

MEMORANDUM

on

POLICY TOWARDS JAPAN

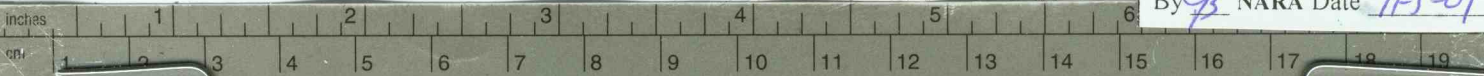
September 14, 1942

Edwin O. Reischauer

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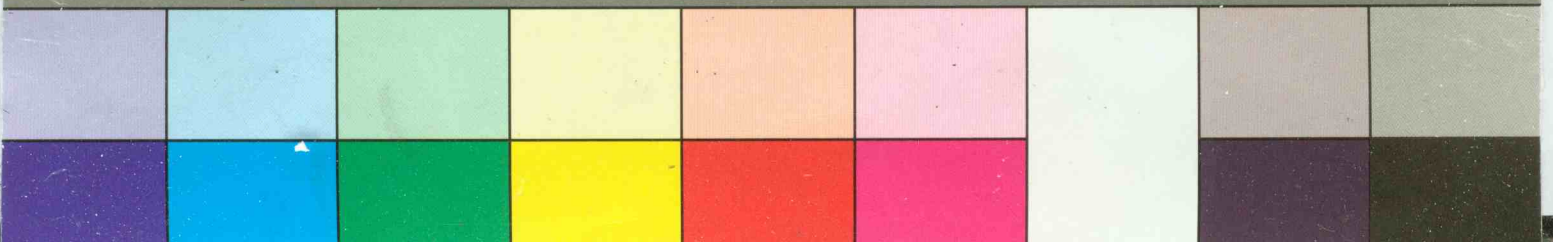
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I should like to present for consideration two small but extremely important points which are closely connected with our war effort in Asia and particularly with our post-war objectives in that area. Military victory is, of course, the essential prerequisite for any war objective, but certain of the more fundamental problems of winning the peace cannot be overlooked in the meantime.

The Japanese are an extremely self-conscious and intensely nationalistic people. Military defeat will unquestionably embitter even the few remaining liberals among them. It will be an extremely difficult task after the war to win over to a policy of sincere cooperation with us sufficient numbers of Japanese to bring Japan back into the family of friendly and cooperating nations. Many Americans believe that Japanese good-will and cooperation will be of little significance after this war, but it is all too clear to serious students of the Far East that a healthy political and economic situation can not be created in that area without the participation of the people of Japan.

One of the major difficulties in attempting to win the Japanese over to our system after this war will be the absence of suitable scapegoats to bear the onus of defeat. In Germany and Italy the Nazi and Fascist parties, and still more Hitler and Mussolini, the personifications of the whole totalitarian system, make most convenient scapegoats. The defeated Germans and Italians can destroy their dictatorial party government and discard their present leadership and by these very acts convince themselves that not they, the people, but their evil leaders were at fault and were defeated.

In Japan no such face-saving repudiation of leadership is possible. That the Emperor is not responsible, all the people know full well, and to repudiate him would be no more satisfactory than to blame the flag. Actual leadership in Japan tends to remain anonymous, there is no party to be blamed, and there are few, if any, prominent individuals who could serve as scapegoats. The army would be the only institution which could be singled out as the false leader and evil genius, but almost the whole nation now is identified with the army in one way or another, and, with their long tradition of respect for the military man, the Japanese would derive no satisfaction from attacking their army. In fact, military defeat might well serve to strengthen rather than to overthrow military dictatorship in Japan.

In Germany and Italy we can expect to see a natural revulsion against Nazi and Fascist rule, a revulsion so strong that it will carry a large percentage of the population over to a policy of cooperation with the United Nations. In Japan, on the contrary, no such easy road to post-war victory is possible. There we shall have to win our ideological battles by carefully planned strategy. A first step would naturally be to win over to our side a group willing to cooperate. Such a group, if it represented the minority of the Japanese people, would be in a sense a puppet regime. Japan has used the strategem of puppet governments extensively but with no great success because of the inadequacy of the puppets. But Japan itself has created the best possible puppet for our purposes, a puppet who not only could be won over to our side but who would carry with him a tremendous weight of authority, which Japan's puppets in China have always lacked. I mean, of course, the Japanese Emperor.

