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HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO (USSBS NO 429)
(NAV NO 90)

Place: Tokyo
Date: 8 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: Observations on Japan at War

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo, IJN; former Ambassador to the UNITED STATES (1941), appointed member of the Privy Council, 26 May 1944.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building

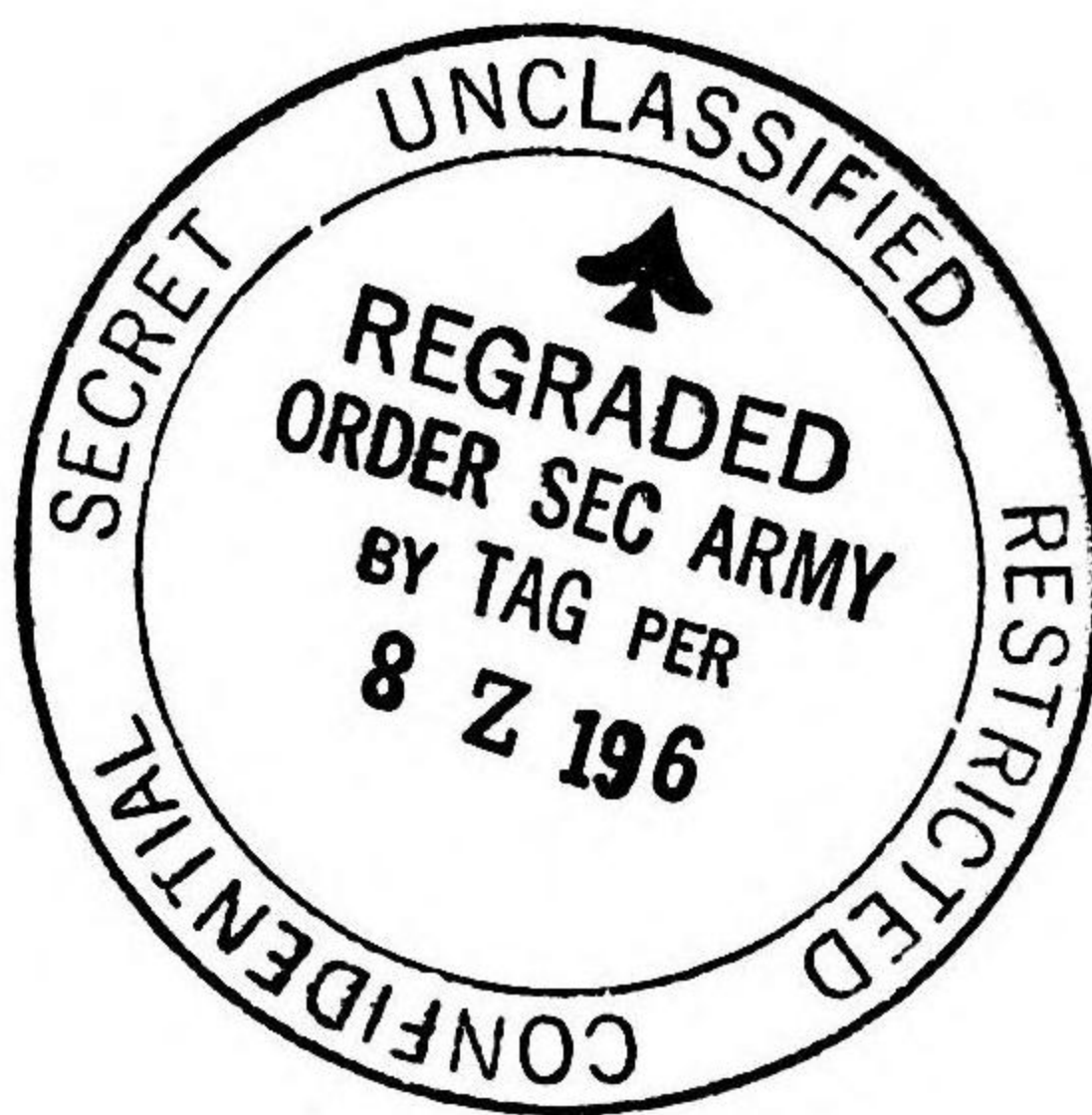
Interrogator: Rear Admiral R.A. Ofstie, Mr. Paul Bañan, Lt. Commander C.N. Spinks

Interpreter: None

Allied Personnel Present: Mr. Paul Nitze
Captain T.H. Hedding, USN

SUMMARY

Admiral NOMURA discusses the background of the war, the situation within JAPAN at various times, and the peace efforts.



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TRANSCRIPT

Rear Admiral Ofstie.

Q. Please outline your official status and activities from time of return to JAPAN until the close of the war.

A. Upon my arrival at SINGAPORE, on my way home to JAPAN, I submitted my resignation but it was not confirmed for two or three months. I was at that time an Ambassador at Large, which position I kept until about the end of that year. As I had no official position, I did not go to the Foreign Office. This year I was appointed to the Privy Council upon the recommendation of Admiral SUZUKI who was President or Vice President of the Council. During this period I traveled quite a bit about the country, and I observed that the people did not know the true situation.

Q. Were you fairly familiar yourself with what talk was going on in General Headquarters; did you discuss it with your friends in the Government?

A. I knew in general what talk was going on, but when I speak with our generals they did not seem to know much of the situation although I spoke frankly with them. As the situation wasn't going well, it was rather embarrassing for them. Since joining the Privy Council, I heard discussions by Army and Navy officers and they must have been more frank in these discussions than they were to newspaper men; and, also since I was at one time a professional naval officer, I was able to grasp the situation from their talks a little better than the average person. Of course, they were reluctant to discuss the situation publicly and wished chiefly to maintain the morale of the people. They seemed to think that if we stood fast the people in the UNITED STATES might by and by weary of the war.

Q. And make a compromise peace?

A. I, myself, wished that. From the beginning I did not think the Japanese could win this war because your country is so vast and your resources so very great. I had little confidence in the outcome, and also during my duty as naval attache I studied your country and militarily it is strongly situated and impregnable.

