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U.S.S.B.S.
Morale

Interview with NAITO, Takasaburo, Secretariat of the Ministry of Education.

SUBJECT: Morale Control Through Education Ministry
INTERVIEWER: Mr. D. B. Truman
INTERPRETER: Mr. Yano
PLACE: Room 847 Meiji Building
TIME: 17 December 1945, 1400 - 1645

BACKGROUND:

He is Secretary of the Section of Documents in the Ministry Secretariat. Graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1936, Department of Literature and Science, specializing in English Literature. He wanted to enter the diplomatic service and passed the exam for admission, but never joined it. Immediately upon graduation he entered the Ministry of Education. From 1936 to the middle of 1942 he was in the Social Education Bureau. Then he was in the General Planning Section in the Section of Documents of the Ministry Secretariat. In April 1943 he was appointed head of the Educational Section of Tottori Prefecture. In August 1944 he returned to the Ministry of Education as Secretary of the General Planning Bureau, the name of which just before the end of the war was changed to the Student Mobilization Bureau. Since the war and immediately prior to his present job he was Chief Secretary and Liaison Officer between the Education Ministry and GHQ.

SUMMARY:

The interview covers changes in the educational system prior to and during the war and the methods of thought control exercised through the Education Ministry, including the Army's influence upon Education Ministry policies.

INTERVIEW: T - Truman N - Naito

The interrogation was opened with the usual structuring, followed by questions on Mr. Naito's experience. In regard to his ambition to participate in Foreign Service, he said that he saw the impending war situation and wanted to have employment and a position which would help avoid the war. In his present position his functions are described as "Arranging the most important policies of the Education Ministry and liaison between the ministry and the Cabinet and the Diet."

T - What do you mean by arrange?

N - Many bureaus submit their policies to the meetings of the heads of the bureaus. As secretary of these meetings I prepare an agenda and examine all the documents submitted.

T - What were your functions in the Student Mobilization Bureau?

N - I was in the General Planning Section. It was most important during the war to mobilize the whole student body for labor service. In that agency I performed a similar job to the one I now hold.

T - What changes took place in educational policy of the ministry from the time you entered it until you went to Tetteri Prefecture in 1943?

N - Just before the GEA War started the whole educational system was changed. Laws on education from the Primary schools to Universities were changed. The most important change was that military mobilization forced the government to reduce the number of years necessary for graduation. Many workers went into the Army and Navy and many into new factories, so we needed a great many men. For example, the Middle school was reduced from 5 to 4 years and higher school from 3 to 2 years. The second major change was that the object of education was changed all the way through from the primary schools to the colleges.

T - How did the purposes change?

N - They were to educate the Japanese people according to the Japanese rule.

T - What do you mean by rule?

N - Nationalistic ends.

T - Can you give us an illustration?

N - Foreign languages were not encouraged. In books the nationalistic characteristics were more stressed.

T - How was this done?

N - Character building is the object of education, I think. But, this stress was placed rather on the nation's self. Military training was stressed. Training became not intellectual but physical, and physical training became much harder. Military science, science of war, was given to the students.

T - What kinds of things were done in the course of military science?

N - How to use tanks, planes, ships - how to use all modern weapons.

T - What was the proportion of military to non-military training?

N - Before the change the Middle School had been five years. When this was reduced to four the loss in time was completely absorbed by the non-military work and the amount of military training was increased. I cannot estimate the actual proportion. These were the major changes that took place up to 1943.

T - What changes took place in teaching personnel?

N - There were many teachers who were dismissed before the 1937 war and gradually more and more were eliminated. By the time the GEA War started it was unnecessary to change many of them. They were trained in how to teach the nationalistic way.

T - How were they trained to teach in this way?

- N - In every prefecture there was a fundamental change in the Primary School ordinance. Lectures were given to the teachers to explain the spirit of the new law.
- T - What things were stressed in these lectures?
- N - Groups of subjects were concentrated (consolidated) through this change. In connection with English, this had the effect of reducing the number of lessons, so some teachers left. Others devoted more time to teaching of morals or the national language.
- T - Did the Ministry encounter any difficulties in installing the new system?
- N - None at all.
- T - Did you expect to have any difficulties?
- N - No, because more teachers were required.
- T - I don't understand how more teachers would be required for less teaching.
- N - The materials to be taught were not reduced very much. They merely tried to cover the same amount of material in less time. The teachers were over-burdened even before the change so that when it occurred they needed more teachers.
- T - You mentioned dismissals prior to 1937 and after. What were the reasons for these dismissals?
- N - Teachers who belonged to the Communist Party, teachers who were antagonistic to military policies. The Ministry of Education did not wish to dismiss these people, but the police bureau and the Justice Ministry required the Ministry of Education to force them to resign. After the China Incident all national policies, educational, economic, and others, were focused on carrying on the war. Actually, in these cases before the teachers were dismissed they were put in prison by the police so the action by the Ministry of Education was only formal.
- T - Was there resentment among the remaining teachers over this action?
- N - No, because they had been trained since the Manchurian Incident to agree with the government policies. Actually, they may have felt somewhat differently. At first, there was some resentment, but later they were trained to be followers of the government in every phase of living.
- T - What were the feelings of teachers during the war?
- N - Teachers and all other people were compelled to follow the government's policies. They were trained to face forward. For instance, military tendencies were so strong that the liberals were powerless. People at large believed the war had a fair intention as the government said. They did not know the real situation. They were not told.
- T - Were the teachers enthusiastic before the beginning of the war?

