

Section H—Social Sciences

ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN,
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THE CONTACT OF PEOPLES

Abstract:

THE comprehensive subject of contact of peoples is briefly reviewed to provide a framework of reference for an analysis and discussion of Japan under military occupation as recently observed. The occupying of countries defeated in war is in itself nothing new in the world's history, but what is new is the avowed purpose of using the occupation—to take the case of Japan—to seek to change deliberately features of the political, economic, religious, and social life of the people as well as some of their mental attitudes.

Occupation policy in Japan is based on the Potsdam Declaration. There is no direct military government as in Germany, the method being that of indirect rule through Japanese representatives and officials. To these, directives are issued by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Many of the important early directives have now been incorporated in the new Constitution. To attempt to judge the likelihood of occupation policy and the means adapted to put it into effect achieving the results aimed at, one must know something of the Japanese character. It would be difficult to imagine a society with a more elaborate code of conventional behaviour than that of Japan, or people with a more highly distinctive and complex personality structure than that of the Japanese, or one that contrasts more with that of the "democratic" countries. During the war in the Pacific the Japanese character was analysed by specialists, and the experience of the occupying troops and observation show the analysis to have been substantially correct.

Rigid early training, the differential training of girls and boys, the use of mockery to produce conformity, leading to fear of loss of "face," are important factors in producing the Japanese character. Elaborate politeness is used to mask actual feelings. The individual is always regarded as representing the group, from the family outwards, and values are group values. Changes made in Japanese education could, if continued, produce some alteration in the Japanese character. Up to the present, so far as can be judged, there has been much outward conformity, but little inner change, on the part of the Japanese. This might have been predicted on general principles. From the military point of view, the occupation has been completely successful and the Japanese have reacted to it with apparent co-operation. The bulk of the Japanese population has been almost wholly indifferent to the occupation, being concerned with problems of bare existence such as food, shelter, and clothing. More than once in the past the Japanese have shown their capacity for making surface adjustments to foreign influences. Ultimately, occupation policy and the pressing of changes depends on world politics.