Q. Was there any effort by people like yourself or official people to start a compromise peace earlier?

A. There were many intelligent people who believed that the longer the war lasted the worse it would be for Japan, and I think there must have been many who wished it to end much earlier. However, in the mind of the people an early termination of the war seemed impossible and the thought was that the people must be kept together.

Q. How early do you suppose that feeling developed; was it 1943 - 1944, after some particular operation?

A. The results of the Battle of Midway were concealed from the people, I left New York just after this battle, so that I knew what had happened from reading the New York papers, but the people at home did not know at all. Later on when SAIPAN was lost I thought it was very bad for JAPAN.

Q. Then, of course, you were in the Privy Council; did you discuss that matter in the Privy Council?

A. The Council was very ignorant about the war situation. There were three Navy men and two Army men on the Privy Council, and since the Army men on the Council were always thinking of ground operations they could not grasp the ocean strategy. I was later told that the late President of the Council who died a year ago was very disappointed and, therefore, he died quickly. When I was appointed to the Privy Council he was President and I approached him and told him the real situation.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, IJN)

When I told him very frankly what was going on he was rather surprised.

Q. Do you feel that all through the war there was the same think, the Army people did not understand the sea and the problems of the Navy?

A. There must have been an exchange of information and talk between the Army General Staff and the Navy General Staff and they must have realized the true situation.

Q. Did the Privy Council really decide what to do?

A. No, the Privy Council was very impotent. Whenever a bill proposed by the government and sanctioned by the EMPEROR was presented to the Privy Council, it was assumed to be all right and in most cases we agreed.

Q. You interfered not at all with military affairs?

A. That is not done in the Japanese political system. The EMPEROR is Commander in Chief and he has as his Staff, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Navy and their Staff Officers, who are quite independent of the Government and, further, they do not allow outside interference. This I think is a question for careful study as to whether or not it is a proper system.

Q. Did you say this war in the PACIFIC was primarily Army or Navy?

A. I don't know for sure, but it has been said that the Navy went too far at the beginning and that the Army did not like to follow the Navy.

Q. When the first basic plan was set, don't you believe the Army and Navy were together on that?

A. They must have agreed willingly or reluctantly, I do not know; but the Army perhaps did not think so well of it and it must have been difficult for them to agree to some of the plans initiated by the Navy. For instance, BOUGAINVILLE in the SOLOMONS, it was said that the Army did not like to go so far.

Q. Was their interest mostly in MANCHURIA and CHINA?

A. The Army was thinking mostly about the Continent.

Q. Do you think because of that attitude they obstructed the work of the Navy in the PACIFIC?

A. At the last, they must have agreed on what was done.

Q. That is, the General Staff had to be in agreement before any move would be made; for example, the expansion of the original plan to go up into the ALEUTIANS, and MIDWAY?

A. Yes, they must have agreed because according to our system they could not act individually. Therefore, in spite of difficulties, they must have agreed before any operations were undertaken. Before I left for the UNITED STATES I discussed the possible war with naval officers. The younger people were not sure in their own minds, but the older officers did not wish war with the UNITED STATES at all; and, therefore, they wished that my mission would be successful, I believe that all of the older officers I met with wished my mission success.

Q. How did you feel about the MANCHURIA and KWANTUNG Army people; did they want war?

A. They perhaps under-estimated the speed of your reactions. They did not consider that when we occupied our outposts and established garrisons that the UNITED STATES would react as quickly as actually happened. Some people believed that your advance towards JAPAN would be very slow.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

However, I myself agreed to this, I did not think your force would be mobilized so quickly and on so big a scale. Although the people to whom I talked upon my return thought that I always overestimated the potentialities of the UNITED STATES, now I feel that I myself underestimated.

- Q. Was that with particular reference to the Navy, or our movement of troops, our Amphibious Forces or what?
- A. In every respect. During the last war I was in your country and was permitted to visit ship-building yards, and I saw with my own eyes what you were doing there. My people think that I overestimated the strength of the UNITED STATES, not only in speed but quantity too. My people thought that in the first war you only accomplished about 80% or 90% of what you planned. I was four years in Washington during the first World War and could imagine what you could do this time.
- Q. When you came back then, you yourself knew what Americans could build, and how fast. Did you feel that the High Command in JAPAN felt that they could actually win the war, or were they all expecting a compromise peace?
- A. I think what they had in mind was to get a draw and maintain our national honor and not unconditional surrender. In the RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, although the RUSSIANS came in superior numbers, our fleet defeated their fleet at TSUSHIMA, and intelligent people knew that was the end of the war in which we got a compromise peace. Public speakers always told that we had won a brilliant victory, and the Army didn't think it was a draw, which I think most intelligent people must have known, but did not speak officially so as to maintain morale of the people.
- Q. Do you think that many people in High Command had hopes of German victory over RUSSIA or over ENGLAND?
- A. I think most people thought that GERMANY would win; at least a majority thought so.
- Q. Consequently there would be a better chance of winning compromise peace if GERMANY won?
- A. They did not think that GERMANY would be defeated. Even at the time of the NORMANDY landings most people thought that this landing would be a very difficult operation, and they did not think that the Allied armies would so quickly continue on to GERMANY's defense line; they were disillusioned.
- Q. Do you feel there was any real common interest between JAPAN and GERMANY other than both fighting the allies at the same time with the consequent obvious advantages?
- A. Once the alliance was made we had to stick to it. It was wrong for our people and I personally think it was a very foolish policy.
- Q. There was no common interest other than to win the war?
- A. Mutual help was impossible. Our interests were very much in the sea, and since the GERMAN naval power was small in comparison with UNITED STATES or ENGLAND it was a very unwise policy to make an alliance with GERMANY. I do not feel that the Japanese Navy was in favor of this alliance. Admiral YAMAMOTO, before he became Commander in Chief Combined Fleet, was Vice Navy Minister and was greatly influenced by younger naval officers. He was even threatened by gangsters.
- Q. Do you think that the Army was more in favor of this alliance in view of the desire to eliminate RUSSIA as a force on the Asiatic Continent?

