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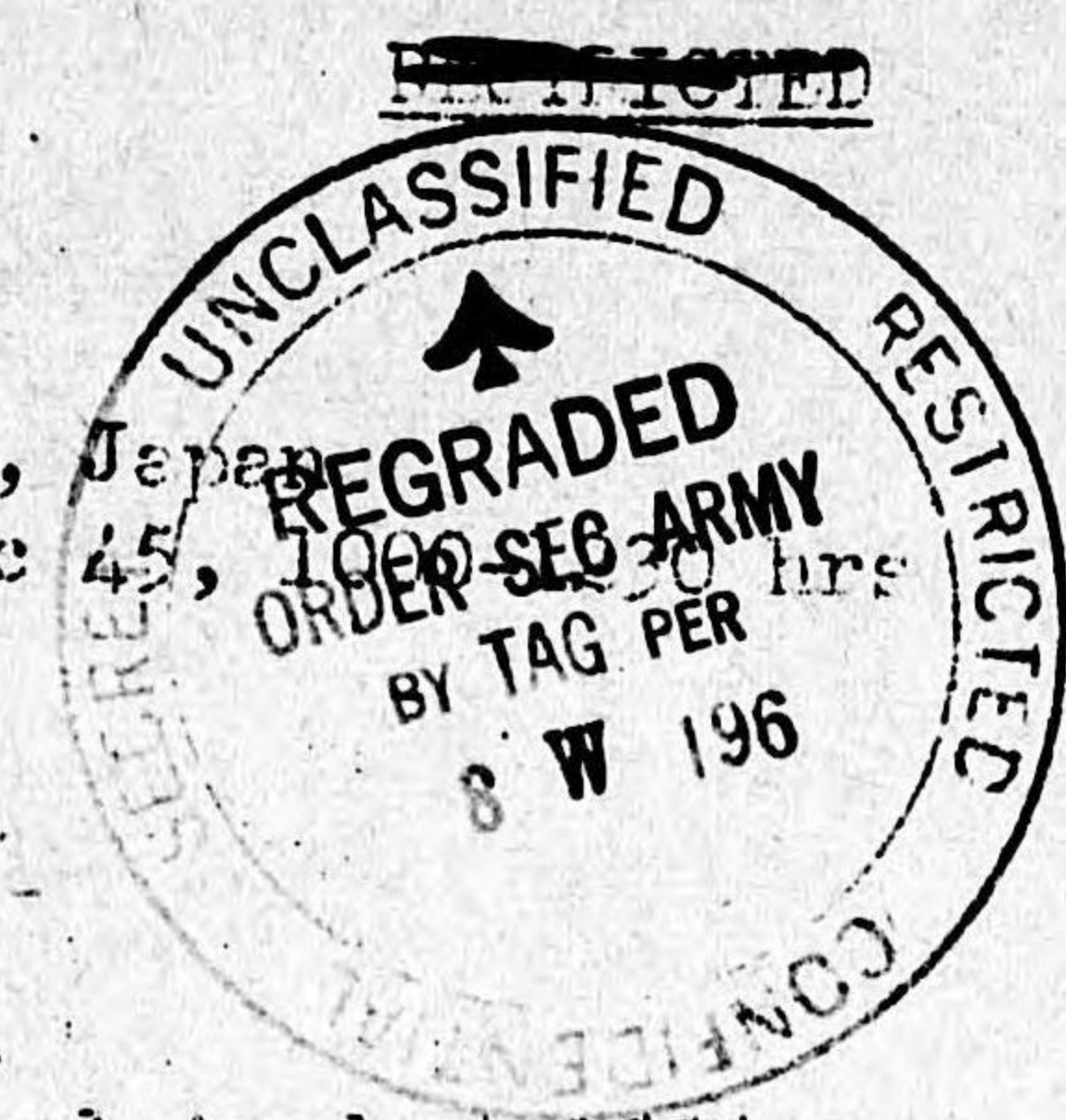
Interrogation No. 531

Place: Tokyo, Japan

Subject: The Privy Council.

Date: 26 Dec 45

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: Joint Interrogation (see \*\* below)



Personnel Interrogated and Background of Each:

Premier Baron SUZUKI, Admiral IJN (Ret). Graduated Naval Academy 1888, Naval Staff College 1895. Served during Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. Has held posts of: Vice Minister of Navy (1914); President Naval Academy (1918-19); CinC Combined Fleet (1924) and concurrently member Supreme War Council; Chief of Naval General Staff (1925); Grand Chamberlain to EMPEROR (1929); Naval Advisor to Privy Council (1933); as member of (1937), Vice President of (1940), and President of (Aug 1944) the Privy Council. Appointed Premier 7 April 1945. Served as President Educational Investigation Council in closing days of the war. (Apparently but little knowledge of English.)

