

U.S.S.B.S.
Morale

Interview with SASAKI, Katsumi, Lt. Col., attached to the Public Relations Section of the Board of Information.

SUBJECT: Control of Morale in Japan.
TIME: 1330 - 1600, December 22, 1945
PLACE: Meiji Building
INTERVIEWER: Capt. Wm. Magistretti
INTERPRETER: None

BACKGROUND:

Sasaki became an artillery Second Lt. in October, 1925. In December of the following year attended Artillery and Engineering School, graduating in December two years later, to go to Utsunomiya Rental as a first lieutenant. In 1933 he attended War College as a first Lt., graduating three years later as a Captain and returning to the same regiment. The following year he became an instructor at Japan's West Point. Two years later, as a Major, he went to the Heimu Ryoku of the Army Ministry, the Heibi Ka, in a job connected with conscription. In April 1941 he proceeded to the Soviet Union, where he was a resident student studying Soviet General Mobilization. He had studied Russian from Preparatory School on. In August of the following year he became assistant attache and a Lt. Col. In July 1942 he returned to Japan to become a member of the Public Relations Section of Imperial HQ. From this time until August 1943 he did nothing much but study, subsequently becoming officer in charge of newspapers until September 1944. Then he became a member of the Public Relations Section of the Board of Information.

INTERVIEW: M - Capt. Magistretti, S - Sasaki

- M - Where was the highest propaganda policy determined?
over-
- S - The highest ~~of~~ all policy during the war was decided in the Inner Cabinet (Sense Saiko Shido Kaigi). These policies were then referred to the Cabinet and then to the Board of Information. However, in actuality, most of the policies were decided on the lower levels. For instance, with reference to the first bombing of Tokyo, there was quite a problem as to how it should be handled and how to avert anti-war feeling. We could not wait for the Inner Cabinet to take action, and so the Deliberative Chamber of the Board of Information set up a policy which was referred to the Cabinet and then acted upon.
- M - Where were the smaller matters of policy decided?
- S - They were decided by the Deliberative Chamber of the Board of Information, which put them into action. An example of this is the policy to stimulate the production of potatoes.
- M - Can you give me an example of policy laid down by the Inner Cabinet?
- S - The Inner Cabinet set up the "Nihon Sense Shido no Yoryu" (Essentials for Leading the War in Japan). There was a section in this concerning propaganda, but it was a very abstract section. For instance, to greatly increase the animosity toward the enemy and to decrease feelings hating war. In actuality, there was no person in the Inner Cabinet competent to handle propaganda matters and so they did not feel that they were very necessary.

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M - What about decisions in the Cabinet?

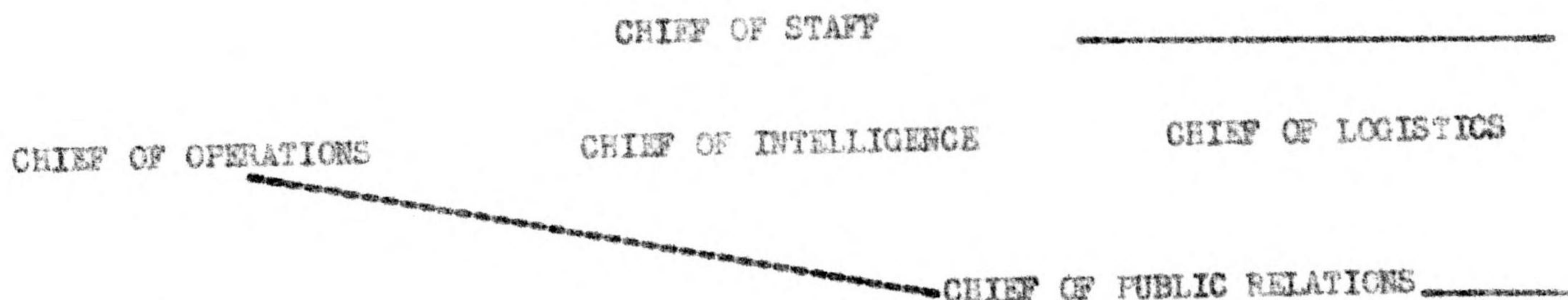
S - The government assumed responsibility for public opinion leadership. They handled such problems as the food problem, inflation, etc.

