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UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
MORALE DIVISION
(Pacific)

Interview with TSUKAHARA, Toshiro, Board of Information, KIKAKU SHIRYO BU, YORON CHOSA KA.

Subject: Information on the Board of Information Public Opinion Survey.

Interviewer: Capt. Wm. Magistretti

Place: Meiji Building

Time: 9:30 - 11:30, 12 December 1945

BACKGROUND:

Subject assumed his present duties as head of the Public Opinion Survey Section of the Board of Information in October 1945. Prior to that he was in the Political Section of Domei. During his undergraduate days at the Tokyo Imperial University he studied Sociology under Professor M Teizo Toda. He graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1935.

SUMMARY: Topics.

1. Public Opinion During the War in Japan.
2. Various types of controls exercised by the Government on the press and the people.
3. Effectiveness of foreign broadcasts and printed propaganda.

INTERVIEW:

M - What was Japanese public opinion at the beginning of the war?

T - There was no public opinion in Japan because Tojo did not permit free talk. However there was discontent but no true public opinion. There was no survey of public opinion as to whether Japan should go to war. Japan went to war at the Emperor's wishes. After going to war the people were overwhelmingly in support of it.

M - What was public feeling in regard to the bombing?

T - At the time of the bombing the government told the people that they could resist by civilian air raid precaution measures. However, the results were very poor and the people were disappointed because they couldn't resist.

M - Can you give me something more about public opinion at the beginning of the war?

T - At the outset the Japanese had some success because of the enemy's unpreparedness and the people felt that they had beaten the American fleet and had won. However, at the end of the expansion in the South the gradual counter-attack began and about the time of the battle of Okinawa people began to think seriously about the war. They felt they must end the war here. Some voices calling for a negotiated peace were heard within the government and within the economic world. Tojo only wanted to continue the war. That includes certain factions in the War Ministry and the Chief of Staff. However, these were controlled by the Tojo clique, and those opposed to the Tojo clique were eliminated by means of various laws. As a matter of propaganda, false communiques and false news reports were sent out.

M - What about government control of newspapers?

T - The first stage was reached in 1935 when the newspapers became more or less a government organ. In 1940 and 1941 the policy of one paper for each Ken was arrived at. At that time various newspapers were amalgamated. Prior to that the Domei Agency had become merely an official organ. Domei was controlled by government directives by the Censorship Section and by the Second Division of the Board of Information so that they were unable to write the truth.

M - When did the people begin to disbelieve the news?

T - They started to disbelieve from Guadalcanal on. The people wanted the truth and not reports of "changing the front", so the people began to look behind the news. From Saipan on they began to disbelieve the news entirely, even the general public. With the bombing the people began to feel that the war was impossible. I felt that the U. S. would try to divide opinion by bombing Japan, but not landing. However, I was criticized for this opinion. The government felt that they could ward off the effects of the bombing by public air raid precautions. They told the people that they were knocking the planes down, but they could not hold out in this policy. At the time of Okinawa the people realized that the war was impossible. There was talk of landings at various places. The government was unable to suppress listening to foreign broadcasts. The people felt that Japan was beaten by the bombing. However, they felt that they should fight the landings. The military started to deploy their troops in opposition to a landing, but there were various bottlenecks in the movement of troops, etc.

M - Did you listen to foreign news?

T - I heard foreign news broadcasts and believed them, because the

announcements could be shown to be true in light of later factual developments. Of course, there were some false reports.

M - Were you ever overseas?

T - I went to China in 1937 and covered the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Col. Hata, Vice-Chief of Staff, told me that the incident would become bigger and bigger, so I went out to cover it. I felt that the enemy was being very up-startish in their claims and thought a good deal about the war (he apologized for this, saying that later on he regretted it). I went to the Southern Regions in 1942, to French Indo-China, Malaya and Java. I was surprised to find that the various peoples did not really welcome the Japanese from their heart, as we were told in Japan. The Japanese military government policy was poor. I felt that after failing in China perhaps the military government policy would be much better in the Southern Regions, but it was not. The military civilian government officials were held down by the military so no good personnel would go out.

M - What were the various means of control of the press?

T - Censorship, various control laws, and various newspapermen were watched. (Note: Presumably by the police).

M - What were the relationship of the Board of Information and Domei?

T - Domei was more or less attached to the Board of Information. The Board of Information set up the basic policy and then the various ministries wrote up their own hand-outs. The ministries had both verbal and written announcements. Editorials were only controlled by censorship. In some cases, the press had direct instructions from the military public relations offices even to the extent that they were told what type of headlines and how much to write. The Army was the strongest in this regard. However, when the Army and Navy were incorporated into the Board of Information, almost all directives came from there.

M - What is the function of the Board of Information?

T - Only the eyes and ears. It is not the mouth of the government.

M - Can you tell me something about the public opinion survey?

T - We are conducting the public opinion survey for democratic purposes. We submit reports to the Cabinet and to General MacArthur, through Lt. Col. North. First, we have to educate the people as to true facts because of the false reports during the war and then we have to interview them. Some interviews run 1 hour and some run 1 day. We will go through the prefectural authorities and the police to select representatives of the

various groups. We use students and newspapermen.

M - What about control of speech and press in the future?

T - It is all right to control speech during wartime, but there is no necessity for such in the future. However, there should be some control over extremes of speech. For instance, some people are already saying that America has set up plans for making Japan into a battlefield. The police should tell the individuals that they should not say such things, as it is not right. For instance, some people are already saying that the Russo-American war has already started.

M - What was the greatest strength of Japan?

T - I believe the greatest strength was that the people obeyed the orders of the Emperor.

M - What was the greatest weakness of Japan?

T - Lack of scientific strength and the power of Japanese politics. The people would not follow government orders. They would not improve production in spite of government requests. The level of Japanese culture is low.

M - What will happen in Japan in the future?

T - If things go on as at present Japan will become like the Philippines. The people feel that there is no use in doing anything. The people will become communists or annihilists.

M - What is desirable in the future for Japan?

T - Japan should be built along cultural lines. The former leaders instilled warlike thoughts in the people, but in the future the people should cooperate and go along with the West. They should have good political parties representative of the people. However, this won't happen in the coming election. The country people feel that everything will be all right so long as they eat. They should be educated. The grammar schools should be revised. A good cabinet will probably appear the end of next year. All the others will be no good. The Bureaucrats are getting out gradually. The papers and the people should attack them (i.e., verbally).

M - Whom should I consult with reference to the Domei Reports on public opinion about the bombing and farm conditions during the war.

T - Mr. Masu Kato, formerly with the Research Section of Domei, who is now with Kyodo, will probably know about them.

M - What about propaganda through religion?

T - I have no interest in that phase.

M - What about propaganda or controls through the ministry of education?

T - Probably some.

M - Did you see foreign propaganda, such as leaflets, etc.?

T - I saw some. One which I saw in Chiba prefecture was the first. It had a comic drawing and the message was that the militarists were over-riding the people. The government wanted to prevent the people from seeing them but the people concealed them and probably believed them because the facts became apparent later on. By and large they were pretty well done.

M - How did you feel about the war?

T - I felt that they should negotiate a peace in the early stages, but knew that the war was hopeless at Saipan. The country was pulled into the war by Tojo's "short mind". There was a lot of friction between the Army and Navy. Even the Army and Navy reporters quarreled among themselves.

Mr. Tsukahara then arranged for a luncheon with Mr. Atsuyasa Fukada, formerly a foreign office official who had been in the Secretariat of the Board of Information all during the war.