

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
A.P.O. 234 c/o PM San Francisco

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION NO. 494

Place: Tokyo
Date: 1 Dec 1945

SUBJECT: Japanese War Plans

Person Interrogated and Background: Admiral OIKAWA Koshiro.

Member Supreme War Council. Graduated Naval Academy & Naval Staff College. 1912-32, various posts including Aide-de-Camp to Crown Prince (now H.I.M. HIROHITO) and member Naval General Staff. Appointed Director Naval Academy 1932. Director Naval Aviation Dept 1936. CinC CHINA SEAS Fleet 1938-40. Navy Minister, 2d & 3d KONOYE Cabinets Sept 40 to Oct 41. Member Supreme War Council 1943-44. Chief Naval General Staff and reappointed member Supreme War Council, May 45. Understands but does not speak English.

Where Interrogated: Room 710 Meiji Bldg.

Interrogator: Col Ramsay D POTTS, AC

Interpreter: Mr MIZOTA, A Japanese National

Allied Officers

present: Col Philip COLE, GSC (1st Half of interrogation)

SUMMARY

Admiral OIKAWA showed a singular lack of knowledge on certain vital matters concerning Naval affairs which he, as NAVY MINISTER, should have been in position to know in detail. Specifically he disclosed only vague and hazy information on the Naval shipbuilding program and the methodology of deciding priorities.

Admiral OIKAWA undertook at this point to secure the data concerning Naval construction, both before and during the war. This data will be compiled and submitted to the Survey. His testimony relative to the importance the Japanese Naval Staff attached to the aircraft carrier before the Battle of MIDWAY is at variance with testimony given by Admiral NAGANO.

In advancing reasons why land-based air forces could not be unified under one control, he revealed the extent to which the Japanese Army and Navy were victimizing the public welfare with their own selfish stupidity.

General war plans and the effect of certain operations upon planning are discussed.

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Admr OIKAWA: I wish to state that my house was burned, all my papers, including diaries and other documents were destroyed, so that whatever I state when you ask me a question must be from memory and that is not too dependable. I may not be able to come up to your expectation, but I will tell you anything that I am able to.

(Note: All questions are by Col POTTS unless otherwise indicated.)

Q. In 1936 when you were appointed director of the Naval Aviation Dept, what were your duties in that post at that time?

A. At the time I took over the position from Admr YAMAMOTO, my immediate predecessor, the actual position of our Naval Air Force was of an extremely low order as compared with the developments later in the war. Therefore, my predecessor, Admr YAMAMOTO, had already started to outline plans for an expanding air force, especially by mass production. The plans were more or less completed when I took over, so actually my work in that position was to carry out the plans which had been laid down by my predecessor, and I believe that I succeeded more or less in doing what I set out to do, principally with reference to mass production of the CHUKO (Medium size bombers) and the ZERO fighter.

Q. Did this expansion plan include plans for building a greater number of aircraft carriers?

A. No, only slightly if at all; the reason being that at that time the only thing that was in our minds was the situation in CHINA so that emphasis was being concentrated upon aircraft themselves and not on aircraft carriers.

Q. In other words, a land-based Naval air Force?

A. That is right, because at that time we did not have in mind fighting a sea power, so that in the expansion program of the aircraft themselves, greater emphasis was placed on land-based planes than on the carrier planes.

Q. Was any consideration given at this time to a consolidation of all land-based air forces under one command?

A. There was such an idea in Army circles, but the Army Air Force at that time, and particularly the pilots, were so inferior as compared with the Navy that the Navy was persistent that it must maintain its air force independently, and that was especially true with regard to long-range bombers. The Navy was not quite so insistent as regards the short-range fighters, but on long-range bombing planes the Navy insisted that it must maintain an independent air force.

Q. Following that same line of thought, what was the assigned role of the Navy as an aviation force at that time? What was going to be their role on the Continent?

A. Operation plans on the Continent were not very clear-cut at that time, and I believe that the main role of the Navy's air force was a defensive one.

Q. In building certain types of airplanes, the bombers you speak of and the ZERO fighter, did the Japanese Naval air force rely upon foreign sources for basic ideas as to types of planes to be built?

A. Both as regards the CHUKO (Medium bomber) and ZERO fighter, they were designed by Japanese technicians. That is especially true as regards the main parts of the aircraft such as the body and the engine. It was about that time that our engine technique reached a stage where the results were fairly satisfactory. As an exception, some parts were imported from your country; we cite the instance of the automatic flight control.