Mr NISHIBUWA, the Premier's Chief Secretary. (Fluent knowledge of English.)

Where Interrogated: Privy Council Building, Tokyo.

\*\*Interrogators: Maj Gen Orvil A ANDERSON, USA, Military Studies Division  
Paul BARAN, Overall Economics Effects Division  
Burton R FISHER, Morale Division

Interpreter: Lt Cndr Walter NICHOLS, USNR

Allied Officers Present: Brig Gen Grandison GARDNER, USA

SUMMARY

Admiral SUZUKI described the Privy Council as an advisory body to the Emperor with no legislative powers and discussed its activities prior to PEARL HARBOR and during the war. On all other subjects, such as military developments, he merely gave his personal opinion, explaining that, due to his reputation as a pacifist he was not informed of political or military activities conducive to war. In conclusion he explained the Emperor's political position and activities and discussed the role of the Premier in relation to the Emperor. General subjects covered: activities of Privy Council; role of Japanese Navy in the drift towards war; occupation of French Indo-China; reasons for the Japanese shift from a defensive to an offensive strategy after Pearl Harbor; deterioration in quality of Japanese government since Russo-Japanese war; reorganization of government with SUZUKI as Premier and reasons for reorganization; the Emperor's opinions concerning an early cessation of hostilities; government methods of estimating popular opinion; attempt to negotiate peace through Russia in 1945; reasons for Japanese capitulation; effect of B-29 raids; efforts to increase plane production with underground factories; political activities of Chief Cabinet Secretary SAKAMIFUJI.

WJN



Gen GARDNER.

Q. Baron, we are very anxious to avoid the next war and are making a study of how it happened--the results--in order to avoid the next one. I'd like to --Mr Baron and Dr Fischer would like to ask a few questions on this subject and your political history and background, then the General (Anderson) here has a question or two regarding the role of air in the war.

A. I'd like to apologize, to begin with, because I'm getting to be an elderly man and am deaf in one ear. My history politically is very long and complicated, and unfortunately all my records--memoirs--were destroyed when my house was burned at the very end of the war. I may not be able to remember everything that you want to find out from me, but I will do my best. I wish to apologize for my position on account of the loss of my records.

Mr BAPAN.

Q. Baron, would you tell us whether our understanding is correct: At the time of the outbreak of the war in 1941 you were Chairman or member of the Privy Council?

A. Yes, I was a member of the Privy Council at the outbreak of the war.

Q. Could you tell us very briefly what were the functions of the Privy Council in matters of foreign policy at that time?

A. The function of the PRIVY COUNCIL at that time was to act as an advisory body to the EMPEROR. At the time war was declared, the declaration of war was submitted to the Council for approval. It was chiefly an advisory body.

Q. Let's actually go somewhat further: Quite frankly, was it more a rubber-stamping agency or did it actually make decisions which determined the course of foreign policy?

A. The only function of the PRIVY COUNCIL in this particular case was to approve the actual declaration of war; in other words, it was acting as a rubber-stamp agency. Its job was more or less to study the problem of whether war was a fit thing for the country or if, just generally, Japan could undertake such a war. The actual declaration of war and everything to do with it, aside from this approval, was the duty of the Government itself, and it was submitted as such to the PRIVY COUNCIL for approval.

Q. In the summer or fall of 1941, what was the feeling in the PRIVY COUNCIL as to the situation of the war in EUROPE? Did they feel that the AXIS was bound to win or what was their appraisal of the general war situation in GERMANY-RUSSIA, GERMANY-ENGLAND?

A. It would be difficult to say that the PRIVY COUNCIL had one specific opinion because there were more than 20 members in the Council, but I myself felt from the very beginning that the AXIS would lose the war. That was my own personal opinion, and it would be very difficult to give the opinion of the whole group.

Q. But do you feel that the prevailing opinion--the opinion of the majority --the opinion of the most important--was very optimistic from the viewpoint of the AXIS? I understand very well that the Baron is a leading liberal here, and I don't mean to ask only his opinion, but would he say that the opinion of the majority--the important majority--was very optimistic for the AXIS? I want to stress, his position was rather separate and specific in this whole picture; it is very important that he understand that?

A. I myself believe that of the people in the PRIVY COUNCIL, the majority had great doubt as to the ability of the AXIS to win the war. I think myself that very few thought they would win.



- Q. When MATSUOKA came back from GERMANY and RUSSIA in April or May--end of April, actually--1941, was it known to the PRIVY COUNCIL that MATSUOKA committed himself in BERLIN to get Japan into war against RUSSIA as soon as GERMANY attacked RUSSIA?
- A. There may have been members of the PRIVY COUNCIL who had been told of it by MATSUOKA, but there was no formal announcement of any such arrangement, and I myself had not heard of it.
- Q. Is it possible, Baron, that the War Party did not care to keep you informed very much about the number of things which were going on because you were of a slightly different--belonged to a different group in the political set-up here?

