

Japan as “the Light of Hope in Asia”
By Henry S. Stokes, former Bureau Chief of *New York Times*
Addressed at the Second Conference for Democratic Asia
Held at Bunkyo Civic Hall on December 6, 2012

1.

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Henry Stokes.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

2.

This symposium is held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India in 1952.

3.

I am very honored to be able to participate in this historic moment.

4.

One of the most surprising developments in the 20th century has been the sheer speed at which the 500 year curse of colonialism came to an end..

5.

Rule by white men petered out in mid-air.

No one seems to have expected this.

6.

Nehru, when asked in the late 1930s, how long he thought it would take for India to gain its independence ventured the opinion that it might come in the 1970s.

7.

In other words, after his time!

8.

By the early 1940s, it was becoming obvious that the Indians themselves were not going to be patient that long. What had happened to concertina all expectations?

9.

The simple answer is the Second World War had broken out and it had shown that one relative newcomer to the world stage in 500-year drama, capable of delivering enormous blows to colonialism.

10.

And that was Japan.

11.

Thus, the Nehru timetable of Independence for India by the 1970s was giving way to a much tighter timetable, namely as soon as World War Two ended.

12.

Let us go back in time from the 20th century to the early 17th century.

13.

In India, Britain established the East India Company in 1600 and started their colonial rule.

14.

Britain further branched out its East Indian Company to Madras in 1637, to Bombay in 1661, and to Calcutta in 1690.

15.

The British Invasion continued with these land-mark events: Battle of Plessey in 1764, the Mysore War in 1799, and the Sikh Revolt in 1845.

16.

The famous Sepoy Revolt took place from 1857 till 1859. It was an anti-British civilian rebellion.

17

In the midst of the UK oppression of India, the Meiji Restoration took place in Japan in 1868.

18.

In India, at roughly that same time, some historical figures in the struggle for Indian Independence were born:

19.

Mahatma Gandhi was born in 1867. And Chandra Bose in 1897.



20.

In 1877, the Indian Empire, featuring direct colonial rule of the whole of India by the British, was founded. And Queen Victoria came to the throne as the “Empress of India.”

21.



In other words, Bose was born at the peak of British colonial rule of India.

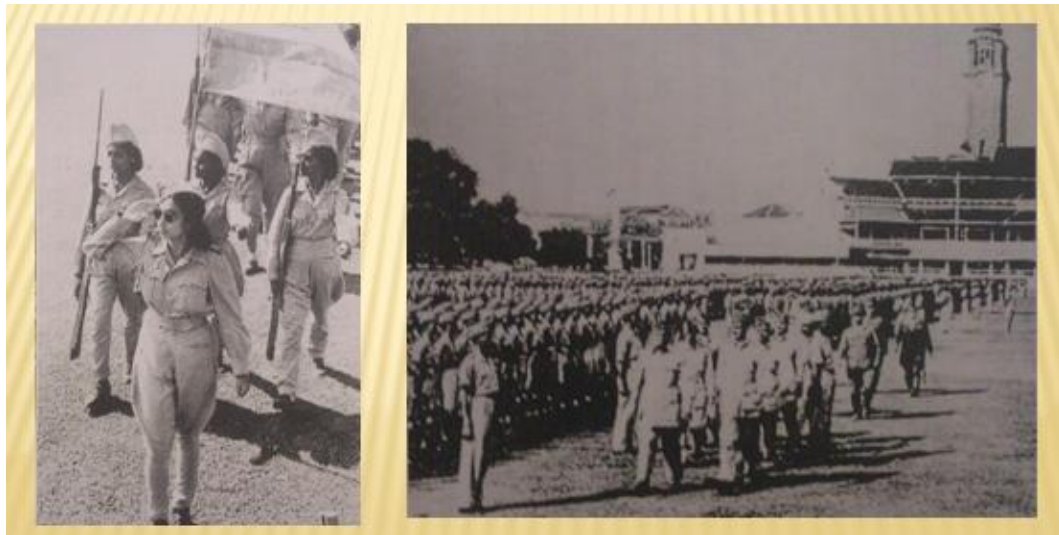
22.

Bose is called “Netaji” in India even now. Netaji means “great leader” .



23.

With Japan’s support, Bose formed the INA—the Indian National Army.



24.

Unlike Gandhi who fought against British colonial rule using a non-violence philosophy, Bose fought in battle as a commander.



25.