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo),

A. They must have thought along these lines. I believe that the Tri-Partite Alliance was a development of Anti-Comintern Pacts.

Q. Do you feel that the Army was looking toward RUSSIA as the major threat, and the Navy perhaps looking into the PACIFIC?

A. Yes, but as I told you before, most people did not know the strength of the UNITED STATES. I think there were some in the Navy who favored war with the UNITED STATES, but it must have been a very small movement. Those who favored war must have thought that I was appointed to Washington through influence by the Navy.

Q. The Navy being anxious to avoid war, is that the reason?

A. Yes, but I think things went too far. Although I am not a diplomat and that is beyond my understanding, I feel very strongly that the Navy people, especially the head of the Navy, wanted me to try one more time to avoid the war; and therefore, I was obliged to go to Washington. The Army was much stronger than the Navy in politics.

Q. Did they have actually more power in Imperial Headquarters around the Throne?

A. That I do not know. The Army was far more influential politically than the Navy. They had organizations of men stationed throughout the country, in every "gun" (county), city and village, and had direct influence on Prefectural Governments and even down to the local police. The Navy, on the other hand; was centered in a few locations such as at YOKOSUKA and KURE, and didn't have much to do with the government of the Prefecture. They kept their hands out of politics. Therefore, upon comparison I feel that the Army had far more influence on public opinion and in politics.

Q. When you returned here, after MIDWAY, what was the common opinion then as to the weakest point in the defense perimeter, the most dangerous to JAPAN?

A. I think our fighting line was extended too far beyond our national strength, our line was everywhere weak and we could not help the weak points. Too much expansion in comparison with our national strength. In CHINA, the Chinese do not fight, therefore we could maintain that extended fighting line for many years; but even there our fighting line was too much extended.

Q. But particularly in the PACIFIC?

A. On the land too, they could not supply the necessary shipping. They went too far in the original plan. All our reserves were distributed at first to the front fighting lines, and we could not help them when these reserves were used up. We could not supply our outposts.

Q. Which would you say was the principal threat of the two in the PACIFIC, the one through the Central PACIFIC or the one from AUSTRALIA - NEW GUINEA?

A. Both very dangerous. I did not know that our Navy was going to make a surprise attack on HONOLULU, but when I returned I found out from the Navy Department that this was the limit of the Navy strength and they could not go any further than HONOLULU. Some of your people say that we could have landed; but with so large an expedition necessary for this, it was impossible to affect surprise. Therefore the plan was to make an attack and retire; that was the maximum we could do. On the southern front I personally thought your fleet might come from the south through NEW GUINEA and to the northwest; if not that to bomb SINGAPORE and JAVA. Both of these were very serious threats and there is no difference between the two.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo).

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- Q. Was it the American Fleet that would constitute that threat from the south, coming to the northwest?
- A. If they cut our lines between NEW GUINEA and the PHILIPPINES some troops might accompany this force, but it would be carried out principally by the Navy. I think a small number of troops because rather small garrisons on those islands.
- Q. But after MIDWAY we had a very small fleet and it couldn't be much of a threat for some time; you had no fear of our fleet, then?
- A. I don't know exactly, but imagine it would take quite a time for you to recover your fleet strength; but you recovered more quickly than we expected. We were told by the navy spokesman that you had repair facilities beyond our imaginations, that you had big floating docks for use in repairing ships which you brought from the UNITED STATES. Your repair facilities were better than we calculated.
- Q. Was it the quick increase in the size of our fleet which took you by surprise; was it because our fleet was bigger than you thought?
- A. The speed of your operations must have been far quicker than our people thought. Our Navy must have been surprised. For instance, after the MARSHALLS Campaign, SAIPAN came far earlier than expected. Therefore, SAIPAN was not prepared at all. The Army sent two divisions to SAIPAN and the Commanding General, after his arrival, had hardly looked over his island when your attack began. Everywhere, I think, you attacked before the defense was ready. You came far more quickly than we expected.
- Q. You think that was again because of the American Fleet being built up more quickly and having good repair facilities right behind it?
- A. Your repair facilities counted very much. I understand that in the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS there is a big repair base, also in the MARSHALLS there are repair facilities. Our Navy must have figured that when your ships were damaged they would have to go to HONOLULU and not to the islands where floating docks and other repair facilities were available. I have been told that in some docks you could repair even heavy ships.
- Q. Where did you hear that?
- A. I heard that in the Privy Council. I know that SAIPAN was a very important position and an acquaintance of mine was in the Air Force stationed there. I asked whether or not the SAIPAN defenses were all right. He said that the coast of SAIPAN being very precipitous that if the landing points were properly defended SAIPAN was safe. This was just a few days before the actual landing. I believed that, but I know you landed there and it disappointed me very much.
- Q. Was it generally known that landing was about to begin?
- A. The people didn't actually know. However, they knew we had a fleet and thought that there would be a fleet action there and placed their hopes on this fleet action.
- Q. When these vast moves went along one right after another and finally came to LEYTE, did that come as a surprise to the Privy Council - the landing at LEYTE?
- A. They expected that you would come to DAVAO in MINDANAO by way of BOUGAINVILLE and NEW GUINEA. You did not come to our defended points but hopped over defended places and went to weaker places. Our Army and Navy should have guarded against such an operation from their knowledge of past experiences. There were several occasions in NEW GUINEA and the SOLOMONS where you by-passed well defended points. You did not come to RABAU but left it behind; therefore, they should have known and guarded against this.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

Q. Do you think that possibly the U. S. Force might have avoided the PHILIPPINES entirely?

A. They must have thought you would come to the PHILIPPINES; but I thought you would not come to FORMOSA, but rather to the RYUKYUS. Premier SUZUKI in his speech about a year ago stated that we must have a good defense in the RYUKYUS; he felt that would be your approach. I myself thought FORMOSA would be by-passed. In such large islands there are many people and only a small amount of resources, whereas in the RYUKYUS there were good resources and supplies. Therefore, you would not come to FORMOSA but rather to the RYUKYUS.

