

The Japanese Blueprint for Southeast Asia

The Japanese Empire's basic aims and policies in the occupied territories of Southeast Asia, as often as not arrived at after thorough discussions among various governmental and military agencies, were spelled out in a long series of documents. The extracts presented below are from a rather comprehensive set of instructions, modeled on some of the basic papers issued in Tokyo; they were issued in Singapore, which during the war acted as the center for the various military and naval commands in Malaya and Indonesia, in the confident phase of the early occupation years.

INSTRUCTIONS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT- GENERAL OF MILITARY ADMINISTRATION (*Gunsei sōkan shiji*)

Military Administration General
Headquarters [Singapore]

August 7, 1942

Although the present Sacred War originated in the self-preservation and self-defense of the Empire, its essence is to rally the various peoples of East Asia and plan the construction of a new world order. In planning and implementing military administration, the long-term objectives should definitely not be lost sight of and care should always be taken in the policies toward the various peoples so that such will be neither too lenient nor too harsh. Appropriate guidance shall be furnished to secure the resources of

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the Southern areas and rapidly strengthen the war potential of the Empire. Special resources having international trade value shall be actively fostered and developed, and industrial and land development plans based on geographic surveys shall be devised with a view to increasing the national power. Japanese subjects shall be afforded opportunities for development everywhere, and after establishing firm footholds they shall exalt their temperament as the leading race with the basic doctrine of planning the long-term expansion of the Yamato [Japanese] race.

Following are details on matters confronting us.

1. On the future status of occupied territories

The national policy is to defer final decisions on the eventual status of the occupied areas. As a matter of course, local military authorities should not prematurely reveal the Empire's intentions or make commitments to the local inhabitants. Care should be taken to avoid military administration policies which may complicate the question of the future status of these areas.

As a matter of reference, the intentions of the Central authorities are as follows:

As made clear in repeated Imperial declarations, the Philippines and Burma are links in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere and their independence shall be sanctioned at an appropriate time in the future after they have evidenced their cooperation with the Empire.

However, particular heed should be taken of the fact that this independence is such that military affairs, foreign affairs, economics, and other affairs shall be placed under the firm control of the Empire. Moreover, since the Empire has not yet made commitments concerning the degree of independence, extreme prudence should be exercised on this matter in guiding the peoples concerned....

4. On policies governing the various peoples

Because the present war was begun for the preservation and the self-defense of the Empire, there are some who, in their haste to acquire resources, have overlooked the tremendous capacities of

the peoples of Greater East Asia in the Empire's planning. The acquisition of resources vital to national defense is obvious, but the various peoples must be guided so as to accept the Empire's policies and push forward toward the construction of Greater East Asia in harmonious unity. The said peoples of the occupied areas should be treated as follows:

(1) Overseas Chinese

Although it is essential that political and economic pressures be applied where necessary, it is vital that they be utilized henceforth under strict supervision and thereby contribute to the execution of our policies.

(2) Natives

Although it is anticipated that the livelihood of the natives will be difficult temporarily, particular care should be taken in their guidance in order that they endure this patiently and never lose hope for the future.

(3) Enemy nationals

The total capacities of persons with special skills among enemy nationals, as well as others who can be utilized, should be fully and cooperatively employed in our construction. Care should be taken so that any local administrative abuses be corrected by separate measures.

(4) Axis nationals

The existing rights and interests of Axis nationals shall be recognized, but the future expansion of these should be restricted.

The policy toward transfers of rights and interests of enemy nationals to third-power nationals undertaken even prior to December 8th—not to mention since that date—which were executed with ulterior motives, shall be one of absolute nonrecognition.

5. On the employment of natives

Although the policy is to dispatch personnel necessary for the implementation of military government from the homeland wherever possible, since it is difficult to dispatch the large number of personnel required for each military unit particularly in the realm of military government because of the manpower mobiliza-

tion situation in the homeland, some inconveniences should be tolerated and efforts made to employ natives. In particular, since this is a significant period when the male youth, who are the nucleus of the future State, should be invested with the capacities which will enable them to take charge of the construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the youth who are dispatched should not be utilized simply for odd jobs but care should be taken so as to afford them leadership training at every opportunity. . . .