On May 16, 1943, Bose came to Japan and met Japanese leaders: Navy Minister Shimada, Chief of Navy General Staff Nagano, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu.

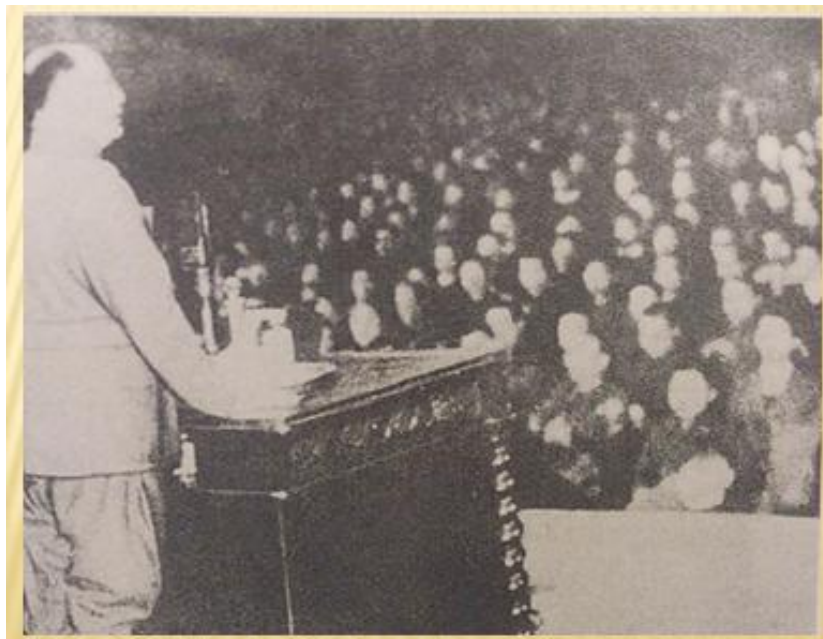
26.

And then he met the Prime Minister Hideki Tojo.



27.

Bose gave his address at Hibiya Public Hall. His message sums up the feeling of Asian people at that time.



28.

He said, “When I started going to elementary school, a country of Asian race fought against one of the world’s largest white empires, Russia.”

29.

“This Asian country defeated Russia completely. And this country was Japan.”

30.

“When this news reached all across India, a wave of excitement covered the entire land.”

31.

“At every corner of my country, people enthusiastically talked about the Battle of Port Arthur, the Battle of Mukden, and the thrilling story of the Battle of Tsushima.”

32

“Indian children honestly adored Admiral Togo and General Nogi.”

33.

“Parents competed to buy the pictures of Admiral Togo and General Nogi in vain.”

34.

“Instead, they bought something Japanese from the market and ornamented their houses with Japanese things.”

35.

Bose clearly said, “Japan was the ‘Light of Hope’ for Asia.”



36.

He further continued, “This time, Japan declared war against Britain, long time enemy of India.”

37.

“Japan has given us the best opportunity to be independent. We realize its significance and thank Japan from the bottom of our hearts.”



38.

“Once we miss this opportunity, we would not be able to have the same opportunity for another 100 years or more.”

39.

“Victory is in our hands and we firmly believe India will accomplish our goal of being independent.”

40.



What really counted was action not talk, In October of 1943, which was the 66th year since Queen Victoria came to throne as the Empress of the Indian Empire, the Provisional Government of Free India was established.

41.

At the Convention held in Singapore, Bose was nominated to be the head by unanimous applause.