- A. In answer to your question, it's quite natural that many things in regard to planning of war with the UNITED STATES would not have reached my ears. I would not say that you could call me a liberal necessarily; whether I am a liberal or not is a question, but I was well-known for being opposed to any war against the UNITED STATES, and I had gone on record many times as being of that opinion. In my opinion it was the worst possible thing that could happen to Japan. As a Naval officer, I myself had always felt and said that the military should not have too strong a voice in the Government because if they did they were apt to run away with control of the Government, and I was widely known for that opinion. I was also widely known for an announcement which appeared in the newspapers reporting a speech I made at a banquet in San Francisco in 1918 regarding friendly relations between JAPAN and the UNITED STATES and a desire for peace. The fact that I was so widely known as being against war with the United States might have prevented anyone from letting me know about operations.

I'd like to go over again what I said about my career in the Navy: All during my tour of duty in the Navy as an officer, right up to the rank of Admiral, I had always felt that the Army and Navy should stay out of politics as much as possible for fear that they would get too much control and run away with political power. My opinion about war with the UNITED STATES was based on my experience as a naval officer.

- Q. On the other hand, when MATSUOKA came back in the Spring of 1941 it looked very much as if there should be a war--JAPAN would actually go to war against RUSSIA in compliance with the TRI-PARTITE agreement, endless promises which MATSUOKA made in BERLIN because MATSUOKA learned at that time that GERMANY was going to attack RUSSIA. Now why did JAPAN at that time, in the summer of 1941 and fall of 1941, not go to war against RUSSIA as promised by MATSUOKA but rather declared neutrality toward RUSSIA and went to war against the UNITED STATES?
- A. It is a very debateable question and one about which I am not certain at all today and one about which not many people are certain. That is, exactly what MATSUOKA did promise GERMANY, and whether the Japanese policy was determined on what MATSUOKA told Japan or on the basis of the military clique is debateable. I myself do not actually believe that MATSUOKA made any promises to GERMANY about Japan attacking RUSSIA, when GERMANY declared war against RUSSIA, because I believe that MATSUOKA on his way back to Japan stopped in RUSSIA and talked to STALIN and that those discussions concerned neutrality. There is nobody in the Privy Council now who really would know unless it was just by personal information because the Government was not accustomed to ever telling us exactly what their true intention was, what their plans were.
- Q. Would you say, to your knowledge, was there a strong wing among people who counted to go to war against RUSSIA rather than to go to war against the UNITED STATES, and what forces do you think were in favor of the war against RUSSIA rather than a war against the UNITED STATES? I wish to make it clear: I don't mean necessarily the PRIVY COUNCIL; I mean just from your knowledge as a politician?



- A. It would be extremely difficult, and almost impossible, for me to give you a reply to that question, but I would like to point out one thing: I'm certain that the Navy was from the beginning opposed to fighting a war against the UNITED STATES, and I think you'll find the Navy's opinion was more or less exactly similar to my own since I had been brought up in that tradition.
- Q. When you speak of the Navy, does the Baron refer to the Navy as a whole or does he refer to the upper commanding staff of the Navy--to people like himself and Admiral YAMAMOTO--or does he actually mean the Naval Officer Corps?
- A. I was referring naturally to only the people of importance within the Navy circle because the younger officers and men just act on orders and have no influence in that respect.
- Q. What was the Baron's opinion about the theory that the war against the UNITED STATES was, to a large extent, started by the younger officer corps in the Navy? Marquis KIDO characterized the outbreak of war against the UNITED STATES as being the end-product of the incident of February 26, 1936, instigated by the junior officers of the Japanese Navy? What is the Baron's opinion on this view?
- A. To a certain extent that may be true, and in my opinion the gradual progress toward war followed by JAPAN was partly due to the impetus provided by the younger officers, and this tendency could be described as a disease which I believe spread from the younger officers in the Army to the younger officers in the Navy. The disease spread through both services, and to a certain extent you could blame that as a cause of the war.
- Q. In other words, your previous statement that the entire Navy as such was against the war is to be modified to the certain Naval officers who were against the war but actually did not represent the entire Navy?
- A. I think that is generally correct except of course there were naturally people among the younger officers who were opposed to war.
- Q. After INDO-CHINA was occupied--I mean FRENCH INDO-CHINA and then SOUTH INDO-CHINA--was your feeling at that time that it would lead to war or not?
- A. At that time I did not believe this action was going to lead to war. However I did believe that it was a very dangerous situation and that this could be regarded as a cause for war.
- Q. Did the Navy approve of this particular action--the action moving South into INDO-CHINA?
- A. I can't answer that question from any knowledge I have of it because I and the other members of the Privy Council usually discovered these things after they had occurred. We would hear about them and think that "this is extraordinary", but we had no knowledge beforehand of any such move. However I suppose that the occupation of FRENCH INDO-CHINA must have been a joint Army-Navy operation, probably planned by the joint staffs as I don't believe that it could have been one or the other which was largely responsible for it.
- Q. One more question: After the war against the UNITED STATES broke out, what was your personal feeling how this war would be run--I mean, what kind of prospects did you have, how did you expect this war to come to an end?
- A. I would like to give you my opinion on that subject as a former Naval officer since I am most familiar with the problems that the Navy faced. The Navy had always planned a full strength sufficient for the defense of Japan, so at the beginning of the war it seemed likely that Japan might win as long as it played a defensive game, but I myself felt that, in a long drawn-out war, Japan would be seriously handicapped. For instance: You have the 5-5-3 ratio--LONDON CONFERENCE. The UNITED STATES not only had this five-to-three ratio but it was a country ten times the size of JAPAN. In addition, when you were fighting the UNITED STATES you were fighting ENGLAND too which



