

## WORLD WAR II AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

From December 1941, Japan, as part of its plan to build an East Asian empire and secure oil supplies essential for war in the Pacific, swiftly took control of Southeast Asia. Japanese occupation had a devastating economic impact on the region. Japan imposed country and later regional autarky on Southeast Asia, dictated that the region finance its own occupation and sent almost no consumer goods. GDP fell by half everywhere in Southeast Asia except Thailand. Famine and forced labour accounted for most of the 4.4 million Southeast Asian civilian deaths under Japanese occupation. In this ground-breaking new study, Gregg Huff provides the first comprehensive account of the economies and societies of Southeast Asia during the 1941–1945 Japanese occupation. Drawing on materials from 25 archives over three continents, his economic, social and historical analysis presents a new understanding of Southeast Asian history and development before, during and after the Pacific War.

GREGG HUFF is Senior Research Fellow at Pembroke College, University of Oxford. He is the author of *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* and co-editor of and contributor to *World War II Singapore: The Chōsabū Reports on Syonan-to*. Gregg Huff has written numerous journal articles, including publications in the *Journal of Economic History*, *Economic History Review*, *Explorations in Economic History*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Oxford Economic Papers*, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* and *World Development*.

# WORLD WAR II AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Economy and Society under Japanese Occupation

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## CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC

- April 1930** The London Naval Treaty limits naval arms and additional types of warships that Japan is allowed to possess.
- 1931** After gaining a railway concession in Manchuria (Manchukuo) in 1905 and then a quarter of a century of ‘informal empire’, Japan seizes Manchuria in the wake of the Manchurian Incident. Japan begins to institute formal control over Manchuria.
- 29 January 1932** Japanese bombers level Chapei in northern Shanghai, killing thousands of civilians.
- March 1932** Japan, having completed the occupation of all Manchuria, sets up a puppet state there and on 15 September 1932 formally recognizes Manchukuo and its independence.
- 24 June 1932** A bloodless coup overthrows the King of Thailand and ends absolute monarchy.
- 25 March 1933** Japan leaves the League of Nations.
- 29 December 1934** Japan gives notice that it will terminate the Washington Naval Treaty (1921). The Treaty remains formally in force until December 1936, by which time a rapid Japanese naval build-up is underway.
- 15 November 1935** A commonwealth government is inaugurated in the Philippines, giving the country a large measure of independence with the promise of full independence to follow.
- January 1936** Japan withdraws from the London Naval Conference (of 1921) on the issue of naval tonnage ratios for the major powers. By 1937, a rapid Japanese naval build-up is underway.
- 7 July 1937** A clash at the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking between Japanese soldiers on night manoeuvres and Chinese units under Song Zheyuan, the China Incident. It marks the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, which lasts for eight years, 1937–45. In the war, an estimated 10 million Chinese are killed.
- 27 July 1937** The Japanese cabinet declares that it is determined to establish a ‘New Order’ in East Asia. The Chinese Foreign Ministry states that China has exhausted all its efforts to maintain peace.