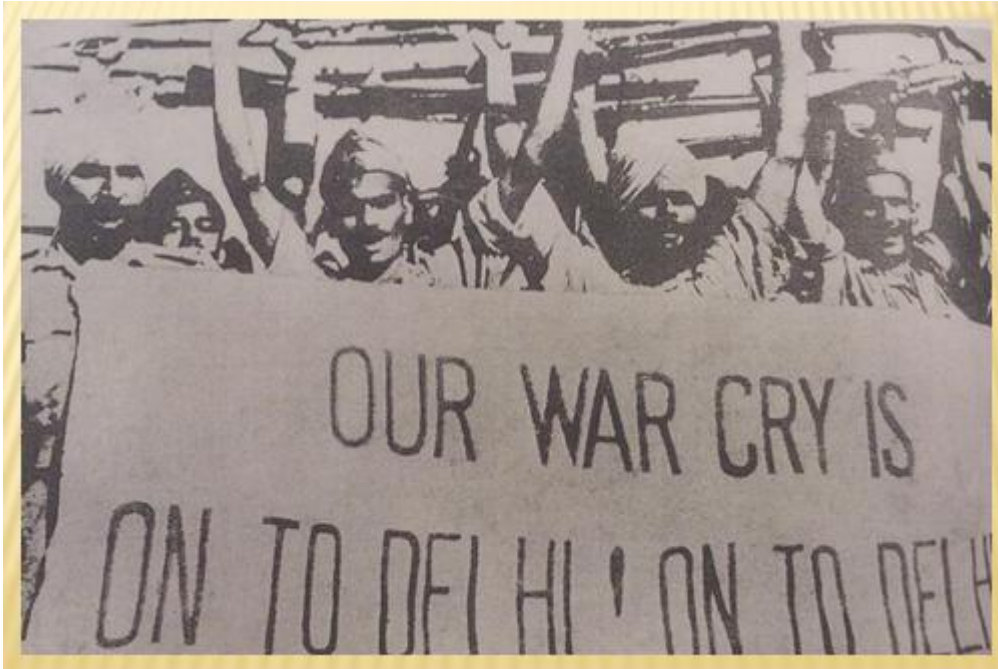
42.



Bose declared, “Chyaro Delhi” which means “On to Delhi.” He and his people held up a board on which the same message was written and marched in the street.

43.

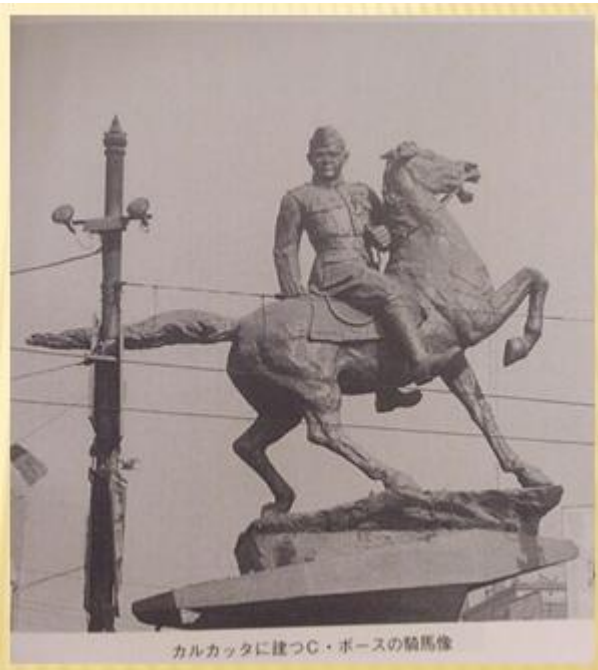
It was a historical start of the march heading for their homeland India.



44.

INA or Indian National Army officers and soldiers, together with the Japanese Army, heading for Imphal, passing the border of Burma and India, shouting “On to Delhi.”

45.



Bose encouraged officers and soldiers saying, “Raise our national flag on the Red Fort!”

46.

The Provisional Government of Free India, together with Japan, declared war against Britain and America.

47.

In the fall of the same year, 1943, the Greater East Asian Conference was held from November 5 for 6 days in Tokyo.

48.

This was the first Summit of colored races held for the first time in the long history of human beings.

49.

Prime Minister Hideki Tojo of Japan met leaders from other Asian countries: Ahang Jinghui (Prime Minister of Manchuria), Wang Jingwei (Chairman of the Nanking Government), Jose P Laurel (President of Philippines), Ba Maw (Prime Minister of Burma), Prince Wan Waithayakon (Acting Prime Minister of Thailand) gathered together. And Subhas Chandra Bose attended as a representative of India.

50.

Today not a few Japanese scholars regard this conference as if it were the gathering of the Japanese military's "puppet government" leaders for propaganda purposes.

51.

But the Japanese who say such a thing are the "puppets" of foreign powers which intend to control the mind of the Japanese people.

52.

At the Conference, the Great East Asian Joint Declaration was approved unanimously.

53.

Bose appealed, "Let this declaration be not only for fellow Asians but also for all the people of the world, who are suffering from suppressions as the Charter for Equality of Human Rights."

54.

As Bose proclaimed, Japan was "the Light of Hope" for non-white people of the world.

55.

World history of the past 500 years is a grand drama of the Western Powers of white Christians ruling the nations of colored races as their colonies

56.