Q. You didn't expect we would go to the CHINA Coast?

A. That was discussed, and SAISHU TO and KOREA were considered, for instance. I myself being a Navy man always thought it would be much easier to capture an island, an island which has operational advantage.

Q. Why go to the PHILIPPINES, did you still feel we would go to the PHILIPPINES?

A. Yes, there was much talk by one of your Generals that he would recapture the PHILIPPINES. He gave much praise to the Filipinos and said he would come back to the PHILIPPINES. Therefore, it was our opinion that you had to go there.

Q. You think we had to go?

A. That I don't know. Our lines of supply were cut so it would result in much waste of blood to capture an island just to be used for the purpose of advancing a further operation. It is far more useful not to land on big islands.

Q. Don't you think that was one weak point in Japanese defense that she had those small islands undefended?

A. Yes, I felt that there were many weak points throughout the Central PACIFIC. These islands were weakly defended. The garrisons that were sent there couldn't depend on help from outside, they could only do their best and fight until they died. Those were very weak points, so many small places poorly defended. If we had been able to maintain our lines of communications any need for help from these places could be requested by radio; but we could not maintain our lines of communication.

Q. What is your opinion how extended a line should you have established?

A. When I was on the Navy General Staff it was felt that the best we could do was fight in the PHILIPPINES; but the initial successes must have caused them to expand their ideas. Initially it was the PHILIPPINES.

Q. That was to keep the lines of communication to the south and west?

A. Yes; but when they went as far as BOUGAINVILLE in the SOLOMONS, it was a great mistake.

Q. Too much for shipping available?

A. Yes, I believe people at home miscalculated our shipping losses. They did not anticipate the large decrease in shipping; they thought losses could be compensated for by new building. Airplanes and submarines damaged our shipping very much.

Q. You said before that everyone was surprised by early recuperation of the American Navy. What did you estimate as time for recovery after the PEARL HARBOR disaster?

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

A. I am not sure how they felt. I myself thought that the ships at PEARL HARBOR could be repaired within at most one year. We had experience at PORT ARTHUR; the ships sunk there, later on joining the Japanese Fleet. Therefore with your facilities, felt that you could repair your ships within one year.

Q. Assuming that JAPAN would have been allowed two or three years to prepare her defenses, how would they have planned to do it? How would they use these two or three years?

A. That is a very difficult question. I believe that the ideas of our people were that the war might last many years and that if we resisted very stubbornly you might get tired.

(Mr. Baran)

Q. Was there a very strong idea of organizing economic resources of the south resources area?

A. They tried to use these resources, for instance oil. Therefore as soon as these islands were captured, experts were sent to get oil. At first all went well; but when our lines of communication were disturbed, it did not go so well.

Q. You mean if JAPAN had had more time you think they might have been able to draw major advantages from these islands?

A. We felt we could get resources from those islands; we depended on that. Our oil stocks were very limited and we must get oil from these islands; and, therefore, whether or not you initiated your attack quickly or slowly was the big question, the determining fate of the war. Most people thought if we could get supplies from those islands undisturbed we could go on many years.

Q. Do you think that the preparations for economic exploitation were adequate for this area in JAPAN after they conceived of the idea of militarily occupying these islands?

A. That I do not know, but my common sense tells me that they thought we could get oil from those areas and continue the war. However, they very greatly under-estimated the strength of your submarines; they did not expect they would be so effective.

Q. Did the submarines come too soon?

A. Yes, your submarines were very efficient and their operations very extensive. It was believed in JAPAN that your people did not like submarines because in the past your Navy always advocated the abolishment of undersea craft. Therefore, we did not believe that you would employ submarines so extensively.

Q. Would you be willing to make a judgment as to whether or not Japanese derived economic advantage in terms of her potential?

A. I am not too well informed on that; however, I believe it must have been felt that we needed a great amount of oil, rubber and metals, etc. However, in the early stages we got very little and I believe that they were too optimistic at the beginning.

Rear Admiral Ofstie.

Q. Do you think that the operations of the Army in CHINA absorbed so much of the war effort that it affected the war in the PACIFIC?

A. Personally I do not know; however, our Government always wanted to finish the CHINA War and during my tour in Washington we requested your President to act as an intermediary. It was felt that if we could arrive at an agreement which would be in accord with your basic policies and would withdraw from CHINA, we could arrive at an agreement. However, at that time our people thought we were winning in CHINA and that we must get something out of CHINA. That was a major cause for this war. If we had terminated the CHINA War much earlier, this war would not have occurred as there would have been no reason.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo).

Q. The Army of course was responsible for that feeling about CHINA?
A. Yes, however, the Army wished to end the CHINA War quickly, but
* at the same time they wished to get something out of it.

Q. They weren't willing to come out entirely?
A. They were not willing to come out entirely, and they wanted to station troops in certain points in CHINA and then be able to say to the people, "We have spent so much but we have received so much". Now we feel that the CHINA situation was a big mistake.

Q. You think the Army expanded too much in CHINA, the Army had too big ideas of what could be done in CHINA?

A. They thought the job would be much easier than it was and they thought that they could accomplish things without much cost. However, I don't think they planned to go as far as they did.

Q. Why did they go further than planned?

A. The situation perhaps made them go beyond their original plans. I was told that they considered that it could be finished within six months.

Q. Do you think the Army actually did all that was possible to finish the CHINA Campaign or was it a minimum undertaking? Did they throw in all they had in the CHINA War, or wasn't it an all out attempt, or was it a limited war?

A. I think they believed it was a limited war and that they did not need to commit many soldiers or a great deal of material.

Q. In 1939 and early 1940 they must have realized this was a very difficult procedure. If you didn't engage all your force in one theater, why didn't they do it; why didn't they go all out to win the CHINA War?

