

# Tanaka Memorial

## A blueprint of world conquest?

Compiled by the CAF Staff

**T**he **Tanaka Memorial** is an alleged Japanese strategic planning document from 1927, in which Prime Minister Baron Tanaka Giichi laid out for the Emperor Hirohito a strategy to take over the world. Its authenticity has been questioned by some people.

The origin of the Memorial is still in question, because the initial edition of the Memorial was in Chinese and the original document was not found.

### Background

The *Tanaka Memorial* was first published in the December 1929 edition of the Chinese publication “Current Affairs Monthly” in Nanking, a Nationalist Chinese publication. The Memorial contains the assertions:

*In order to take over the world, you need to take over China;*

*In order to take over China, you need to take over Manchuria and Mongolia.*

*If we succeed in conquering China, the rest of the Asiatic countries and the South Sea countries will fear us and surrender to us.*

*Then the world will realize that Eastern Asia is ours.*

The *Tanaka Memorial* was depicted extensively by the United States during wartime as a sort of Japanese counterpart of *Mein Kampf*.

Frank Capra’s Academy Award-winning movie series *Why We Fight*, the installments, *The Battle of China* and *Prelude to War* described the *Tanaka Memorial* as the document that was Japan’s plan for war with the United States.

As presented in these movie series, the five sequential steps to achieve Japan’s goal of conquests are:

1. Conquest of Manchuria
2. Conquest of China
3. Conquest of the Soviet Union
4. Establishment of bases in the Pacific



### 5. Conquest of the United States

The *Tanaka Memorial* was widely accepted as authentic in the 1930s and 40s because Japan’s actions corresponded so closely to these plans published in the 1920’s. The 1931 Mukden Incident, 1937 Second Sino-Japanese War, 1939 Battles of Khalkhin Gol, 1940 Japanese invasion of French Indochina, and the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent Pacific War seemed to confirm this suspicion.

In 1940 Leon Trotsky published an account of how the document allegedly came to light. Soviet intelligence had obtained the document from a high-placed mole in Tokyo, but did not want to compromise their own security by publishing it openly, so had leaked it through contacts they had in the USA.

Another vision was stated in a book on President Chiang Kai-Shek’s memoir. It described how a rich, well-connected Taiwan merchant in Tokyo, Mr. Tsai Chih-Kan, who managed to be smuggled into the palace and spent two nights to hand-copy this important document. The *Tanaka Memorial* was later published in Nanking. Mr. Tsai gave detail accounts of the event in his interviews after he returned to Taiwan when the war ended.