made your ratio ten to three. I thought that against those overwhelming odds Japan would probably lose, so that from the very beginning, although I thought things might go well for a while, I believed Japan would eventually lose the war. That is, as a Naval observer.

Q. As a politician did you have the opinion that a negotiated peace might result from the big initial success of Japan?

A. I thought a negotiated peace would be very difficult to arrange because, naturally, when you have two countries at war you get nationalism and determination to fight which prevents almost any possibility of negotiating peace. However I did believe that after war continued for a certain time without any apparent decisive point being reached, and a certain stage had been reached where the war looked as though it was going to drag out for a long period of time, possibly then negotiations should be made to bring the war to a close.

Q. Did you advocate such negotiation at any point during the war?

A. I did not myself advocate a negotiated peace, and this may be my fault--my fault that I did not advocate it--but it was mostly because I was so opposed to the general political set-up in Japan at the time. If you compare the wartime program in Japan during this war with that during the war with CHINA, say, and the war with RUSSIA, the present Government is far inferior. I believe that, as a result of those wars, the Japanese became rather proud and careless, generally speaking.

Q. You mean, the old SINO-JAPANESE War?

A. Yes. They became generally sort of reckless. The Government became more and more relaxed, and I myself felt that I would have no influence over it in anything I said, so I just didn't advocate anything. I did speak out once or twice on Naval affairs, but I never brought out anything about this negotiated peace.

Q. Does that imply at the same time the weight of opinion which the PRIVY COUNCIL was permitted to give diminished gradually, or was it just your private feeling that you had nothing to say?

A. What I just said was my personal opinion. Now, the PRIVY COUNCIL had virtually no influence over the political thought of the Government and no power of direction. The PRIVY COUNCIL was really nothing more than an opinionated body and was consulted at times, for instance, when there were direct orders from the EMPEROR--directives about national policy, national law--but it actually had very little to do with the making of policies and laws and, as a consulted body, it had really no power to block any plan presented by the Government, although at times, as the result of opposition by the PRIVY COUNCIL, certain policies were abandoned. However, may I point out that it had no power of its own to control; the functions of the PRIVY COUNCIL were very limited.

Gen ANDERSON.

Q. I'd like to ask first what the Admiral thought the air success--the Japanese air success--in their attack on our battleships at PEARL HARBOR, and later the successful attack against the "REPULSE" and the "PRINCE OF WALES" had in its effect on Naval thought on how the Naval war should be conducted against AMERICA?

A. The attack on the "PRINCE OF WALES" and the "REPULSE" and the attack on PEARL HARBOR brought to my attention for the first time the importance of air in naval warfare, simply because I, myself, had been retired for some twenty years prior to the outbreak of war, and so I had forgotten--not kept in touch with recent development of armaments and weapons. However when this happened, I believed that, although JAPAN had such spectacular success at PEARL HARBOR and down in MALAYA, it was because of her initial advantage in being the attacking nation, and, knowing that the UNITED STATES was more advanced in aircraft construction and technique than JAPAN, if the war



continued beyond a certain point the UNITED STATES would be able to make up for the disadvantage and itself be able to utilize the same kind of tactics and strategy against the Japanese. I felt that although these first successes were spectacular they did not by any means indicate Japan's winning the war by such methods. That was my opinion on the basis of my past study of military history and strategy.

Q. What influence, if the Admiral can give it, did those two successes have in causing the Japanese Navy to abandon the defensive employment of her Navy and proceed to an offensive course of action by expanding out into the Pacific and apparently endeavoring to obtain decisive fleet action with our Navy in the earlier phases of the war?