M - What about policy regarding military operations?

S - They were usually handled in the Deliberative Chamber of the Board of Information, where the Army and Navy Public Relations officers were represented. The opinions of the Army Chief of Staff and Naval Operations were represented in the Deliberative Chamber of the Board of Information through the Army and Navy Public Relations Officers. The Public Relations Office would take a proposal of the Deliberative Chamber to the G-1 or the G-3 and would have him make corrections in it. The Public Relations Officer would decide the smaller matters himself. I had great admiration for the fastness of American propaganda. The people hated Japanese Imperial HQ propaganda because it was so late. American news had a great advantage because it would reach the neutrals faster, and in some instances, reach Japan faster. For instance, in the case of the air raids, GHQ and the newspapers could do nothing for two days while decisions were being made in higher quarters. In the staff, matters of propaganda were usually given later consideration, since the matters of actual military operations were more pressing.

M - Can you tell me about the propaganda set up in Imperial HQ?

S - The planning was done by Maj. Gen Arise, who was in charge of the Second Section, and the actual carrying out of policy was done by the Public Relations Officer of Imperial HQ. The following diagram will show how the Public Relations Office was at a disadvantage:



Whereas in actuality the Public Relations Office was under the Chief of Staff, he was on a lower level than the three sections shown above. He could not take action himself, but constantly had to refer his materials to the Chief of Operations. The Chief of Operations would frequently hold up approval for a day or more. For instance, in the case of the first Doolittle raid of April 8th, there was a considerable amount of uproar as a result. However, the newspapers could take no action in regard to it until Imperial HQ had made an announcement. It should be noted that regulations were such that newspapers and other public organs could only publish to the extent of Imperial HQ announcements. For instance, if Imperial HQ said that many incendiary bombs were dropped on Tokyo that is all the newspapers could say. They could not say that incendiary bombs had been dropped and a large number of houses had been burned. They were strictly limited to the extent of the Imperial HQ announcement. Because of this and the lateness of Imperial HQ announcements, there was much confusion of public opinion and public feeling after the raids. For instance, the first Yawata raid wasn't bad as far as actual damage went,

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but Imperial HQ announcement was rather late and so the rumor spread that the whole plant had been destroyed, since the Japanese people knew that the Yawata plant was the most important iron and steel plant in Japan they knew it would have a terrific effect on Japanese economy. As a result of this, the regulation came into effect that local announcements could be made for purposes of local peace preservation.

- M - Can you give me an example in which the Public Relations Officer would refer a matter to the Chief of Operations?
- S - He would ask him how to handle matters concerning military operations, as, for instance, how to treat the American landing at Leyte.
- M - What about matters referred to the Chief of Intelligence?
- T - Matters such as the air raids, which might concern intelligence of benefit to the enemy would be referred to him.
- M - Were any matters referred to the Chief of Staff?
- T - I only remember two instances which were referred to the Chief of Staff. These concerned Attu and Saipan. On May 12 the U.S. forces landed at Attu and the Japanese Government got its last wire from the officer in charge on May 29, so the question came up as to what announcement to make to the Japanese people, and when the official ending of the war was. For instance, we know that fighting still continued after that date, because of American broadcasts to that effect. This was also the case at Saipan.
- M - What about the problem of Prisoners of War?
- S - We took the policy of not touching on them at all, since the Japanese families would have felt very much disgraced if it became known that their sons or husbands were prisoners of war.
- M - What about friction between the Army and the Navy Public Relations Section?
- S - In the earlier stages of war there was no particular friction, since the Army and Navy operations were separated. For instance, Midway was a naval operation and the operations in China and Java were Army Operations. However, at about the time of the Solomons battle there came to be combined operations, with the result that the objectives of both services did not meet eye-to-eye. For instance, there were Army planes under Navy control, etc.
- M - What about control of the press and public opinion?
- S - Under the 27th Section of the Newspaper Law the Army and Navy and Foreign Minister have the right to prohibit or limit the printing of matters relative to military and diplomatic matters. However, the major part of these controls were exercised by the Home Ministry - only military matters were covered by this. At the time of the China Incident in July 1937 an Army Ministry Order was issued to the effect that the newspapers were not to print matters concerning activities of the military, military secrets or military plans. However, those receiving prior approval of the Army Ministry or the Navy Ministry could be printed in the newspapers. In order to handle this, an Army censorship officer was set up in Imperial HQ and passed upon material regarding military activities.