- 29 July 1937** Japanese forces occupy Peking only 22 days after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.
- 5 October 1937** The League of Nations condemns Japan for violating the Nine-Power Treaty.
- November 1937** Japanese forces conquer Shanghai.
- December 1937** Japanese forces seize Nanking.
- 1938** Construction by Britain, aided by the United States and using Chinese labourers, of the Burma Road from Lashio in Burma to Kunming in China. The purpose of the road is to avoid having to use the old India to China silk route to supply Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist forces.
- January 1938** Japan announces it 'would not negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek', opening the way to an 'endless war' in China.
- 6 August 1938** The Japanese Foreign Minister states that Japan aims for a New Order in East Asia, to include China, Indochina and Indonesia (Netherlands India).
- October 1938** Japanese forces seize Hankow and Canton.
- November 1938** The term Japanese Greater East Asia Sphere first appears.
- 3 November 1938** Japanese Prime Minister Konoe (Konoye) declares a New Order in East Asia and by the end of November the concept of a New Order in East Asia emerges from an Imperial Conference.
- 22 December 1938** Japanese Prime Minister announces the New Order in East Asia to apply to Northeast Asia.
- 26 December 1938** Plaek Phibunsongkhram (Phibun) becomes Prime Minister of Thailand.
- 15 January 1939** Japanese aeroplanes begin heavy bombing raids on Chungking, where the Chinese nationalist government had fled.
- February 1939** Japan occupies Hainan Island and in March 1939 occupies the Spratly Islands. Hainan and the Spratlys are strategically situated between the south-eastern coast of China and the north-eastern littoral of Indochina. Both are convenient way stations for operations against Borneo and the Philippines.
- 10 February 1939** Japan invades Hainan as a springboard to invasion of Southeast Asia.
- 2 July 1939** Japanese forces in Manchuria cross into Outer Mongolia (Nomonhan Incident).
- 3 September 1939** Britain and France declare war on Germany following the German invasion of Poland.
- 16 September 1939** Japanese ceasefire with Soviet forces in Manchuria.
- 10 May 1940** Germany begins an invasion of the Netherlands, France and Belgium. They capitulate within a few weeks, appearing to give Japan an opportunity for expansion in Southeast Asia.

- 12 June 1940** The United Kingdom and Thailand sign a Treaty of Non-Aggression. It stipulates that no assistance is to be given to third party aggressors. Britain tells the US government that it will close the Burma Road for three months and does so in July.
- 20 June 1940** In Indochina, the French colonial government closes the Yunnan–Hanoi railway.
- 22 June 1940** Germany and France sign an armistice agreement.
- 25 June 1940** Japanese war ministry and General Staff draft plan to attack Western colonies in Asia. The Japanese hope, as far as possible, to avoid war with the United States.
- 10 July 1940** Vichy government founded after the fall of France on 25 June.
- 1 August 1940** Japan, under new Japanese Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, declares its aim is the creation of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a geographically expanded version of the New Order in East Asia and involving Japanese leadership of China, India, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Netherlands India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Indochina, Australia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Siberia.
- 19 August 1940** Japanese Zero fighters appear for the first time over Chongqing (Chungking) in Southwest China. Vichy France allows Japan use of Cam Ranh Bay Naval Base in Indochina.
- 30 August 1940** Under the Accords of Principle, France agrees to recognize Japan's special interest in the Far East. The accord with France gives Japan military facilities in Indochina.
- September 1940** The United States breaks the Japanese diplomatic code in a decryption effort known as MAGIC. By early 1942, the US has made considerable progress in decrypting the communications code used by the Japanese navy, called JN-25 by the Americans.
- 4 September 1940** The Liaison Conference in Japan makes a policy statement for a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and indicates the countries it would comprise and the roles of the constituent parts.
- 22 September 1940** Japan gains the right to establish garrisoned airbases in northern Indochina. Japanese land forces cross the border into Indochina, seize border crossings in the Lang Son region and occupy Tonkin.
- 26 September 1940** The US bans iron ore exports to Japan.
- 27 September 1940** Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan signed in Berlin.
- 8 October 1940** Chinese Nationalist forces penetrate into Yichang, Hubei Province, but Japanese forces manage to drive them out. Churchill agrees to the re-opening of the Burma Road.
- 18 October 1940** The British re-open the Burma Road.
- April 1941** Japan begins to ration rice in six cities.
- 6 May 1941** Tokyo accords fix the quantities of rice and rubber Indochina is to export to Japan and the arrangement for payments between the two countries.