No one in this country is in a position to know what the Japanese Emperor personally believes, but there is good reason to judge from his education and from the associates he has had for the greater part of his life

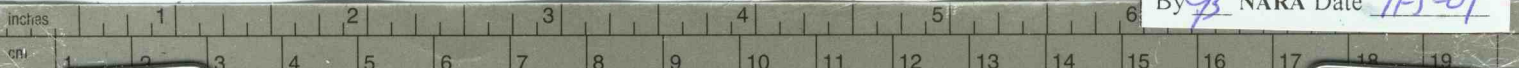
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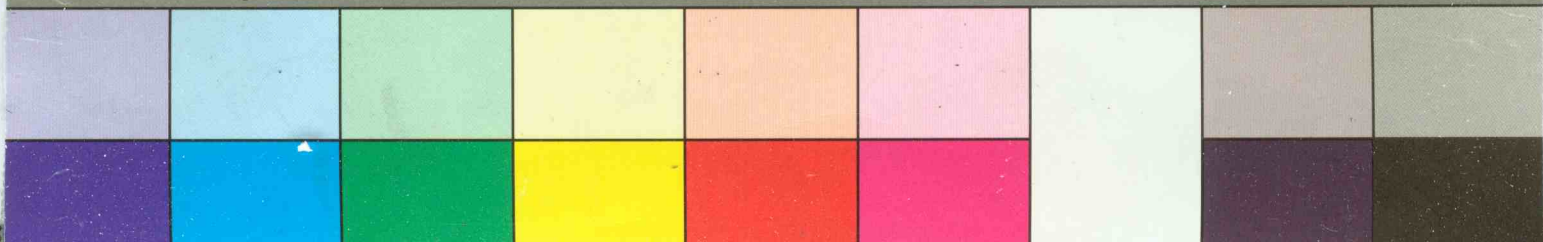
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that, as things are measured in Japan, he is a liberal and a man of peace at heart. It is not improbable that he could be won over to a policy of cooperation with the United Nations far more easily than the vast majority of his subjects. He, and possibly he alone, could influence his people to repudiate their present military leadership. If he proves to have the potentialities of a real leader like his grandfather, so much the better. If he proves to be no more able than his half-demented father, his value as a symbol of cooperation and good will can still be extremely valuable.

The possible rôle of the Japanese Emperor in the post-war rehabilitation of the Japanese mentality has definite bearing upon the present situation. To keep the Emperor available as a valuable ally or puppet in the post-war ideological battle we must keep him unsullied by the present war. In other words, we cannot allow him to be portrayed to the American people as the counterpart of Hitler and Mussolini in Asia or as the personification of the Japanese brand of totalitarianism. General reviling of the Emperor by our press or radio can easily ruin his utility to us in the post-war world. It would make the American people unprepared to cooperate with him or even to accept him as a tool, and naturally it would make the Emperor himself and the men who surround him less ready to cooperate with our government. During the past several months there has been considerable use of the name Hirohito as a symbol of the evil Japanese system. With the post-war problem in mind, it would be highly advisable for the government to induce the news-disseminating organs of this country to avoid reference to the Emperor as far as possible and to use individuals, such as Tojo or Yamamoto or even a mythical toothsome Mr. Moto (in uniform!) as personifications of the Japan we are fighting.

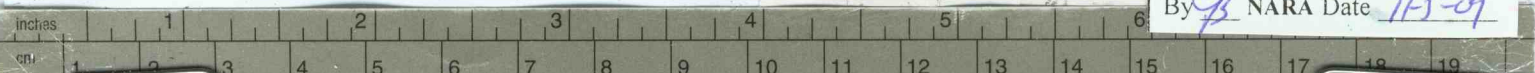
The second and more important point I wish to make has to do with the inter-racial aspects of the conflict in Asia. Japan is attempting to make her war against the United Nations into a holy crusade of the yellow and brown peoples for freedom from the white race. China's courageous stand has prevented Japan from exploiting this type of propaganda too much, but it has apparently met with a certain degree of success in Siam and the colonial lands of southeastern Asia and even in a few circles in China. If China were to be forced out of the war, the Japanese might well be able to transform the struggle in Asia in reality into a full-scale racial war.

