

10010-54  
copy 2  
~~SECRET~~  
**SECRET**

**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES  
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS BRANCH**

**R & A 2423S  
8 SEPTEMBER 1944**

## **SINGAPORE UNDER JAPANESE DOMINATION**

Singapore, the former symbol of Western commercial and military strength in Southeast Asia, became in 1942 one of the main centers of the Japanese Outer Empire. Though the city has lost its commercial importance, it has remained a vital military supply base supporting both the Burma theater of operations and the Netherlands East Indies. Maintenance of at least a subsistence economy and firm administrative controls has consequently been essential. Despite this importance of Singapore, and the tenets of Greater East Asia propaganda, the Japanese have not been completely successful in making the local population content with Japanese rule.

The Japanese have established a special municipality for Singapore, and have installed a Japanese mayor at its head. They have tried to create an impression of prosperity, but the disappearance of consumer goods and trade, the inefficiency of the public services, and the reported disaffection of parts of the population belie their claims. A persistent food shortage has not yet resulted in prevalent starvation only because of strenuous efforts to increase local food production, the partial payment of the large groups of workers in food, and the exodus of numbers of natives to the mainland. There has been considerable collaboration on the part of the local population, but this has resulted at least as much from economic necessity as from pro-Japanese sentiment. In spite of it, the Japanese have found need for an extensive system of military police.

Singapore, still the capital of Malaya and the leading city of the region, is now administered as a separate municipality (called Shonan by the Japanese). Beneath the Japanese mayor and his deputy function various administrative departments (including Welfare, Education and Food Control) with much of their pre-war personnel. The area they administer is larger than before the occupation, for the Japanese have added to Singapore the islands of the Riau archipelago (formerly part of Sumatra) as well as Tambelan, Anambas and Natuna (islands to the northeast, also part of the Netherlands East Indies).

Despite the geographical augmentation, the population of Singapore is probably under the 1940 level. Approximately 1000 Japanese businessmen, technicians, and administrators, in addition to the regular army and navy garrison, have come to Singapore. But the Japanese forced or induced large numbers of people to leave the island for self-sufficient agricultural communities on the mainland. For those remaining, deterioration to starvation levels has been retarded only by this exodus, by

**SECRET**  
91

SECRET

Japanese employment of large groups, and by increased cultivation of food crops on Singapore Island.

The Japanese have provided work for a large proportion of Singapore's laboring class in reconstructing the naval base and in enlarging other facilities for Japanese use. The laborers receive reasonably high wages, paid partly in food, as well as extra ration coupons for scarce articles. Their labor has not resulted in adequate production of consumer goods. By August 1943 the shortage of consumer goods had become so severe that the authorities froze stocks of critical commodities. The scarcity of cloth has been particularly stringent; many people ordinarily adequately clothed are now barefoot and in rags.

From the local point of view, the large decrease in rice imports from neighboring countries is the most serious effect of the Japanese occupation. According to the Japanese themselves rice imports are now less than one third of the pre-war amount. Between February 1942 and July 1944 the monthly ration was decreased 18 pounds per person, reducing consumption to a quarter of the pre-war level, and the shortage apparently extends even to the Japanese population. There has undoubtedly been an increase in local food production, however, since a number of rubber and pineapple plantations have been converted to cultivate tapioca and sweet potatoes. The authorities, with assistance from the recently established Cooperative Association, have urged that all uncultivated land on the island, even the race tracks, be devoted to food and tended by office workers and women in their spare time.

The Japanese want the world and particularly the people of the occupied areas to believe that prosperity characterizes their rule, but their claims of flourishing industrial activity in Singapore are unsubstantiated by the facts. The leading insurance offices, shipyards, rubber mills, engineering works, department stores, restaurants, cabarets, and movies have been taken over by Japanese companies. The Japanese have enlisted the residents in labor corps, and have used these groups as well as racial organizations and educational institutions to channel "co-prosperity" propaganda to the local population. All nationals in the city, including Chinese, Indian, Malay, and Eurasian, are automatically declared to be members of their respective national associations, and the leaders, hand-picked by the Japanese, direct the efforts of these groups under the watchful eye of the Japanese administration. There has been considerable collaboration from the natives but it has sprung from economic necessity as much as from a desire to cooperate.

Moreover, the Japanese have found it necessary to develop further controls over the local population. In the early days of the occupation, the Japanese retained the framework of the pre-war Malayan police force and necessarily employed those members of the British police force who remained after the fall of the city. Gradually they were able to train special officers in Japanese methods and have effectively established Neighborhood Associations (Rimpohan) and the Peace Preservation Corps

**SECRET**

(Jikeidan). Under this system a certain number of households are organized and made collectively responsible for any untoward happenings. When the Peace Preservation Corps was founded in September 1943 it consisted of 80,000 members.

These organizations enforce a curfew in Singapore between midnight and six o'clock and in emergencies it can be advanced. The Peace Preservation Corps also registers all families by means of residential cards. The cards must be endorsed by the proper authorities if the resident wishes to travel off the island. Upon arrival at a new town any traveller must again register with the local police. Movement on the island itself has been unrestricted with the exception of the Naval base and the dockyard area of the city.

Japanese military police, in addition to their normal activities of controlling the relations between Japanese army personnel and the civilian population, have directed their attention to counterespionage and are now apparently entirely responsible for the Secret Police and Informer Service.

While the control over the conduct of the native population is thus reasonably effective the administration of public service departments has not produced adequate results. The public utilities operate, but less efficiently than under the British. There is electricity but it is restricted, and roads have not been well tended. Japanese cars can get gasoline, while the local cars use charcoal or gasoline made from rubber. Hygienic conditions in Singapore have degenerated because of a reduction in the conservancy staff and a shortage of Japanese vehicles to remove refuse. Few medicines are left on the market and hospitals have been largely requisitioned for Japanese patients. Despite the absence of epidemics, there have been widespread undernourishment, a lowering of vitality, and an increase in beriberi and tuberculosis.

**SECRET**