- 9 May 1941** Treaty of Tokyo cedes to Thailand the Laotian provinces west of the Mekong River and all Cambodian territory bounded by the Mekong down to Stung Treng.
- 22 June 1941** Germany attacks the Soviet Union, but gives Japan no prior warning; German forces cross the Russian frontier.
- 25 June and 2 July 1941** Japanese Liaison Conferences decide that Japan will not join Germany in the attack on the Soviet Union, but gives Japan no prior warning the Soviet Union but instead move south to Indochina and establish military bases. The southwards move makes a Pacific war 'highly likely' because the United States reaction forces Japan to choose between 'dismal retreat or war'.
- 28 June 1941** Accords for Japanese mission to Indochina are signed.
- July 1941** Japan establishes military bases in Indochina, which is seen as a staging post for a further Japanese move into Southeast Asia.
- 2 July 1941** Liaison Conference declares that Japan must establish a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.
- 26 July 1941** The United States government freezes Japanese assets; the United Kingdom and the Netherlands follow suit two days later. The US also bans exports to Japan of top-grade scrap iron and aviation gasoline. Japan perceives its economic strangulation by the ABCD powers of America, Britain, China and the Dutch. General Douglas MacArthur is appointed to command United States Armed Forces Far East.
- 29 July 1941** Indochina Joint Defence Pact (Darlan-Kato Accords) concluded. Japan is allowed to station an unlimited number of troops in Indochina and can use roads and railways for military purposes. Indochina is to pay 23 million piastres a month as advance military expenses for Japanese.
- September 1941** In response to the Japanese occupation of Indochina, Vietnamese communists abandon a planned anti-imperialist front and forge a formal coalition of the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, commonly known as the Viet Minh.
- 8 September 1941** Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh announces a national front to fight the Japanese and French.
- 10 September 1941** Japanese forces destroy the bridge at Lao Kay in Indochina, cutting the Hanoi to Kunming railway line.
- 27 September 1941** Japan joins the Axis powers.
- October 1941** Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs mission of 151 persons arrives in Indochina to survey its economic possibilities for Japan.
- 17 October 1941** General Tōjō Hideki becomes Prime Minister of Japan after the fall of the Konoe cabinet the previous day. In the new cabinet, Tōjō holds the posts of both Prime Minister and Minister of War.
- 2 November 1941** Japanese Liaison Conference decides on war if the US rejects final Japan proposals for a settlement in Asia but to continue with diplomacy until the end of the month.

- 5 November 1941** Liaison Conference decision of 2 November is agreed by the Imperial Conference. The deadline for US acceptance of Japanese proposals is 26 November 1941.
- 26 November 1941** The United States rejects Japanese proposals of 2 and 5 November. The United States maintains Cordell Hull's 'Open Door Policy' for China and gives an ultimatum of complete Japanese withdrawal from China and Indochina. War in the Pacific is now 'almost inevitable', since immutable for Japan is a New Order in Asia with Japanese leadership. Japan fears United States' control of markets in the Far East which it is convinced will hinder Japanese economic development.
- 26 November 1941** Japanese naval task force leaves Japan on a mission to destroy the US naval base at Pearl Harbor.
- 1 December 1941** Formal Japanese decision for war on the basis of the decisions of the 2 November Liaison Conference and 5 November Imperial Conference.
- 7–8 December 1941** Japanese aircraft bomb Pearl Harbor and Japanese forces begin an offensive aimed at occupying Southeast Asia within 150 days. A two-pronged attack aims, first, to occupy the Philippines and Malaya and then converge on Indonesia. The attack on Pearl Harbor is to prevent any disruption of these plans by the United States Pacific Fleet. Japanese forces occupy the Shanghai International Settlement and British and American concessions at Tianjin.
- 8 December 1941** Countrywide rice rationing starts in Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Reserves of rice are exhausted by April 1944.
- 8 December 1941** Japanese forces land in Thailand by arrangement with a passive Thai government, and after symbolic resistance Thailand surrenders to Japan. Japanese forces seize Shanghai. The Battle of the Philippines begins with the Japanese bombing of Clark Airfield and Cavite Navy Yard.
- 10 December 1941** United States Marines are ordered to surrender Guam.
- 10 December 1941** HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales* are sunk off the coast of Malaya by Japanese naval vessels. Japanese land on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.
- 12 December 1941** The Information Bureau in Tokyo announces the term 'Greater East Asia War'.
- 15 December 1941** Japanese forces take Victoria Point (the southernmost town in Burma).
- 16 December 1941** Japan invades British Borneo.
- 21 December 1941** Japan and Thailand conclude a formal 10-year Pact of Alliance providing for military, economic and political aid.
- 22 December 1941** First Japanese air raid on Rangoon occurs. Exodus of Indians from Rangoon begins. A few leave by ship but most attempt to walk back to India.