A. It is quite possible, I think, that the Navy, encouraged by its successes at PEAPL HARBOR and down in MALAYA--rather flushed with its success--went on to an offensive policy all throughout the Pacific. However, what I said first was my opinion of Japanese Naval Strategy at the beginning of the war. I thought it was a very poor strategy from the very beginning simply because, although Japan had seized the initiative and attacked and would have to maintain a certain degree of initiative because it had started out on the offensive, I did not believe it was a good thing to expand too much because we would have to spread our forces all through a tremendous sea area with concentration on certain islands which would mean that we would have scattered forces with only a small amount of strength at each given place. Since all communication was by sea to these various places, it would become an increasingly difficult problem for the Japanese Navy to maintain communications, and small garrisons at various points would not be sufficient to withstand a heavy attack on one given point by a superior force. On that basis I myself believed that the Japanese policy of expansion to such an extent was a poor policy.

Q. I recognize that very clearly; that is why I was trying to explore the subject to determine, if possible, whether or not the strategic employment of the Japanese Navy that they had accepted hinged its success, or its expected success, on decisive fleet action and whether or not, in your opinion, they had accepted the hazard of this over-expansion in order to force a decisive fleet action before AMERICA had been able to over-build the Japanese Navy?

A. Yes, I believe that, since JAPAN had had great successes early in the war, it was trying to press its advantage as much as possible in order to fight a showdown battle.

Q. That were the political and military factors that led to the reorganization of the Government with the appointment of the Baron as Premier in April of 1945?

A. There were probably two main reasons for the change of Government: The military reason being that the people had lost confidence in the Government because of its false propaganda. Whereas the Government had been advertising victories continually, they had not mentioned any defeats, so that where newspapers carried stories of great victories all through the Pacific, they never mentioned defeats--they never mentioned losses and casualties. But you can't keep facts from the people forever, and gradually these facts began to come out.

At the time of the Leyte operation, Imperial General Headquarters issued an order for a fight to the death, describing the battle as decisive in defense of the Homeland and referring to it as a TENNOSAN battle, TENNOSAN being a mountain in Japan on which a crucial battle in Japanese history had been fought. Local successes on LEYTE were featured, but defeats were never mentioned until finally casual references were made to the enemy's occupation of LEYTE. Such incidents naturally weakened the people's faith in Government reports on the war situation.



I believe the second reason for the fall of the Government was the difference of opinion within the Cabinet itself--disagreement among the members of the Cabinet. When I was called upon to take over as PREMIER, I myself had been opposed to ever becoming PREMIER: I had never wanted to be PREMIER but under the circumstances I felt there was nothing I could do but accept the post. Therefore I accepted and became PREMIER.

Gen GARDNER: I have been wondering: When the people lost confidence in the Government, how was that transmitted up to the Government? Did the people themselves complain or how does it--

Mr BARAN: --manifest itself?

Mr FISHER: In deliberation within the highest circles, how did they know there was this discontentment among the people?

A. The peoples' dissatisfaction with the Government would never have appeared in the papers for fear of Government retaliation or because of Government control. Although people were afraid of talking or writing anything among themselves because of the KEMPEI--military police--the KEMPEI were naturally in touch with things that were going on and could report any general opinions such as dissatisfaction with the Government. In addition to that there were occasional cases of sabotage which naturally indicated dissatisfaction.

Gen ANDERSON.

Q. What general and/or specific instructions regarding the war were given to the PREMIER at that time--at the time he accepted that appointment--by either the EMPEROR or by the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL?

A. At the time I became PREMIER, I did not receive any direct order from the EMPEROR, but I understood clearly from what the EMPEROR said to me at that time that the EMPEROR was very much concerned over the situation that JAPAN faced in the war, and he was very concerned over the death of civilians due to bombing, and the general sickness and the great number of civilian casualties, and the great losses in the field of battle. Therefore I was given to understand that it was the EMPEROR'S desire for me to make every effort to bring the war to a conclusion as quickly as possible. So as PREMIER I started out with the purpose of bringing the war to a close as quickly as possible.

Q. When did you first initiate positive steps to bring the war to a close and what was the action that you took?

A. I was naturally in a very difficult position because, on the one hand I had to carry out, to the best of my ability, the mission given me by the EMPEROR to arrange for a conclusion of the war, whereas if anyone heard of this I would naturally have been attacked and probably killed by people opposed to such a policy. So that on the one hand, I had to advocate an increase in the war effort and determination to fight on, whereas through diplomatic channels and any means available, I had to try to negotiate with other countries to stop the war.