9. On respecting mores and customs in administering the occupied areas

Matters relative to respecting the existing organizational structure and ethnic mores in administering occupied areas shall be as previously stated, but great care should be taken in matters such as the hasty institution of public holidays, the casual changing of names, or the enforcement of Japanese morality and customs. In particular, religious customs should be especially respected and extreme circumspection must be used in exerting coercive pressures upon Buddhism or other religions.

It has been decided to coordinate the revision of geographic names through a geographic name revision conference which has been created in Japan and which will be constituted from the Cabinet and the three ministries of the Army, Navy, and Foreign Affairs. Items of consideration shall include national designations, major regional names, major municipal names, and leading seas, mountains, lakes, rivers, and islands. Since these names should take cognizance of local opinions as much as possible, especially of the invasion forces, the revision of major place names should not be conducted solely on the local level but should always be communicated to the entire Army. Further, those names which have already been conceived should be reported promptly.

10. On education

The emphasis of native education shall be upon industrial technological instruction adapted to practical life and the vigorous cultivation of an atmosphere respectful of labor. At the same time

an education conforming to the special character of each region and to local circumstances shall be implemented, but policies such as compulsory or universal education should not be devised.

Schools beyond the existing precollege level shall be universally closed and, following an examination of the educational system and content, the reopening of those which are considered especially necessary shall be subject to the approval of the Supreme Commander.

As to the propagation of the Japanese language among the natives, plans should be made for its prompt and thorough cultivation from a beginning which must tolerate some disadvantages and inconveniences until its complete utilization and acquisition.

An idea for consideration at this time is to utilize the musical talents of the natives and teach them the Japanese language through songs.

Since the improvement of the character of the people who are the guiding race is extremely essential to the establishment of Greater East Asia, special consideration should be given to the education of Japanese residing in the Southern sphere. Their understanding of the Southern sphere should be increasingly deepened together with the cultivation of their character and the strengthening of their solidarity, and they should be instructed so as to take the initiative as exemplary embodiments of self-sacrificing service.

Where those going to the Southern area for the first time are concerned, although the establishment of a coherent training and educational system through the central and local levels is anticipated, it is desirable that special efforts also be made by all military units because of the importance of the education of the Japanese.

Java Under Japanese Occupation

The following excerpts are taken from the memoirs of a Javanese aristocratic official who served as Regent (Bupati) of Banjumas in Java under both the Dutch and Japanese regimes. His observations on the occupation era were apparently written after the war, and thus do not represent on-the-spot reporting; nor are they entirely free from either personal bias or a certain caution.

Through its slogans of friendship and its encouragement to the people of all classes to learn Japanese, Japan had succeeded in obtaining the complete confidence of a portion of the Indonesian people. During the Dutch colonial period, not everyone could learn Dutch. It was only the upper class which was permitted to learn Dutch and of the lower class one may say only those who were allowed to enter the Dutch-Native Schools. This type of distinction was not to be found in the treatment of the Indonesians by the Japanese. If in the Dutch period the people felt prevented from making progress, under the Japanese government, they were given the widest possible opportunities to increase their knowledge. School teachers who had followed courses in Japanese had to take part in competitions in the language, in writing and reading, singing, speaking, etc. Various prizes were presented to the winners. The winners in the Under-Districts were sent to competitions in the Districts, and those who passed these examinations were sent in turn to the Regencies, Residencies, and finally to the last competition in Jakarta. In this way the Indonesian people were able easily to accept Japa-

S. M. Gandasubrata, *An Account of the Japanese Occupation of Banjumas Residency, Java, March 1942 to August 1945*, trans. Leslie H. Palmier (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper No. 10, 1953), pp. 12-13, 15. By permission of Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.

nese habits and customs, Japanese influence, Japanese understanding so that among Japanese leaders there were those who said outright that the Indonesian people who were so "excellent" were to be made Japanese.