- 23 December 1941** General Douglas MacArthur withdraws from Manila and declares it an open city. The Dutch military commander in Indonesia surrenders to Japanese forces.
- 24 December 1941** Japanese forces capture Wake Island. General MacArthur, Manuel L. Quezon and others evacuate to Corregidor.
- 25 December 1941** British surrender Hong Kong after a battle beginning on 8 December. Japanese bomb Rangoon for a second time.
- 26 December 1941** Manila is declared an open city.
- 2 January 1942** Japanese forces occupy Manila.
- 3 January 1942** Chiang Kai-shek named Supreme Allied Commander of the China Theatre, which includes Indochina and Thailand.
- 11 January 1942** Japan invades Indonesia, including Dutch Borneo.
- 13 January 1942** Japanese forces capture Kuala Lumpur.
- 16 January 1942** Japanese forces begin the invasion of Burma.
- 25 January 1942** Thailand declares war on the United States and Britain.
- 26 January 1942** Japanese forces begin their offensive towards Singapore from the north of Malaya. Allied forces, including British Indian Army units, are already deployed in the Middle East and North Africa, and without air or naval cover, the defence of Fortress Singapore is doomed to fail.
- 27 January 1942** Japanese Total War Research Institute (established December 1940 in Tokyo) draws up a draft plan for the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The plan envisages a Greater, a Smaller and an Inner Sphere. India is to be included within the Greater Sphere, or sphere of influence.
- February 1942** Seni Pramoj, Thailand's minister in Washington, regards Thailand's declaration of war against the US as illegal and begins to organize the Free Thai (Seri Thai) movement in co-operation with the American Office of Strategic Services.
- 2 February 1942** Japanese forces invade Java.
- 7 February 1942** Britain accepts the assistance in Burma of the Chinese Expeditionary Force of China's National Revolutionary Army.
- 9 February 1942** Japanese Fifteenth Army is ordered to seize strategic places in Burma and soon occupies Moulmein.
- 15 February 1942** British surrender Singapore to Japanese forces.
- 18 February 1942** First Japanese air raid on Mandalay.
- 22 February 1942** General Douglas MacArthur leaves the Philippines.
- 27 February 1942–1 March 1942** Combined British, Dutch and American fleet is destroyed, opening the way for Japan to control the Indonesian archipelago. The Japanese navy is victorious in the Battle of the Java Sea.
- 28 February 1942** Japanese forces land on Java.
- 5 March 1942** Jakarta (Batavia) falls to the Japanese.
- 7 March 1942** Fall of Bandung, Java.
- 8 March 1942** Japanese troops occupy Rangoon; Japanese land in New Guinea.