A. It might not have been impossible but would have been very difficult. In CHINA due to the geographical situation there was no way in which to use our full strength against the CHUNGKING Government; and therefore to a certain extent Chiang Kai Shek was in an impregnable position. This can be compared to the war between RUSSIA and GERMANY in which RUSSIA could have retreated east of the URALS where they could have reorganized their Army and where they had steel and other production potential. They could have resisted for a long time and in this situation it was impossible for the German Army to utilize their full strength beyond the URALS. The same situation applied to Chiang Kai Shek. We had many opportunities to make a compromise with Chiang Kai Shek, but to save face or for some similar reason we stopped attempting to make a compromise.

Q. Did you say the Army was primarily responsible for this situation?
A. I think this was true. The Army was very influential and they promised many things to our people. If they evacuated CHINA they would lose their prestige. In order to save face they were forced to continue.

Q. With all their interest and activity in CHINA, did they during the war or the end of the war, to any extent, attempt to control naval operations? Did they, for example, insist on using submarines for supplying bases; did they interfere in naval business.

A. I do not believe they interfered with naval operations although they sometimes were not contented with the way the Navy was operating. I have also been told that they built their own submarine transports and transport carriers. They did not go so far as to attempt to control the Navy. However, they would requisition transports for their own use; and when HONGKONG was captured, the Army wanted to keep half of the dockyard in order to repair their transports and to build additional transports.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

The Navy did, however, provide personnel to help them build transports and to train officers in their use, but they did not interfere with fleet operations.

Q. They did not seem to exert pressure to try to get the Navy to go out and destroy our fleet?

A. I did not hear of any such pressure. In the past there were instances, for example in the CHINA - JAPANESE War, when Army officers were appointed to be Chief of Naval Operations. However, in this war that did not occur. They might talk but they had no authority to act.

(Mr. Baran)

Q. Do you think the structure of your war organization at the top had anything to do with the way the war went? Did the relationship between Army and Navy and Air strength make any difference? Did you ever think it could be changed and improved?

A. There was considerable discussion regarding the use of a single air force, independent of the Army and Navy. There was also considerable dispute between the Army and Navy on how to divide munitions; that was always a big question. Therefore, the Department of Munitions was established. However, the possible use of our total force for a single purpose did not go smoothly, the Army wanted so much and the Navy so much and there were many disputes.

Q. What view did you take?

A. I haven't arrived an any opinion on that subject; however, I do know that there is much discussion going on now on that subject.

Q. To whom did the Privy Council make its report after a decision was made?

A. We made our report to the EMPEROR.

Q. In that case then, the head of the Privy Council would go direct to the EMPEROR himself?

A. The EMPEROR would be present at the final sessions of the Council. During my years of experience in the Council thought there wasn't much dispute; they always arrived at an agreement.

Q. Would you say that Baron HIRANUMA had a good deal of influence with the EMPEROR?

A. He was one time Premier, and how much influence he has I do not know.

Q. Did he have more or less influence than KIDO?

A. Marquis KIDO always had great influence on Privy Council matters. He always had the confidence of the EMPEROR and therefore had quite wide influence in the country.

(Lt. Comdr. Spinks)

Q. What influence did the JUSHIN exercise in the selection of a new Premier after a Cabinet resignation?

A. The JUSHIN had little influence. Only recently was this body used to select Premiers; and since they only had experience of a few years, they were not requested to attend important meetings. The Lord Privy Seal however had much influence in the selection of the Cabinet.

Q. Looking at the overall picture, Admiral, what would be your personal opinion of the cooperation of the Army and Navy during the war? Did they work at cross purposes?

A. That is a difficult question to answer. Admiral SHIMADA who was the Navy Minister at the beginning of the war worked very closely with Premier TOJO, and the Navy was quite disappointed in this.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

The Navy felt it was losing its own individuality and they complained that SHIMADA made too many compromises with TOJO; and as a result of this feeling, they compelled him to retire. I have a feeling that the Navy always wanted to maintain its own individuality. In the three years after PEARL HARBOR, perhaps SHIMADA worked too closely with TOJO, and the Navy complained very much, particularly about the disposition of aircraft production. The Navy General Staff felt that SHIMADA should get more planes for the Navy. During the three years, I do not feel that he satisfied the Navy.

- Q. Thereafter, when you came back for example, did things go smoothly then?
- A. When I returned to JAPAN the people did not know the real situation, after the MIDWAY Battle. They thought the war was going along very well and they had no complaint. But later on when losses began to be announced, although this was only a part of the real situation, they complained very bitterly. I do feel, however, that the Navy did know the real situation.
- Q. When did Admiral SHIMADA retire as Navy Minister?
- A. About the middle of July 1944. He was succeeded by Admiral NOMURA, Naokuni who held the position three days because three days later the TOJO Cabinet fell.
- Q. Why, in your opinion, was that change made just before the eve of the fall of the cabinet?
- A. At this time TOJO wanted to remain and did not expect that he would be forced to retire. Although a new Navy Minister was appointed, this had little effect since TOJO did retire.
- Q. Did the Navy force that situation?
- A. The Navy did not interfere. However, their primary interest was in maintaining the Navy; and therefore, within the Navy it was an almost unanimous feeling that the Office of the Navy Minister and the Chief of Naval Operation must not be embodied in a single person, which feeling compelled SHIMADA to retire. Although they did not say that the Army should do the same I have feeling that this trend resulted in TOJO's retirement; he combined the Chief of Staff with Premier, and was also War Minister.
- Q. Was it the Lord Privy Seal who asked TOJO to retire?
- A. I do not know that; however, I do not think so as only the EMPEROR can compel the retirement of the Prime Minister. However, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal can make proposals and recommendations to the EMPEROR. The EMPEROR, however, is very gentle and does not remove ministers because he is displeased. I do remember, however, that there is perhaps one instance when Premier TANAKA was compelled to retire but such cases are very unusual.
- Q. Then if the Prime Minister feels that the EMPEROR is dissatisfied he retires on his own initiative?
- A. In the case of TANAKA this was so; that was because of the bombardment of CHAN SO LIN-MANCHURIA. Whether or not the EMPEROR expressed his will, I do not know. However, if the Minister felt that the EMPEROR was displeased he would probably retire.
- Q. In the case of TOJO, was it a similar incident?
- A. I am not sure of this; however, it was impossible for TOJO to maintain his position. I was told that some of our senior statesmen were saying that TOJO should have resigned much earlier.