Confidence in Japan was not limited to the poor only. Some intellectuals, also, had their hearts stolen. In Purwokerto, for instance, there was a headmaster's wife who spoke to her children in Japanese every day, swallowing whole Japanese customs and habits. There was also an Indonesian legal expert (Master in Laws) holding the office of President of the Court. He was already proficient in Japanese and according to his own statements he was already so far advanced that he was able to read Japanese legal works, etc. It was not surprising that the Japanese were delighted and placed great hopes on being able to change the Indonesians to "Nipponjin." . . .

We said above that the Indonesian people were an "excellent" people. The Japanese were happy to possess pupils who were clever, industrious, and cultured, but they also understood that for the Indonesians to progress as quickly as possible Javanese customs such as the "homage," "squatting," had to be abolished. With the training which I have described above the character of the Indonesians began to change. The lower class began to acquire self-respect. Added to the shortage of textiles, it became usual to wear practical clothes, that is the man used shoes and shorts for daily wear, whilst the women, especially the young women, wore frocks. Eventually this simple type of Western clothing became popular even in the villages, only the more conservative people remaining attached to the original Javanese costume.

As a Regent I certainly held the opinion that some of the Javanese customs of their nature could hinder the development of our people. Furthermore, they made those of little education feel inferior to those in high positions. I myself could therefore approve the changes in the spirit of our people. It was to be hoped that a belief in oneself would become the property of the whole of the Indonesian people. This was the only condition to

stand alone. As long as the Indonesian people were kept down by the disease of "inferiority complex," so long would it be difficult for us to free ourselves from the prison of foreign colonisation.

Even though I realized that among Indonesians it was certain that there would be some who would lose their heads because of these sudden changes, I felt it was necessary to set an example so that the general public should favour the wearing of practical clothes. I never wore shorts, but I ceased wearing the "belangkong" (Javanese head-cover, formed by folding a batik kerchief). In the Dutch period though I wore trousers I still used a head-kerchief. I myself also felt that the "sembah" [sign of obeisance with folded hands], and so on, in these times was out of place. Some officials usually performed this salutation to me. I did not allow them to do so any more. . . .

Japan was a country which dared to take risks. Holland for centuries had held the opinion that the Javanese could not become satisfactory soldiers. Japan, in a little while only, felt and was able to see the desire of the people to defend their fatherland against the Allied powers. Japan was willing to invite the Javanese people to oppose the Allied attack together with her. Even though at that time the hatred of the Indonesians, who learnt industriously and trained themselves in the Japanese fashion, had already arisen and was clearly seen, because the behaviour of the Japanese was in general extremely coarse, nevertheless Japan continued to be concerned to build up an army made up of Indonesians.

Propaganda to receive officer candidates for the FDA (Fatherland Defense Army) was conducted actively, especially among the teachers and police, because there the Japanese spirit had entered most deeply, even though there also was felt a feeling of hatred towards Japan. At that time in order to tempt the Indonesian people, who in general like high positions, Japan declared that the rank of Major in the FDA was the same as that of a Regent. . . . Japan truly understood that in the eyes of the people of Indonesia there is no rank other than of Regent which is recognised as the peak of respect and greatness. To live in

a Regency, facing the alun-alun [open, grassy square] with a pair of "walled banyans" was an honour which bore no comparison. So, seen from the point of view of psychology, Japan was not wrong in using propaganda which gave Indonesians a hope of obtaining a rank equivalent to that of a Regent by following the road of the FDA. The results of Japanese propaganda were satisfactory. FDA officer candidates mostly originated from the teachers. Local Government officials, the Police and other officers did not feel drawn by the Japanese inducements.

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The Burmese Declaration of Independence (1943)

Although many parts of Southeast Asia were retained by Japan under the control of the Imperial Army or Navy after the conquest of the area in 1942, selected countries were granted nominal independence during the war years. The following documents indicate the nature of the process by which Burma received her independence from Japan in 1943. The first document, dated March 22, is the unilateral declaration by the Imperial Government which outlined the new Japanese policy toward Burma, signed by Premier Hideki Tōjō. The second document, dated August 1, is the Burmese Declaration of Independence from Great Britain and the Empire of Japan, signed by the President of the Burma Constituent Assembly, Dr. U Ba Maw.

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(Translation)

To enable all nations each to find its proper place and all peoples to pursue their lives in peace is the immutable national policy of the Empire of Nippon.

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