The best proof of the falsity of Japanese claims is America's record both in the Philippines and in China. However, on the other side, we have also unwittingly contributed to Japan's dangerous propaganda campaign. The removal from the West Coast of the American citizens of Japanese ancestry along with the Japanese aliens was no doubt a move made necessary by immediate military considerations, but it provided the Japanese with a powerful argument in their attempt to win the Asiatic peoples to the view that the white race is not prepared to recognize them as equals and even now continues to discriminate against them.

Up to the present the Americans of Japanese ancestry have been a sheer liability to our cause, on the one hand presenting a major problem of population relocation and military surveillance in this country and on the other hand affording the Japanese in Asia with a trump propaganda card. We should reverse this situation and make of these American citizens a major asset in our ideological war in Asia. Their sincere and enthusiastic support of the United States at this time would be the best possible proof that this is not a racial war to preserve white supremacy in Asia, but a war to establish a better world

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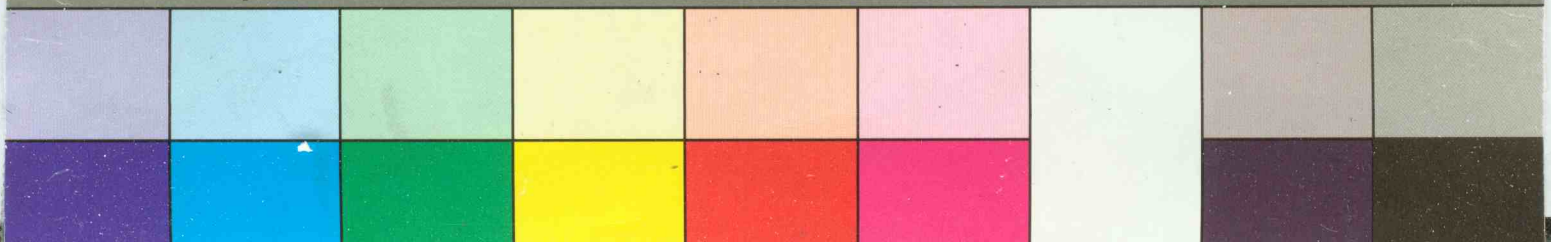
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order for all, regardless of race, and, when the military victory is achieved, these American citizens of Japanese ancestry could serve as an opening wedge into the minds and hearts of the Japanese people. That they had fought willingly and gladly for our side would prove to the Japanese people that this was not simply a war to defeat them as a people, but was a war to crush the wild schemes of their military clique and to win Japan back to a system of international cooperation.

There are probably many methods by which the Japanese Americans can be made an asset rather than a liability, but among the most effective methods would be to encourage them to join the armed forces, and to give them training in political thinking and for specialized services, military or civilian, they can render during and after the war. If they knew they were wanted and that opportunities for advancement were open to them, large numbers of young Japanese would certainly be glad to volunteer. A special volunteer unit of Japanese Americans and other Americans who desired to serve with them could easily be formed for combat service in the European or African zones, where it would probably be as effective as any other unit and where it would cause no special disciplinary or organizational difficulties.

The inclusion of large numbers of Japanese Americans in combat units would strengthen the morale of the whole Japanese American group and would help to keep it loyal to the United States. More important, when the war in the Pacific is ended, such a unit might prove an invaluable asset in lessening the inevitable animosity of the Japanese populace for us and our troops. If liberal numbers of Japanese Americans were to be among the troops of occupation we may station in Japan or were to be among the units which receive the surrender of the Japanese armies, the bitterness of the defeat would be alleviated slightly and cooperation with the victor nations would seem more possible to the Japanese. The enthusiastic and active participation of 100,000 Japanese Americans and of these Japanese American troops in the cause of the United Nations could be made into a tremendous strategical advantage in the great struggle to win the peace in Asia.

Edwin O. Reischauer
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September 14, 1942

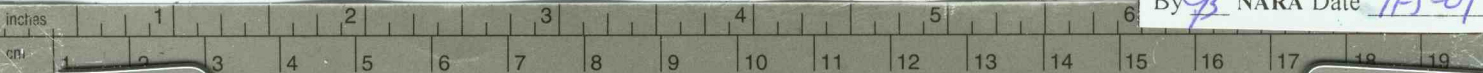
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