In such a historical context, Japan is an unprecedented nation. It is worthy to note that Japan proposed abolition of racial discrimination at the Paris Conference held right after the WWI.

57.

At this conference, the post-war order of the world, including the foundation of the League of Nations, was discussed.

58.

When a proposal for abolition of racial discrimination was presented, Prime Minister Hughes of White Australia left the conference room saying he would reject signature and go home.

59.

The chairman was the US President, Woodrow Wilson. He demanded that the Japanese Representative withdraw his proposal saying this matter was an issue which should be treated quietly.

60.

Baron, Nobuaki Makino, the chief Japanese representative and a former Japanese Foreign Minister, would not follow Chairman Wilson's demand and requested a vote.

61.

Although Britain, America, Poland, Brazil and Rumania opposed, 11 countries, mostly minor, out of 16 countries attending voted for the Japanese proposal. Thus the proposal won a majority and was approved.

62.

Nonetheless, Chairman Wilson, the US President, announced that the voting itself was invalid because it was not a "solid vote."

63.

Makino still demanded that the conference accept the majority vote but Wilson insisted that "important issues like this one required a solid vote in the past. At least no objection is needed to proceed the meeting.."

64.

Despite the fact that the proposal for abolishing racial discrimination was approved by an overwhelming majority of 11 to 5, Chairman Wilson, the US president, ignored the voting result.

65.

Such behavior would be unacceptable in today's civilized world. Now the President of the United States is black, but such a thing was totally unbelievable back then.

66.

The Japanese are not white, they are a colored people. So the proud Japanese were not able to overlook such whites' high-handedness.

67. Turning now to the case of Indonesia, colonial rule began when the Dutch dispatched their navy to Indonesia in 1596.

68.

350 years or so of colonial rule by the Dutch ended in 1942 when the Japanese army advanced to Indonesia. The Dutch Army surrendered in only 7 days.

69.

An Indonesian legend has it that God's soldiers led by a hero riding a white horse helped Indonesia to become independent.

70.

Japan's advance reminded Indonesian people of the coming of those legendary God's soldiers. The Japanese Army was the Army of the Myth.

71.

Dr. George Hueu Sanford Kanahale raises 4 points as to Japan's role in his book entitled, "Japanese Military Rule and Indonesian Independence."

72.

1. Banned the use of Dutch and English. Due to this, Indonesian spread as the official language.

73.

2. Gave military training to Indonesian youth. Thus young Indonesian people learned strict rules, endurance and courage.

74.

3. Swept away the Dutch authorities and gave high posts to Indonesians. This improved Indonesian's ability and responsibility.

75.

4. Established Puta (as a civil organization) and Hoko-kai (a voluntary service society) in Java and built its network and chapters across the country. The Japanese taught Indonesians how to operate these nation-wide network organizations.

76.

It is widely said that Japan invaded Asian countries during WWII. But if so how come the invaded country provided military training to the youth of the country being invaded,

77.

Trained their mental power, gave them high position and help them build nation-wide organizations where people got together to unite, and taught them how to manage such organization?

78.

These fact certainly prove that Japan was not the country which invaded Indonesia.

79.

It is correct to say that Japan made all the efforts possible to let Asian countries be independent.

80.

Independent from whom?

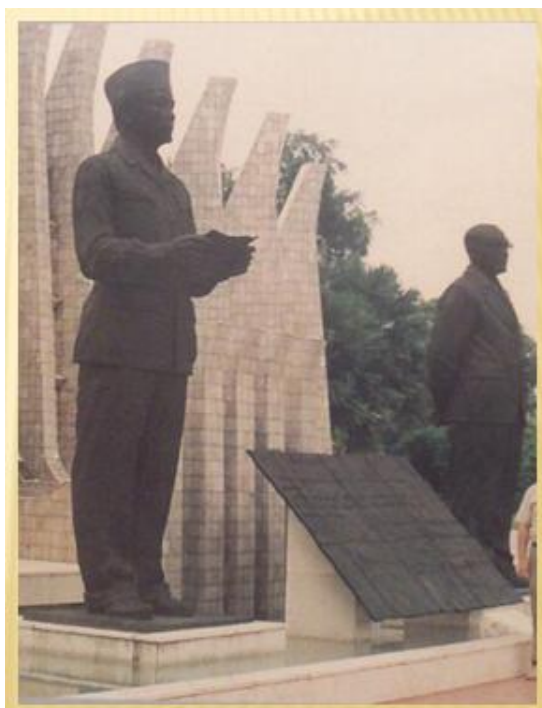
81.