- N - Perhaps. The government propaganda was so influential that they tended to believe that the U.S. was pressing our nation. The Sino-Japanese Incident did not settle this oppression because the U.S. and Great Britain interfered too much and cooperated with Chiang kai shek regime.
- T - Were the teachers optimistic?
- N - Of course, because at first Japan was so influential as to be able to occupy the East Indies, so teachers had the idea that Japan would be victorious at last.
- T - How long did this feeling last?
- N - Until Guadalcanal for some of them. Even after Guadalcanal many still believed that Japan might win. A few university professors were skeptical from the beginning. At the time of Guadalcanal they recognized the grievous situation of the Japanese government. There were many of them, but most still believed that Japan could win because the government propaganda was so nice. Most believed that Japan would attack the U.S. at last.
- T - How long did this feeling last?
- N - Until just before the end of the war. Many were really astonished at the Emperor's announcement. The teachers were no different from the public at large.
- T - How about yourself?
- N - I doubted that Japan could be victorious, but I knew that if the U.S. should invade the home islands the war would be prolonged because at Iwo and Okinawa victory for you had been slow and difficult. So many houses had been burned and food was so scanty and transportation was so bad that I couldn't yet believe in victory. There were long queues in all the cities and villages. Telephone and telegram and other machines were badly damaged. We couldn't communicate our thoughts to one another in any way so the government divided the country up into administrative regions. During the war the moral standards so degenerated we couldn't believe in victory under such conditions.
- T - What do you mean by the degeneration of moral standards?
- N - Before the war, after the Sino-Japanese Incident, educational policies were changed to the nationalistic way and character building was not stressed. Loyalty to the nation was so stressed that the individual was not held as responsible as before in every kind of way. I believe the character of the individual must be stressed in education. Because of the stress on nationalism, individual morals became less important. A confusion in individual morals was therefore allowed. There was confusion in the economic system; the destruction of houses, etc.; deaths from bombing; the food was so scanty; inflation was bad because the Army and Navy purchased at abnormal prices. People did just as they wished and did not care about others. Especially during the war, to obtain the object of carrying on the war the means used were not so important as the end, and the Army and Navy encouraged this attitude. I do not believe that the end always justifies the means. The resulting confusion encouraged a decline in people's morals. After the war people lost hope, with houses and food so hard to get. The nation also lost hope because it lost all its territories. These things made morals degenerate even more.

T - How is that?

N - Before the end of the war they endured the suffering because of the war. After the defeat they believed they had been cheated by the government, or the military, and they did not care about the nation. Farmers would not give up their food as they had before. They did not care about the miserable people who had no houses or who had lost their parents or husbands in the bombing. There is so much misbehavior for example in entering street cars. People indulged in barter. The big factories cooperated with the government in the war, but they still earned the money which they were expecting to get.

T - To return to the changes in the educational system, who was responsible for seeing that it was carried out?

N - The Ministry of Education.

T - How did the Ministry of Education know whether the teachers were conforming to the new system?

N - The Prefectural Governors would do as the Education Minister ordered. Prefectural governors gave notice of the change to the head of the educational sections in the Prefectural government, and in that department there are school inspectors. They inspect all the schools, especially the primary, middle and continuation schools. The Ministry of Education itself supervises the universities and colleges. There are many inspectors in the Ministry of Education.

T - How did the school inspectors operate?

N - They would go to each school. They would talk with the teachers about the management of the school and they would visit the class rooms.

T - Were there any divergences from the regulations during the war?

N - The teachers were all very obedient.

T - Were there any cases at all that you know of?

N - There was no such brave fellow. There were many idle teachers. Almost none expressed any ideas against the government policies because they were afraid of their jobs.

T - What did the government do in case such an incident did occur?

N - Before the Sino-Japanese war such men did exist among teachers, but there were almost none afterwards. The Secret Police and the Kempei eliminated most of them. Inspectors only had to do with the technical way of teaching.