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In the event that the Army did not want a certain matter printed, they normally would approach the Home Ministry with this request and if the Home Ministry agreed they would prohibit the publishing of the item. An example of this was an order of last year in which the locality of factories was no longer to be published, but just numbers assigned as in the case of the Soviet Union. Another example was the Army request that the Home Ministry lift its limitation on the number of homes damaged as a result of the air raids, as these facts were already pretty well known.

M - What about the Military Police?

S - The Military Police had jurisdiction over the preservation of military secrets. In this case, censorship by Military Police was also necessary. Most of the newspapermen were punished under the Army Ministry order, or they were referred to the Police Affairs Bureau of the Home Ministry or the Board of Information, with the request that they be punished. They could cause the newspapers to suspend publication for a couple of days or prohibit their reporters access to press conferences, so that this was quite a threat over large newspapers. The large newspapers could use Domei coverage, but they hated to do this. There were a few instances in which newspapermen just came in and apologized and this was rather galling for them as high-class newspapermen. We had quite a few incidents, but the great majority of them were unwitting errors due to the pressure of publishing against a deadline. Sometimes there was voluntary establishment of a publishing deadline at the request of the newspapermen themselves because there was only one evening newspaper and several morning papers.

M - Can you give me a summary of changes in Japanese public opinion during the war, beginning just prior to the war?

S - Prior to the war the people were in a deep fog, like the monsoon period in Japan. With the coming of war everything cleared up and they said: "Well, let's get on with it". During the summer of 1942 everybody was optimistic and we had to warn the people not to become drunk with their successes. About the time of Guadalcanal we emphasized that the people should not forget the effects of the great earthquake in 1923 in order to quell this optimism of the people. In October, with the Guadalcanal and Solomon news, people began to get uneasy. Tojo told the people that everything was all right in the Diet. In February of 1943 people's unrest got deeper with the announcement of our withdrawal from Guadalcanal. The people wanted to know why they had begun to get defeated. We then emphasized the necessity for making more planes. In May of 1943 came the defeat at Attu and a great shock to the Japanese people. The result was that they felt that they should get revenge, but with Kwajalein defeatism began to come about. People felt that they couldn't work and also somewhat of a feeling of giving up. Toward the end of 1944 people began to hate war and at the beginning of 1945 we began to emphasize the battle of the homeland and began to give them various reasons why we could hold out there. Then, in the spring of this year the terrible air raids began. There was also the defeats at Iwo, Saipan and in Burma. These were not such a great shock to the Japanese people, but the bombing was. People were very upset over the raids. There were great problems with regard to public opinion. People were talking first about the air raids and second about food. They did not talk about anything else. They even forgot their love life.

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M - Would you write me a report with reference to the effect of the bombing on public opinion and the measures you took against it?

S - Yes, I will, When shall I bring it to you.

M - Let us have another meeting at 1400 on the afternoon of the 26th. What was Japan's greatest strength?

S - I think both our greatest strength and greatest weakness was that the people had no knowledge of the outer world. They simply followed along like sheep, listening to what their leaders told them. In this respect, they were something like the Soviets. They were an extremely good people to have. Those who knew anything were constrained by the Military Police.

Mr. Sasaki then stated that he wanted to tell me off the record that the biggest problem the Japanese had during the war was the arousing of animosity toward America in the hearts of the Japanese people. By and large the Japanese people had always respected America and American culture since the opening of the country. Therefore, it was most difficult to arouse any animosity ~~at~~ at all at the opening of the war. He cited the way in which Americans were so openly and warm-heartedly greeted upon occupying Japan as an instance of lack of animosity on the part of the people during the war.

IMPRESSION

Mr. Sasaki seemed to talk very openly and very freely. He seemed to be fairly well versed in the public opinion structure of Japan. He gave the impression of being somewhat eccentric and this may have been the reason why he was not used in a position of considerable importance upon his return from the Soviet Union. His post in the Soviet Union would normally ~~lead~~ lead to a position of some importance in the General Staff upon his return to Japan.