Of course, from the rule of the Western countries which colonized the Asian countries.

82.

At the center of Jakarta is Merdeka Park. Merdeka means "independence" in Indonesia.

83.



Besides raising statues of Hatta and Sukarno, the Indonesians raised a 37-meter tall Memorial Tower of Independence.

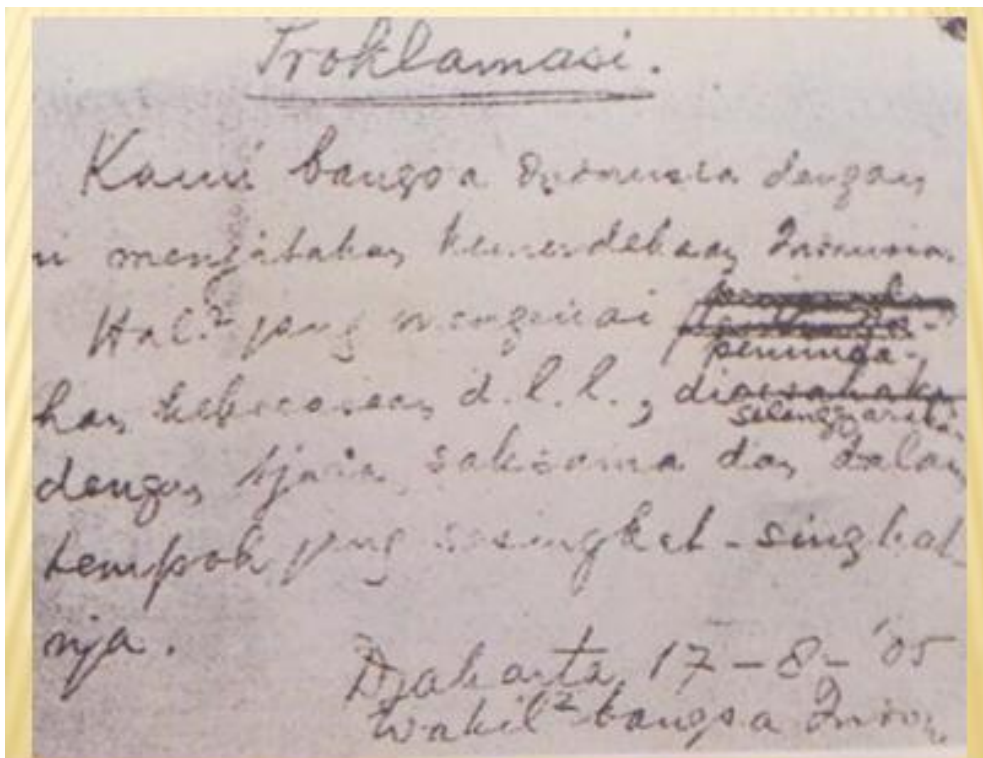
84.

On the first floor of the basement, there is the original statement of the Declaration of Independence on which we can find the signature of Hatta and Sukaruno.



85.

On this document, the Independence Day is recorded as 17-8-'05.



86.

17-8 means August 17, the date of Independence. But how about '05, meaning the year five?

87.

Many Indonesians are Muslim, but it is not an Islamic calendar. Needless to say, it is not a Christian calendar. Then what is this '05, the year of five?

88.

'05, the year of five, in fact, is the Japanese "Imperial Calendar."

89.

The year 1945 is, according to the Japanese Imperial Calendar, the 2605th year since the first Emperor Jimmu came to the Imperial throne and founded Japan officially.

90.



Hatta and Sukaruno used Japan's Imperial Calendar to express their gratitude to Japan for Japan was the mother of Indonesia's independence.

91.

Thus they used Japan's "Emperor's Calendar" to celebrate their Independence Day in their Declaration of Independence document.

92.

Ladies and gentlemen, this tale we have told of 500 years of colonialism is widely known all over the world.

93.

Nonetheless, we are gathered today to celebrate the end of the curse of colonialism.

94.

Japan is a country of Rising Sun. Joining hands together with the fellow Asian people who desire truly Free Asia, I sincerely hope that Japan will play a vital role for realizing democratic Asian unity.

95.

Hoping "the Sun Rise Again", I would like to conclude my speech tonight.

96.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.