T - What kind of directives were sent out to the churches and the schools by the Education Ministry during the war?

N - Just general urgings to cooperate with the war. After it began, some special messages were sent to the prefectural governors and the directors of the higher class schools by the Ministry of Education. They explained the reasons for the war and urged all to cooperate with it.

T - Was the purpose of these messages to explain the situation to the students?

N - Yes. (There was a pause at this point, after which the respondent proceeded)
I want to tell you some more things about the points of change in the educational system during the war. In addition to the ones I told you before the war/situation became so bad that commercial schools were changed to technical schools for both boys and girls, because Japan needed technical people to make planes and other materials. The Student Mobilization Movement was started at the beginning of 1944 and it completely changed the educational system. From Middle School to University students, all were compelled to participate in labor service on the farms or in the factory. The Welfare Office would ask for certain numbers. The Ministry of Education, in the cases of the higher class schools and the Universities, allotted the number of students who were to go to certain factories according to their knowledge or technical skill. Middle School boys were allotted by the Prefectural Government. The Welfare Ministry took the initiative. Of course, the Ministry of Education had to consent to the specific assignments and orders from the Welfare Ministry to the Prefectural governors. During the Student Mobilization the students did their military training in the factories. After hours teachers who had to go with the students gave some lectures on some of the cardinal lessons.

T - What were these cardinal lessons?

N - Science, arithmetic, etc.

T - Did this apply to girls as well as boys?

N - Yes. Toward the end of the war the older boys in the Primary School also were mobilized. The government could not tell the exact number in the student mobilization movement, but I think it was about 3 million or more.

T - What can you tell me about the relations between the Ministry of Education and the religious bodies during the war?

N - The religious bodies were to cooperate to carry on the war, especially in such things as setting up child welfare centers for working mothers; in conducting specialized education for new workers before they went to the factories. This was especially true when farmers went to the factories, as they needed special technical and moral training. This was also true of civilians, businessmen and women.

T - What do you mean by moral training?

N - The reasons for the war, the necessity to cooperate, and civic morals. To teach them to sacrifice themselves for the country; to stop the black market; to encourage savings and the purchase of war bonds.

T - Was this specialized training also given to the students before they went into the factories?

N - No, they were given only technical training. The students knew the real condition better than other workers.

T - Why?

- N - Because they read the papers and listened to the radio and they already had this moral training in the schools.
- T - Were there any other functions performed by the religious bodies?
- N - Of course, they encouraged and urged their believers to carry out the war.
- T - How did the Education Ministry make sure that its requests were followed?
- N - It was all purely voluntary.
- T - Were there any non-volunteers?
- N - The government was not so strong against the religious bodies. Of course, there was the Religious Bodies Law, according to which the Ministry of Education and the prefectural governments could cancel the approval of religious establishments if they wished. They had the power to do so, but the religious bodies power was not used. The Religious Section of the Prefectural Government controlled the religious leaders. They asked them to cooperate and that was all that was necessary.
- T - I wonder if you can tell me anything about the relation between the schools and the military.
- N - The regulations regarding military training were supposed to become the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, but during the war the Ministry of Education was not so powerful. The Army and Navy were so strong that the Ministry of Education was compelled to impose lessons on military training. The Army wanted to control the military training. The Ministry of Education cooperated with the Army on curriculum, but had to carry out the plan. During the war the War Office gave special instructions to the schools through the local sub-division or region. They wished to control the military training by themselves. The Ministry of Education was very annoyed sometimes, but if the Ministry of Education did not cooperate with the Army, the Army would simply "confiscate" the schools, that is, they would take both teachers and students right into the Army. About the end of the war the conscription age was reduced to 17 years in order to control the educational system further.
- T - What can you tell me about the Army officers who were military training instructors in the schools?
- N - They were assigned by the War Office. The school master or the Minister of Education had no control over them. Technically, the Army's control was limited to instruction in military subjects, but the Army requested many other things.
- T - For example?
- N - They insisted on a reduction in the length of the school term; they made suggestions on how to teach the Japanese language and history as well as foreign languages. They interfered with the thoughts of the professors, that is, the Army would press the Ministry of Education to request the resignations of professors they did not like.
- T - Do you know where I can find documents containing these requests from the Army?

N - No, there were no documents. All the requests were purely oral.

At the end of the interrogation Mr. Naito suggested that I might talk with Mr. Nakane, who is head of the General Planning Board of the Ministry, and with Dr. K. Tanaka, Director of the School Education Bureau and professor of commercial law at Tokyo Imperial University. He said Dr. Tanaka was new in the ministry and was one of those who was most hostile to the Army during the war.