- 12 March 1942** Japanese Southern Regions General Army prepares a plan to build one million tons of wooden ships in occupied territories.
- 15 March 1942** Chinese Expeditionary Force under General Wei Lihuang enters Burma.
- 23 March 1942** Japan occupies the Andaman Islands, about 250 miles southwest of Rangoon and a similar distance from the entrance to the Straits of Malacca.
- 24 March 1942** General MacArthur arrives in Australia.
- 5 April 1942** Japanese attack Colombo.
- 9 April 1942** Japanese attack Trincomalee in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- 10 April 1942** Beginning of the Bataan Death March in Philippines. After surrendering to the Japanese, some 11,000 Allied soldiers die during a 65-mile forced march.
- 18 April 1942** United States Doolittle bombing raid on Tokyo has an important psychological impact on Japan.
- 29 April 1942–1 May 1942** Lashio and Mandalay in Burma fall to Japanese forces.
- 5–8 May 1942** Battle of the Coral Sea. For the Japanese navy, the battle is a reversal but not a disaster.
- 6–8 May 1942** Allied forces surrender at fortresses of Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor in the Philippines.
- 20 May 1942** Allied forces complete withdrawal from Burma.
- 26 May 1942** Japanese begin planting of castor beans in Java to use as aviation fuel.
- 4–6 June 1942** Naval Battle of Midway during which Japan loses four carriers and the United States one. Midway is a decisive battle of the Pacific War because it ends Japanese supremacy on the high seas. The battles of the Coral Sea (May 1942) and Midway (June 1942) can be regarded as ‘turning points’ in the Pacific War. After these battles, Japan might have been ready to compromise for peace, but this was frustrated by Japanese Prime Minister Tōjō packing the Diet.
- 9 June 1942** Japan abandons its attempt to occupy Midway.
- 9 July 1942** Sukarno arrives back in Java from Sumatra, where he had been in exile since 1938.
- 21 July 1942** Burma Independence Army disbanded by the Japanese.
- 1 August 1942** Burma Executive Administration (Ba Maw government) installed.
- 7 August 1942–9 February 1943** Solomons and New Guinea campaigns. US Marines land on the island of Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942. Five months of bitter fighting between US and Australian forces and Japanese troops follow.
- 26 August 1942** Japan inaugurates the Burma Defence Army, the remnants of the disbanded Burma Independence Army.

- November 1942** The Japanese government creates the Greater East Asia Ministry. Its purposes are: (1) to unify economic policies regarding labour, capital, transport, trade and natural resources; and (2) to protect and supervise Japanese interests. The Ministry's headquarters are in Tokyo and its chief Kazuo Aoki.
- 12–15 November 1942** Japanese are badly defeated in the naval Battle of Guadalcanal.
- 8 December 1942** Batavia officially renamed Jakarta.
- 30 December 1942** Mitani–Laval agreement signed in Vichy, France between Japanese ambassador Mitani and Premier Laval, binding Indochina to Japan's economic sphere.
- 31 December 1942** Five-year plan for cotton cultivation in Java announced.
- January 1943** Japan withdraws from Guadalcanal, marking an end to the threat of a Japanese invasion of Australia. After Japan's retreat from Guadalcanal, its military position in Asia crumbles rapidly.
- 1 January 1943** Japanese diplomatic mission in Indochina is put under Japan's East Asia Ministry.
- 11 January 1943** Chinese nationalists form an official alliance with the United Kingdom.
- 22 January 1943** Prime Minister Tōjō announces in the Diet independence for Burma within a year and that the Philippines will also be granted independence.
- 28 January 1943** Prime Minister Tōjō announces the intention to re-organize Burma as an independent state.
- 31 January 1943** Japanese and Thai forces attack Yunnan in China, occupying several border towns.
- 7 February 1943** The last Japanese forces withdraw from Guadalcanal.
- 22 February 1943** Japan occupies Guangzhou Bay in China, having persuaded France to withdraw.
- March 1943** Founding of the Southern Regions Development Bank, which will operate in Southeast Asia.
- 1 April 1943** Forced delivery of rice to the Japanese authorities begins in Java.
- 18 April 1943** Admiral Yamamoto, Japan's most brilliant military strategist and the architect of Pearl Harbor, is killed when his plane is shot down by American P-38 fighter planes.
- 20 April 1943** Japan's military administration of Sumatra separated from Malaya and placed under the 25th Army.
- May 1943** Subhas Chandra Bose reaches Tokyo, and then, by June 1943, Sumatra from exile in Germany.
- 8 May 1943** Japan organizes an Independence Preparatory Committee to consider independence for Burma.
- 13 May 1943** The Allies begin to plan for the re-conquest of Burma.
- 11–30 May 1943** Japan defeated in the Battle of Attu, an island off the coast of Alaska in the Aleutians. The strategic location of Attu and the nearby island

of Kiska give control of the sea lanes across the northern Pacific and are regarded by Japan as important because their occupation will prevent possible United States attacks from Alaska. The loss of Attu and Kiska, after fierce fighting in Arctic conditions, signals to Tokyo the need to begin massive build-ups in the occupied areas and to try to secure strong co-operation from local populations.