Transcript of interrogation of (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo).

Q. At what time did the Cabinet first reconsider the question as to whether or not the war should be continued?

A. As far as I know that question came up at the end of the SUZUKI Cabinet. I knew SUZUKI very well and served under him, and I feel sure he knew the true situation and that when he became Prime Minister he was perhaps informed by the Army and Navy of their true situation. He further knew the Emperor's mind, and together with his own convictions he made attempts to approach Soviet RUSSIA hoping that RUSSIA would act as an intermediary. Whether or not that was wise, I do not know. In any case the Tri-Partite Pact was still in force, and in any case RUSSIA did not answer. Our Minister approached MOLOTOV and requested that RUSSIA act as an intermediary. In view of this SUZUKI must have felt that the war must be ended. There were still many responsible men who wanted to continue the war. I cannot understand what the Army and Navy must have been thinking of; but if the war continued, JAPAN would be wholly destroyed and I think some of the Army and Navy would not hesitate to be destroyed completely, and they persuaded the people that they must die fighting. I also know that in the country where I was the farmers believed that when such an occasion came they must be ready. SUZUKI thought that we cannot sacrifice the people for the sake of the Army and Navy, the people must be saved. As a result of this strong feeling, near the end of the war his house was burned down. I still feel that, as Premier, SUZUKI did the right thing in taking steps to stop the war and prevent the Japanese people from being destroyed. I feel that the Primer Minister was not as concerned with the war as he was with saving the people, even though the Navy and Army lost face. He felt he must save the people, and even today he thinks he did the right thing.

Q. Did SUZUKI get much support from others in that policy?

A. So far as I know there was considerable disagreement among Council Members. Although as Premier SUZUKI felt the war should be stopped, it was necessary that the Council be in accord, and if he could not reach an accord in his Council he would be compelled to retire. The Minister himself could not take the responsibility for ending the war. I believe that the EMPEROR told SUZUKI that his mind was made up to end the war; and in spite of the fact that certain ministers made eloquent speeches to continue the war, the EMPEROR said "My mind is made up in this case. Your views are understood, but I know what we must do in this case". I was told some of them retired with tears in their eyes.

Q. I imagine it was most difficult for the Army Minister?

A. As member of the Cabinet he knew the real situation, but as head of the Army he knew that there was a strong feeling in the Army for continuing the war. Therefore, he was in a dilemma and, therefore, after signing the Emperor's orders that they have taken the responsibility for ending the war, which all Ministers must sign, he killed himself. He was in a very difficult position being both a member of the Cabinet and head of the Army and it was said that he acted truly like a gentleman.

Q. The Navy Minister did not face as difficult a problem?

- A. He was a good man too and he felt that all the people must not die, and I understand he supported SUZUKI that the war should end. However, there were some younger officers, for instance the Navy Special Attack Groups at ATSUGI, who wanted to continue the war; but the Minister knew the true situation and supported SUZUKI.
- Q. What influence do you think the atomic bomb had on the decision?
- A. Although the Soviets joined the war and the atomic bombs were mentioned we feel that when the people understood the real situation they would know that we were then exhausted.
- Q. As we understand it, there was some discussion among the intelligentsia as early as December 1944 at which the proposition of ending the war was discussed; do you know of that?
- A. No, However, there are always some people who seek an opportunity to make peace, especially among the diplomats. Service people consider that that was a defeatist attitude and were very critical of them.
- Q. Was it considered that SUZUKI was a man who might reconsider the question of continuing the war when appointed Premier?
- A. He was attempting to bolster the peoples morale and must have felt that in order to prepare for peace it would be necessary to disclose the real situation; then the people would lose their morale. I have been told that SUZUKI was thinking very deeply of that, must have always had it in mind; therefore, even approached SOVIET RUSSIA.
- Q. TOJO, did he know the truth?
- A. Yes, he knew it.
- Q. Did TOJO collaberate with the Prime Minister in planning negotiation?
- A. Prior to the beginning of the war TOJO was the Foreign Minister, and TOJO once told me after I returned from the UNITED STATES that during this period when he was Foreign Minister he had a feeling that everything was pointed toward a war and that he also felt he would not have complete freedom of action; but he must have been to the Tri-Partite Pact on one side and attempted negotiations with CHIANG-KAI-SHEK on the other side, and that everything was not going well and that he did not have freedom of action. As Foreign Minister he countersigned the declaration of war.
- Q. Whom do you think were the principal people who advised the EMPEROR to select SUZUKI at the time he succeeded KUIISO?
- A. I believe it was the Senior Statesmen (JUSHIN). In the past it was the elder statesman (GENRO) who advised the EMPEROR. The present Senior Statesmen are not elder statesmen in that sense. These Senior Statesmen are former Prime Ministers. However, I don't believe they were very influential.
- Q. How man people do you think advised the EMPEROR to appoint Admiral SUZUKI?
- A. About five or six, the former Prime Ministers and the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal.
- Q. What would you say was the primary factor in the minds of those who were of the peace party? Were they more influenced by the Navy Department or the Army Department, or Army defeats, or continued Air attacks?

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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo, IJN.) - - -

A. The people's mind was made up to continue to the very last. But some of the thinking people, when air attacks became frequent and we were not fighting against them, these people must have become very disillusioned. In spite of this however, they continued to be loyal and did not talk of peace in spite of how they may have seen the war was going on. Although the people may have sensed the true situation they were loyal to the Government. The Japanese people obey government orders. Therefore, although there were among the people a very few who favored peace, these few did not express their views. I feel that the people did not know the true situation. As for the Navy, we might say that they thought the war was almost hopelessly gone if a landing was made, but the Army people always thought we should fight even after the landing.