During May and June (1945) we carried on negotiation with RUSSIA since RUSSIA was the only neutral country left accessible. In our negotiations with RUSSIA we progressed so far that we were on the point of sending Prince KONOYE as an agent to MOSCOW, but just at that time the POTSDAM CONFERENCE began and then, as you know, after the POTSDAM CONFERENCE it was impossible to make any headway so that our negotiations simply dragged on until August, near the end of the war.

In answer to your question, the only thing to do was to negotiate with a neutral country such as RUSSIA to bring the war to a close, with the understanding that JAPAN would have to accept certain terms to effect that negotiation.

Q. What were specific proposals--concessions--that JAPAN was prepared to accept made as a basis for negotiations through the RUSSIANS?



A. JAPAN had not actually been able to make any decision regarding what terms it would accept, principally because it didn't know what demands would be made. There was no way of knowing what the UNITED NATIONS wanted since no declaration had been made, and JAPAN itself naturally, under the circumstances, was prepared to accept almost any terms in order to achieve peace. Prince KONOYE was on the point of going to MOSCOW with JAPAN's decision regarding what terms it would accept when the POTSDAM CONFERENCE began, and since the negotiation was still at a point where it wasn't even clear whether RUSSIA would act as intermediary or not, we were in a quandary as to what the general situation was and what demands we would have to meet. Just at that time the POTSDAM DECLARATION came, and that was the end of attempted negotiation.

Q. What were the final political and military factors that caused Japan to accept the POTSDAM DECLARATION?

A. May I explain the causes of the end of war as being, generally, desire of all hands to prevent tremendous loss of life on all sides to civilians and military, and from the political aspect the EMPEROR was terribly concerned over the tremendous losses in personnel and the suffering of his people and wanted to prevent any further losses. He also felt that any landing in JAPAN would cause a tremendous loss of life to the Allied countries, and he wanted to prevent that unnecessary loss too; therefore he was desirous of ending the war by negotiation. From the military aspect there was a difference of opinion: Some wanted to fight it out to the finish and others wanted to quit. Those who wanted to continue felt that there was one thing JAPAN could do and only one thing, and that was to fight it out in a decisive battle at the very end, leaving it to a question of victory or defeat in a decisive battle when the AMERICANS landed in JAPAN itself.

However, the outcome of such a battle was very much in doubt, and in addition to that, whether JAPAN won or lost such a battle, it would be perhaps no nearer victory because, while perhaps we would have won a local victory, we would still have been practically a defeated nation and could never win a final victory and would probably succumb to further attacks from the enemy. In other words, such a decisive battle, although it might result in victory for JAPAN, would result in the end in a probable defeat, and in any case a certain tremendous loss in personnel, so more or less from the point of view of preventing this tremendous loss of Japanese lives, I believe that both the political authority and the military authority were anxious to end the war at that stage.

Q. Specifically, what importance did the Baron or the SUPREME COUNCIL attach to the B-29 air attacks on JAPAN that were then being conducted and the threat of an ever-increasing intensity, you see, of that type of air attack against JAPAN proper?

A. I myself recognized the B-29 as a very superior weapon. As you can see it was doing tremendous damage to JAPAN, and in every direction towns and cities and homes were being burned up. It seemed to me unavoidable that in the long run JAPAN would be almost destroyed by air attack so that merely on the basis of the B-29s alone I was convinced that JAPAN should sue for peace. On top of the B-29 raids came the ATOMIC BOMB, immediately after the POTSDAM DECLARATION, which was just one additional reason for giving in and was a very good one and gave us the opportune moment to make open negotiations for peace. I myself on the basis of the B-29 raids felt that the cause was hopeless.

Q. Had the Japanese SUPREME WAR COUNCIL considered the degree of probability that AMERICA might decline in invade on the surface and continue its operations solely by this increased aerial bombardment? If so, what plans had they considered as a course of action that they could possibly take against that type of military action?

(Note: At this point, Mr. NISHIGURA, The Premier's Chief Secretary, was admitted to the conference.)