- 29 May 1943** The Japanese government accepts main principles for economic measures in the Southern Areas which stress that local manufacturing and food production should be increased to attain local self-sufficiency.
- 31 May 1943** Imperial Conference resolves to conclude a revised treaty of alliance with China; to grant Thailand border regions it had claimed in return for economic privileges; to implement a previous decision to grant Burma independence; to move towards independence for the Philippines; and to permit greater participation in political affairs for the peoples of Malaya, Sumatra, Borneo and Java.
- 1 June 1943** The United States begins submarine warfare against Japanese shipping.
- 17 June 1943** Prime Minister Tōjō refers to prospective independence for Burma and the Philippines in a speech to the Diet.
- 4 July 1943** Prime Minister Tōjō announces that the Shan states of Kengtung and Möng Pang in Burma are to be given to Thailand.
- 5 July 1943** Japan announces decision to transfer the Malayan states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand.
- 1 August 1943** Burma Declaration of Independence, written by the Japanese, is issued. Prime Minister Ba Maw declares war on Britain and the United States.
- 16 September 1943** Burma Defence Army renamed (under Japanese direction) the Burma National Army.
- 23 September 1943** proclaimed 'National Service Day' in Burma in preparation for the first week of formal celebration of Burma's independence.
- 3 October 1943** Japanese establish Peta (*Pembela Tanah Air*, Defenders of the Homeland) as a volunteer army in Indonesia comprised of Indonesians.
- 9 October 1943** First cotton harvesting ceremony held in Surakarta, Indonesia. The Japanese are anxious to increase cotton production for the manufacture of textiles.
- 14 October 1943** Declaration of Philippine independence and the beginning of the government of José P. Laurel. Pact of Alliance signed between the Philippine Republic and Japan.
- 17 October 1943** Thailand–Burma railway completed. Preparations for construction had begun in June 1942 and actual construction started in November 1942.

- 18 October 1943** Japan transfers the Malayan states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand.
- 25 October 1943** Thailand–Burma railway opening ceremony.
- 5 November 1943** Assembly of Greater East Asian Nations takes place in Tokyo. The Assembly is attended by President José P. Laurel from the Philippines and Prime Minister Ba Maw from Burma, but not Thailand's Prime Minister Phibun.
- 15 November 1943** General Louis Mountbatten takes charge of the South-East Asia Command.
- December 1943** General Gōtarō Ogawa, formerly professor of economics at Tokyo's Imperial University and prominent member of the Diet, is sent to Burma as 'supreme economic advisor' with the brief that individual provinces in Burma should become self-sufficient. Ogawa remains in Burma until March 1944.
- 1–3 December 1943** Second Cairo Conference, at which Churchill and Roosevelt agree on scaling down operations in Southeast Asia and reducing naval and air assistance. Roosevelt and Churchill decide that landings in Europe prevent deployment of amphibious forces in Southeast Asia; Roosevelt informs Chiang Kai-shek, who was not present at the conference.
- 8 December 1943** Formation of Malay Defence Army and Corps after Japan announces its decision to form an army comprised of residents of Malaya.
- 27 December 1943** The Japanese formulate a plan to make Indonesia self-sufficient in paper.
- 1 January 1944** The Supreme Allied Commander issues a proclamation assuming responsibility for all of Burma.
- 11 January 1944** Burma State Bank opens, though the Japanese delay the issue of currency by the bank.
- 4 February 1944** Beginning of Japanese Arakan offensive, *Ha-Go*, in Burma.
- Mid-February 1944** The United States mounts the largest carrier-launched air armada in history and blasts Japan's strategic Caroline Islands base at Truk, sinking from 19 to 26 ships and destroying an estimated 201 aeroplanes.
- 21 February 1944** Prime Minister Tōjō becomes army chief of staff.
- March–April 1944** Allied counter-offensive triggers an all-out Japanese effort to fortify defences in Malaya.
- March–July 1944** The Imphal–Kohima battle costs 30,000 Japanese dead and 20,000 wounded.
- 15 March 1944** Beginning of Japanese Imphal offensive, *U-Go*, in Burma. Imphal is the main Burma offensive.
- 1 April 1944** Bayah railway opens to transport coal from a mine in eastern Java.
- 24 May 1944** Japan begins construction in Indonesia of the central Sumatra (Pekanbara) railway, using 2,000 prisoners of war and 6,000 *romusha*.