Q. With those who were concerned over the American Air Attack do you think they were more influenced by the reduction in production of war materials or because the cities were being burned and the populace suffering?

A. Production of airplanes suffered naturally; but that, the people did not know. They did suffer themselves from the air raids but even then, as I told you before, the people did not say peace. Willingly or reluctantly I cannot say, but they were prepared to sacrifice themselves if the Government so ordered. In the country where I lived when things went very badly in February, the small Postmaster said there was no other way then to kill themselves fighting; such was a common feeling. There must have been some of the people who felt that this feeling was very unwise, but they did not express their views. However, I felt that after the war was over and they really understood the true situation, they were glad that the war stopped when it did. For example, in the country where I lived was sometimes a farmer who had five boys, all of them at the front during the war. He was ready to give them to the country knowing that they might not ever return; but after the war was over, when he understood that they were returning, he was very happy.

Q. Had they known the true situation then, would the Government have initiated steps toward a compromise peace at some earlier date?

A. It seems very likely to me that our Government said little about the true situation in order to maintain the people's morale.

Q. If the Army was not, then, of great influence in the Government, do you think the Navy might have taken steps toward a compromise peace sometime earlier?

A. This would be a big responsibility and it would have taken a very big man to take this responsibility.

Q. Could Admiral YONAI have taken it when he came into KOISO Cabinet?

A. That I cannot say, but I feel sure that YONAI felt that it was impossible to destroy all the people. But whether or not he could carry out such an idea as Prime Minister in the closing moments, I do not know. Even at the end of the war some of the Army people attacked SUZUKI's house and he very narrowly escaped; so it seems to me that it was the destiny of our country to continue this very unwise war to the very end.

Q. ABE, who was Home Minister in the SUZUKI Cabinet, told us that when he came into office he had changed the policy of the Government to one of giving full information of damages caused by air raids and of Army and Navy losses in the field. He said that as a result of the former policy of keeping news from the people, there had been a cloud of rumor, and that it was considered unwise to consider that policy in the hope that would build a spirit of cooperation so that they would

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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo, IJN.)

withstand invasion. Had you heard of that change of policy?

A. That I do not know. When the full explanation was made to the people, they must have thought that they were fooled and were not told the truth. In some country prefectures people still continued to believe what they had been told and as a result attacked the house of the Prefecture Governor; and throughout all the country, people were still stubborn. I have heard that the delay of two days, due to bad weather, of MACARTHUR's arrival at ATSUGI Airfield was very lucky and that these two days were sufficient to have the people calmed down.

Q. Assuming that you and YONAI and SUZUKI were in control, at what time would you have taken steps to get a compromise peace?

A. That is a difficult question to answer. We three worked together in the Navy General Staff. SUZUKI was Chief, I was Deputy and YONAI was Head of the First Section; and we were very good friends from that time on. Also, YONAI was in command of a ship when SUZUKI was Commander in Chief. I am not too well acquainted as to what went on these past two years. However, at the end of the war there were many who thought that we should have ended this war much earlier, that the best time would have been when SAIPAN fell. Although SHIMADA was considering retirement at that time, he put off time of retirement until after SAIPAN fell. I myself thought we had a chance of facing the situation after SAIPAN fell, and then at that time he retired.

Q. So that is the date you would have selected, although you would n't have started the war initially. What would YONAI do?

A. If we had stopped the war any earlier the people would not have understood. They had never been told the truth about the situation and there would have been civil war in JAPAN among the people.

Q. But supposing there had been complete information on the progress of the war given in JAPAN as was given in the UNITED STATES, then when would the war have ended by compromise?

A. Many people knew at the very beginning it was very unwise to make war against Anglo-Saxons, but situation being as it was they were compelled to go to war.

Q. What do you say was the major thing done by AMERICA in a Military way to bring about the collapse of JAPAN?

A. Submarines initially did great damage to our shipping and later the submarines combined with air attack made our shipping very scarce. Our supply lines were cut and we could not support these supply lines; Although our aircraft factories were being destroyed and we could not replace our planes, the people in general have the idea that it was these airplanes that were so important without appreciating the loss of our shipping. Our experts knew that it was necessary to have 3,000,000 tons of shipping just for civilian living in JAPAN.

Q. Then as an expert opinion, would you say that the loss of shipping was the cause of the loss of the war?

A. Whether or not it was the major cause, it damaged us very much. At the end of the war we had few lines of communication around HONSHU Island; even to KOREA, ships were not running and in HOKKAIDO it was very difficult to bring coal. The scarcity of shipping was very difficult.

Q. Three million tons was absolutely necessary to continue?

A. That was almost a unanimous view among expert people.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Admiral NOMURA, Kichisaburo)