- A. The SUPREME WAR COUNCIL, up to the time of the ATOMIC BOMB was dropped, did not believe that Japan could be beaten by air attack alone. They also believed that the UNITED STATES would land and not attempt to bomb Japan out of the war. On the other hand there were many prominent people who did believe that the UNITED STATES could win the war by just bombing alone. However the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL, not believing that, had proceeded with the one plan of fighting a decisive battle at the landing point and was making every possible preparation to meet such a landing. They proceeded with that plan until the ATOMIC BOMB was dropped, after which they believed the UNITED STATES would no longer attempt to land when it had such a superior weapon--that the UNITED STATES need not land when it had such a weapon; so at that point they decided that it would be best to sue for peace.
- Q. Did the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL have an alternate plan for military resistance to meet the event of AMERICA not landing but continuing its air offensive and blockade against JAPAN, not committing themselves to a landing operation at all? Did they have a plan of action, a course of action, to follow in that military event?
- A. If the UNITED STATES had not landed in JAPAN and had just continued bombing JAPAN, I believe the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL intended to fight AMERICA in the air with planes. At that time JAPAN was on the point of finishing the development of a superior-type plane and various other weapons such as rocket planes with which we hoped to offset the advantage given you by the B-29s, so that I believe the alternate plan was that, if you did not land, we would fight it out with you in the air with the new equipment which we hoped to have available very shortly.
- Q. Did you consider that the state of the Japanese industry and the progressive attacks that were being made on it would permit the development of an effective air weapon to oppose these invasions, these air attacks?
- A. The Japanese had planned to put their factories and air installations underground. Although our production had fallen off, we believed that, with this plan of going underground, we could perhaps continue to manufacture 1700 planes a month (that is just a figure which I picked at random and may not be accurate). I am not too familiar with the subject because it is a little bit technical, and I don't know too much about it, but I believed that, by going underground we could prevent bombing from having very much effect on our actual strength in production. Although we had a very all-inclusive plan for going underground and fighting it out to a finish, I don't believe we'd made much progress on it at the time the war ended.

Mr FISHER.

- Q. You mentioned before that you learned the state of opinion of the people through KEMPEI report. We'd like to know, in general, not only that particular medium but in general what means were available to him and his cabinet for learning what the Japanese people were thinking during the war?
- A. I myself don't know too much about the details of the matter, but just in outline; naturally when a nation is at war, if there is sabotage in factories or elsewhere, it is the duty of the military police and ordinary police not only to report those incidents to the military but also to the Government, so that the Government would know.

Towards the end of the war there was a considerable amount of personal friction, perhaps you would say, or antipathy between civilians and the military. The Government believed that such a situation would only occur at a time when the people had lost faith in the Government.

- Q. Well, the thing I wanted to know is, I'm interested in the manner in which the Cabinet would be informed about public opinion. You told us before that the KEMPEI reports were one means of finding out. How about Police Bureau of Home Affairs Ministry--wasn't there any channel there by which public opinion was sent up to Cabinet level? In other words, we want to find out what channels there were for the Cabinet to learn about public opinion?



A. The three main sources of information on the subject were: (1) The Military Police; (2) the Police Headquarters of the NAIMUSHO (Internal Affairs Dept.) and (3) investigators sent out by the Government to find out what the situation was in certain areas--local agents of the government who made direct reports.

Q. Direct reports to the Government?

A. To the Government.

Mr NISHIGURA: May I explain more fully the functions of these people who were representing the Government: They were not officials; they were committees of civilians; they merely formed this committee and would go out and talk to people and try to get them to voice their opinions freely. This was evidently first adopted at the time of Admiral SUZUKI's taking over as PRIME MINISTER. It was on account of the fact that they were civilians, for instance, that they were able to obtain information from civilians about their feeling towards the military.

Q. These civilians: Under whose control were they?

A. The cabinet itself had control of them.

Q. In other words, these people were directly under the Cabinet?

A. Yes.

Q. Was information on what the people were thinking at any time the subject of Cabinet discussions?

A. Actually the opinions of the people were not discussed in the cabinet--weren't brought up as a matter of discussion--but there were people in the Cabinet called "advisors", a group of perhaps ten civilians of whom one was the head of this group of civilians who went out, so there was a great deal of discussion among the advisors, but only their reports were read to the Cabinet itself; a sub-committee was about what it amounted to.

Q. Who was the head of this sub-committee? Who got these reports from the people in the field?

A. The PREMIER himself could be called the nominal head of the committee because it was appointed by me, but under the PREMIER there was a director of the committees.

Q. Director of the Cabinet Advisors?

A. Of the Cabinet Advisors, with various members assigned to each section, but it was purely a temporary affair, and the personalities changed so frequently that it would be very hard to just pick one man out. The best thing to do would be to say that I was the nominal head of it.

Q. There are just two more questions I have: (1) After this director of the Cabinet Advisors group had gathered some material through his sources on what the people were thinking, could the Baron tell us (a) whether the cabinet considered those reports, and (b) what specific subjects they would consider as to what the people were thinking?

A. The committees sent out were sent out to investigate problems of all natures in respect to the people, and so it would be hard to pick out just any one. The people who were appointed in charge of each particular committee were people of some importance, and they themselves in turn appointed those under them. They went out and carried on these investigations and then brought back their report, and on the basis of those reports, the Cabinet would act, taking into consideration the implications of the reports, and would frequently make changes on the basis of the reports, so that it had some considerable influence on the actions of the Cabinet.