- June 1944** Report on ‘The Present State of Material Power’ is submitted to Japan’s Supreme War Council, showing that Japan cannot carry on the war beyond the autumn.
- June 1944** Setbacks for Japan beginning June 1944 include defeats in battles of the Marianas and the failure of the Imphal campaign in Burma.
- 15 June–10 July 1944** Battles of the Philippine Sea and Saipan greatly reduce Japanese air and sea power.
- 15 June 1944** Americans invade Saipan, one of the largest islands in the Marianas. American strategic air offensive against Japan begins from China. United States B-25 bombers use China bases to attack Japan.
- July 1944** The Phibun government in Thailand is toppled by the National Assembly.
- 3 July 1944** Japanese forces, after suffering heavy losses, abandon any attempt to win the Battle of Imphal in India, marking a turning point in the Burma campaign.
- 8 July 1944** Saipan falls to United States forces and US operations against Guam begin. Japanese Prime Minister Tōjō had boasted that Saipan was ‘impregnable’. Its loss causes the collapse of Tōjō’s government. Saipan was at the very centre of the maritime defence ring around Japan. Its capture makes sea traffic between Japan and Southeast Asia almost impossible and allows US bombers easy access to Japan.
- 18 July 1944** General Tōjō falls from power as Japanese Prime Minister.
- 21 July 1944** United States forces invade Guam.
- 26 July 1944** Thailand’s Prime Minister Phibun is ousted, partly because he would be unacceptable to the Allies and because it becomes obvious that Japan is losing the war. Phibun is replaced by Khuang Aphaiwong, who holds office until the defeat of Japan.
- 7 September 1944** Japan gives a public promise of eventual independence for Indonesia.
- 21 September 1944** President José P. Laurel invokes martial law in the Philippines.
- 23 September 1944** The Philippine Republic declares war on the United States and United Kingdom.
- 24 September 1944** The Allies bomb Jakarta.
- October 1944** United States task force sweeps against the Ryukyus, a chain of Japanese islands, bringing Japanese economic lifelines under naval air attack for the first time.
- 18 October 1944** The United States’ Philippine Campaign starts. The campaign makes the invasion of Indochina seem likely.
- 20 October 1944** United States forces land on Leyte in the Philippines.
- 23–26 October 1944** Battle of Leyte Gulf. After this battle Japan can no longer maintain open communications with Indonesia. The Battle of Leyte Gulf is,

overall, the largest naval engagement in history. Japanese kamikaze attacks begin.

**November 1944** United States B-29 bombers begin air raids on Singapore.

**24 November 1944** United States air raids on Japan's home islands from the Mariana Islands begin. By August 1945, 27,059 planes have dropped 155,253 tons of bombs on Japan.

**December 1944** In Burma the final Arakan offensive and Operation *Extended Capital* begins.

**December 1944** Communications between Japan and Southeast Asia are virtually severed.

**7 December 1944** Japanese Prime Minister Koiso Kuniaki declares that in the foreseeable future Indonesia will be granted independence.

**January 1945** Japan makes a policy decision to take control of Indochina. By now, a United States invasion of Indochina is anticipated.

**4 January 1945** British forces occupy Akyab, Burma.

**9 January 1945** United States forces land on Luzon.

**11–12 January 1945** Large-scale United States bombing of Indochina takes place.

**17 January–August 1945** United States Air Force fire-bombing of Japanese cities causes mass destruction and high death tolls.