- Q. In addition to that, how much was required to maintain Army and Navy in the field?
- A. I can't exactly say, but in this country during the war we had 6,500,000 tons; distributed about one half to civilian requirement and one half to Army and Navy.
- Q. The 6,000,000 was only Japanese merchant shipping; in addition you had merchant shipping acquired in MANILA, SINGAPORE, etc?
- A. That was only one-tenth.
- Q. In the event you had more time to fortify or strengthen your perimeter what type moves would have been made to strengthen the perimeter?
- A. I don't believe the perimeter was properly fortified. I am not too sure of this, but in any case know the defenses were very weak. We were very short of guns, especially anti-aircraft guns. We could not defend our perimeter. Our garrisons were very small.
- Q. Would you have put larger garrisons and guns in the event you had time and shipping?
- A. These garrisons should have had some guns. However, it was impossible to get guns to these islands; we didn't even have them here in JAPAN.
- Q. Do you think it would be possible, by any means you can imagine, to successfully defend a place like KWAJALEIN Atoll?
- A. We had hoped that the enemy would not come to KWAJALEIN. Although that was a very unwise thought, we were compelled to think that way.
- Q. As a member of the Privy Council and in your position in JAPAN in which you discussed the progress of the war with the leaders of the Army and Navy, officially and unofficially, when in your opinion did the war take a bad turn for the Japanese?
- A. When I left NEW YORK in the middle of June I didn't know exactly how the Battle of MIDWAY went, I didn't know that we lost so many aircraft carriers; but I did know that compared to what we did in PEARL HARBOR there was a big difference. Also, I had some fear at that time that the war might be turning unfavorably, so it was my idea when I returned home that I would let our people know the full strength of the UNITED STATES as I saw it. But the people at that time did not wish to believe that, they did not realize it would be a difficult war. I also heard that at GUADALCANAL in August we sent a lot of transports, and I heard that almost all of them were lost. That was not disclosed here but I heard such a rumor. I felt we went too far.
- Q. You felt the decision was made there in the early part of the SOLOMONS - GUADALCANAL, etc?
- A. We advanced very fast when the Americans weren't prepared; but when they were prepared and came back, we were forced to retreat.
- Q. From your position here in JAPAN and watching progress of the war do you consider that the operational planning of Imperial Headquarters was sound?
- A. That I did not study carefully but I have a general idea that they made many blunders. When they plan an operation they should be prepared to take the defensive, that is to maintain and support what they acquired offensively, and this must be calculated carefully. But they only thought of pushing forward; they were little concerned with the defensive. They did not calculate shipping losses or materials to supply and maintain their positions acquired

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Admiral NORMURA, Kichisaburo, IJN) - - - - -

- Q. Do you think your planning and thinking was too offensively minded?
- A. That is very true, they made the mistake of thinking an attack is the best defense. They made a great mistake in following this proverb without proper preparation. Some people even wanted to go still further.
- Q. Do you think those ideas were the ideas of the Navy, Army people or as a whole?
- A. As I understand it, what sense is there in losing your blood in useless attacks against power. We thought too much of the present, we did not plan in detail.
- Q. In the event the plan had been a much smaller plan, to take merely the PHILIPPINES, how would you have met the problem of oil?
- A. We accumulated oil. In the war with RUSSIA we stored anthracite coal and the same policy was being followed. The tanks were being built to keep a certain amount of oil. But it is impossible to last many years, so those who knew the situation did not advocate the war at all. Some people might think that Admiral YAMAMOTO, Commander-in-Chief, was a supporter of this war. It is not so. He always was against the war. He told Prince KONOYE, "Yes, one year or two we might fight. Later, we don't know." Therefore, for the war, one year or two. If it would last longer, we don't know what would happen. I always thought, from Washington, Government must be careful. Once it happens it must be a many-year war. In that case no one knows how it would become on shortage of oil, fuel, and many other items.
- Q. In other words, in order to fight a longer war the inclusion of oil resources in the arrangement was necessary. Is that correct?
- A. Yes, they must have gone to the south. There was a question if SUMATRA could be captured or not. And then how much it would be destroyed, how long it would take to recover once the wells were destroyed; no one knows. Therefore, this war was a very risky war from the beginning. Even the Chief of our Naval Staff told me. We asked him. We were being struck by embargoes. Then no one knows how it will be. If operation goes well for JAPAN, there might be a chance. With such idea, it is very risky, some people say, for a long war with our national resources; but this war will be long, no doubt. I agreed strongly with KONOYE's conviction that we must make agreement with the UNITED STATES. He wanted to go to HONOLULU, if it is possible, to meet with the President. Therefore, I made such a proposal. The President announced there must be a preliminary understanding, and we did try to reach one; but we could not agree. If, as I told you before, in the CHINA affair we make compromise, then it could be carried out. Now, we think it must have been a much wiser course. But that is quite foolish now to speak.
- Q. In your estimation, did the Japanese General Staff, in its planning prior to the war, give sufficient emphasis to the problem of air power?
- A. That is not so. I have had one of them, Vice Chief of Naval General Staff who killed himself, who was complaining that our old Admirals are not air-minded at all. Even modern ones, they are not quite air-minded; so it is very difficult for them to understand the meaning of air power.
- Q. Do you think with adequate air power you would have been able to hold this perimeter?
- A. It might be within our power. On production we are left. I think in JAPAN we did rather better than we expected. To increase our aircraft production we tried. I did not expect that they can build 2000 a month. It went rather better than we expected.
- Q. But if you had had 4000 a month, would it have been possible to hold that perimeter?
- A. That I don't know, but anyway impossible for us to train pilots. It is a very difficult job in JAPAN. It would take at least one year and a half to let them fight. We can't expect speed from our student pilots.
- Q. Admiral, when it was possible to take French INDO-CHINA without being involved in war, why wouldn't it have been desirable to have gone on and taken SUMATRA and JAVA and completely by-pass the PHILIPPINES? Was that discussed?

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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Admiral NORMURA, Kichisaburo, IJN) -----

- A. I don't know, but I discussed it from your government and your government warned on August 17th when Mr. Roosevelt returned from the ATLANTIC Conference; I got the warning. At that time our forces proceeded to French INDO-CHINA and in that warning if JAPAN go any farther -- I don't remember the exact words -- but if you go any farther then in the present situation, the UNITED STATES will be compelled to take immediately all necessary steps to safeguard their rights and interests.
- Q. Do you know whether the Japanese government discussed that - taking JAVA and SUMATRA during that period and by-passing the PHILIPPINES?
- A. No, I don't know. I don't know at all about those conferences.
- Q. Was there any discussion at the time of the possibility of taking BORNEO and MALAYA and becoming involved at that time in EUROPE; of becoming involved with BRITAIN but not with the UNITED STATES?
- A. They did know as I told you that if we go into French INDO-CHINA, the UNITED STATES will take all necessary steps immediately to protect their rights and interests. They did know. I reported this to the government office in full detail and they must have known that. By marching our troops into French INDO-CHINA, all trade ceased, the embargo was placed and everything frozen, and that is economic blockade. If go any further, then war with the UNITED STATES. They must have know that. That was August 17th.

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