- Q. The second point I had was: As PREMIER, did you have any direct control or did you make any attempt to control the policy on information put out by the Cabinet Board of Information and other informative parts of the Government?
- A. The committee which was formed to investigate public opinion was formed in early June and didn't even finish its work until late in July so that actually it was too late to have much effect on the Government because the end of the war came along. However as a result of the investigations, it was found necessary to change certain laws and revise certain set policies so that any such decisions were announced through the Cabinet Information Office by myself as the PRIME MINISTER.
- Q. Evidently Mr NISHIGURA is familiar with all this: What was his role during this Cabinet?

Cmdr NICHOLS: You were the Secretary of the Cabinet?

Mr NISHIGURA: Yes, as a civilian I was also a temporary civilian appointee.

Cmdr NICHOLS: You were a member of the committee?

Mr. NISHIGURA: Yes, I was.

- Q. Well, that's fine; we'd very much like to speak to you, perhaps some time in the future. Who was the Chief Cabinet Secretary?
- A. Mr SAKAMEZU. He was a very brilliant man with a broad background and a great deal of education. He seemed to know a lot about almost all subjects. I chose him to act in the Cabinet because I felt I needed a strong supporter, as a friend, in the Cabinet. Unfortunately, because of his youth, he was the subject of envy of various other members of the Cabinet, and there were even people who came to me and asked if I didn't think it would be a good thing to get rid of this man. I believe it was simply because of his youth that he was the subject of envy; I myself believe that he is a very hard worker, an industrious person, and that he has a great future, and that Japan must rely on men like SAKAMEZU to reconstruct Japan in the future.

I want to make it quite clear that, in the Japanese political framework, the man who is responsible for events--political events--is the PREMIER. He is appointed and he himself in turn appoints all his various Cabinet members. All decisions relative to government policies and actions are made in different councils and decided upon by various groups inside the Government. Their decisions are then submitted for approval to the EMPEROR, so that all policies and actions taken by the Japanese Government are really the product of the Government itself, of which the PRIME MINISTER is the head. Political decisions cannot be regarded as the responsibility of the EMPEROR.

Ordinarily speaking, even though He himself may be opposed to the proposed plans or policies, the EMPEROR will approve them. Therefore I want it very clearly understood that the PRIME MINISTER throughout recent Japanese history is the man who is responsible for the actions of the Japanese Government. That is, with only two exceptions: (1) In the February 26 incident of 1936, the EMPEROR himself voluntarily ordered Japanese troops to attack the revolutionaries barricaded in TOKYO because the Government had more or less split up; the PREMIER was in hiding, various Cabinet members couldn't be found, so of his own volition the EMPEROR ordered the Army to put down the revolt; (2) at the end of the war, just recently, he again gave his own personal order to stop the war. These are the only two occasions upon which the Emperor has exercised his personal power.

The situation at the end of the war was, that no one could agree on whether to continue the war or to end it. There were those who wanted to end the war by a negotiated peace and those who wanted to fight it out to the last, and no matter how many arguments and meetings we had, we could never get a complete agreement anywhere in the government. Therefore I was given the task of presenting to the EMPEROR the Government's split decision on whether to continue the war or to end it. I want to point out that in this particular



case the EMPEROR himself made the decision to end the war because of his personal greivance over the suffering of his people and also because of his humanistic feeling in regard to the loss of life which would be involved by both sides in a landing operation and a fight to the finish.

This is an extremely difficult point to understand, the role of the EMPEROR and the PREMIER in Japanese policy, and I don't believe there is any country in the world that has a similar organization. I want the EMPEROR's position to be made very clear so that it will be understood. On the second occasion when the EMPEROR took his active role in politics, at the end of the war, it was because the PREMIER, at his direction, had been able to lead the Government up to a point where it could be left to the EMPEROR to make the decision; in other words, I had prepared the way.

End of Interrogation



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Summary

Admiral SUZUKI described the Privy Council as an advisory body to the Emperor with no legislative powers and discussed its activities prior to Pearl Harbor and during the war. On all other subjects, such as military developments, he merely gave his personal opinion, explaining that due to his reputation as a pacifist he was not informed of political or military activities conducive to war. In conclusion he explained the Emperor's political position and activities and discussed the role of the Premier in relation to the Emperor. General subjects covered: activities of Privy Council; role of Japanese Navy in the drift towards war; occupation of French Indo China; reasons for the Japanese shift from a defensive to an offensive strategy after Pearl Harbor; deterioration in quality of Japanese government since Russo-Japanese war; reorganization of government with SUZUKI as Premier and reasons for reorganization; the Emperor's opinions concerning an early cessation of hostilities; government methods of estimating popular opinion; attempt to negotiate peace through Russia in 1945; reasons for Japanese capitulation; effect of B-29 raids; efforts to increase plane production with underground factories; political activities of Chief Cabinet Secretary SAKAMEZU.

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