**February 1945** Oil imports to Japan cease entirely by the end of February.

**3 February 1945** United States forces launch an attack on Manila.

**19 February 1945** 30,000 US Marines storm the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima, beginning one of World War II's bloodiest battles.

**4 March 1945** Resistance of Japanese forces in Manila ends after street by street fighting. Between 3 February and the re-taking of Manila, 100,000 Filipino civilians die during the 'Massacre of Manila'. Close to 200,000 Japanese die during the battle for the Philippines.

**7 March 1945** The Chinese Expeditionary Force takes Lashio, Burma. Chinese forces retake Liucheng, Guangxi Province.

**9 March 1945** Japanese coup against French colonial administration in Indochina. The coup is followed by the setting up of the Japanese-sponsored Bao Dai (Emperor of Annam) government, which consists of Vietnamese nationalists.

**9 March 1945** The United States starts incendiary bomb attacks on Japanese cities. Tokyo is devastated by incendiaries during the night. A massive Allied bombing campaign begins which causes the wholesale destruction of Japanese cities.

**10 March 1945** American forces land on Mindanao in the Philippines.

**20 March 1945** The British Indian Army takes Mandalay.

**24 March 1945** Provisional government of General Charles de Gaulle announces it intends to form an 'Indochina Federation' within a 'French Union' with metropolitan hegemony over foreign affairs and defence. The

French Constituent Assembly is to determine participation in the Union, and the Governor-General to arbitrate between different parts of the Federation.

- 26 March 1945** Iwo Jima is declared secure by the United States after battle with Japanese forces beginning 19 February.
- 27 March 1945** Burma National Army rises against Japanese occupying forces. This day becomes Burma's 'Armed Forces Day'.
- 28 March 1945** Burmese rebellion against their former Japanese allies starts.
- 1 April 1945** Massive assault by United States forces on Okinawa begins.
- 17 April 1945** New Vietnamese nationalist government formed under Tran Trong Kim.
- 23 April 1945** Japanese withdraw from Rangoon.
- 3 May 1945** British troops capture Rangoon.
- 8 May 1945** Victory in Europe after the German surrender, allowing the transfer of Allied troops to the Pacific theatre.
- 28 June 1945** General MacArthur announces victory in the Philippines.
- 26 July 1945** At the Potsdam Conference, the Allies decide to divide Vietnam at the 16th parallel and allow Chiang Kai-shek to receive the Japanese surrender in the north, opening the way for the post-war stationing there of 200,000 Chinese Nationalist troops.
- 30 July 1945** Japanese government instructs its civilian population to collect acorns to stave off starvation.
- 6 August 1945** A five-ton uranium bomb, 'Little Boy', is dropped on Hiroshima.
- 8 August 1945** The Soviet Union declares war on Japan. Massive Soviet attack against Japan is launched across the frontier into Manchuria.
- 9 August 1945** The United States drops a plutonium bomb, 'Fat Boy', on Nagasaki.
- 13–14 August 1945** The United States Air Force fire-bombs Tokyo.
- 15 August 1945** Japan accepts the Potsdam Declaration. Emperor Hirohito announces the Japanese forces' unconditional surrender. The central Sumatra railway, begun in 1944 and which crosses central Sumatra, is completed.
- 15 August 1945** Responsibility for Indonesia is transferred from General MacArthur's HQ to General Mountbatten. He can do no more than order the Japanese 16th and 25th Armies to maintain law and order for the time being.
- 16 August 1945** Thailand's National Assembly declares null and void the declaration of war on Britain and the United States.
- 17 August 1945** Sukarno and Hatta proclaim Indonesian independence. José P. Laurel, now in Japan, issues a proclamation declaring the dissolution of his government.
- 18 August 1945** Subhas Chandra Bose killed in a plane crash in Taiwan.
- 18–19 August 1945** During the night, the Viet Minh take control of Hanoi.