Admr OIKAWA

Q. I wasn't speaking so much of the actual construction of the engine, etc. as I was thinking of the idea as to the type of airplane you would build. In other words, you would build a bomber with a certain range. Were the military characteristics influenced by any foreign aviation experts?

A. It is possible that our technicians might have received hints or suggestions from papers and magazines of other countries, but I did not hear at the time. For instance, we had foreign advisors come to Japan to teach us.

Q. Going back on the point of unifying the land-based forces under one command, you stated that the Army had worse training than the Navy. Wouldn't it have been possible, by consolidation of the forces, to adopt the best training program, which was the Navy's, and therefore bring the standard of the whole force up? Why couldn't that have been done?

A. That idea even occurred to me at the time, the possibility of such a step, but I felt then and I feel now that with the atmosphere prevailing in Army circles at the time, such a unification could not have been successfully carried out.

Col COLE: What do you mean by atmosphere?

A. Had unification been affected under the prevailing circumstances, I think the actual result would have been a cancellation of the Navy's air force and an expansion of the Army air force.

Q. You do not believe it would have been possible for the Naval pilots and commanders in the aviation field to be absorbed into the body of the new organization?

A. I think it would have been extremely difficult.

Q. Does the Admiral know why the training standards of the Army were below those of the Navy air force at this time?

A. I think there are two main reasons: As in most other countries there was a great difference between the Army and Navy personnel in Japan as regards their mechanical-mindedness. Our Army men were far less mechanically-minded than our Navy personnel; consequently, less capable in the handling of machinery of all kinds. That applies particularly of course to aircraft. The second point was, that they did not know the science of navigation as did the Navy, which is natural, because the charts that Army flyers would use would be the same as they have for land warfare, whereas the Navy were accustomed to the regular navigation charts, and consequently could more easily adapt themselves to conditions necessary for air force. The Navy always used MERCATOR charts. Those were the two principal differences which explains, I think, the inferiority of the Army Air force pilots. At the time, the Army far outnumbered the Navy in air personnel, and had there been unification at that time, the result would have been, I'm afraid, a drop of the general level down to that of the Army rather than the reverse.

Q. We know that, in application to our own forces, you correct that just by improving the training. Couldn't that be done?

A. Because of the large number of the Army air force, their reeducation would have been a very difficult problem.

Q. At what point was it contemplated to increase the emphasis on carriers?

A. I was not in a position responsible for that change at that time, so I cannot give an authoritative statement, but I think the transfer to aircraft (carriers) took place after the Battle of MIDWAY.

Q. Then it was not until after the Battle of MIDWAY that the Japanese Navy recognized the full importance of the carrier?

A.--and began to devote their efforts to the building of the carriers. That is not to say that we had not recognized the value of importance of aircraft carriers before, and there had been a gradual development of carrier strength, but I think it was after MIDWAY that the decision was made to concentrate our efforts on the aircraft carrier with the idea of having it serve as a nucleus of task forces.

Q. At what point chronologically--by date--just a general date--did the aircraft carrier supplant the battleship as the most important vessel in the Japanese Navy?

A. I think that the Battle of MIDWAY was just about that time.

Q. Prior to the Battle of MIDWAY, did the Naval Staff generally regard the battleship as a more important type than the aircraft carrier?

A. Yes, Prior to that, the Japanese Naval authorities looked upon battle ships as of a more important category than aircraft carriers. At that time, probably, they evaluated the aircraft carrier about on a par with the battleship-cruisers.

Q. Going back to the period when you were a director of the Naval Aviation Dept., were any efforts made at that time to establish a standardized training for the Army and Navy air arms--to establish a standard communications equipment and to establish standard land-based facilities for maintenance, etc.

A. For the two?

Q. Yes, for the two so they could use each others' facilities and communicate with each other?

A. No, I do not believe that there was any plan suggested for unifying training methods or for the joint use of bases or of communication facilities. There might have been exchanges of information between the two, but I do not believe it got beyond that stage. One difficulty to such an idea was the fact that the Navy emphasized training of aircraft-carrier crews, whereas the Army concentrated on training of land-based aircraft crews. Such a great difference between the two, that I think it could not have been worked out.

Q. I think we will go on now to the period April 1 1938 to May 1940 when you became Cinc of the CHINA SEAS fleet: At the time that you were put in command of the CHINA SEAS fleet, what were you given as a directive? What were you to do with your forces?

A. At that time our objective of course was CHINA, and the object of the fleet was to support our Army Operations, and the object of our Naval air force was to destroy CHINA'S air force. That was the only duty possible for the fleet, because CHINA had no fleet.

Q. Did the aircraft under your command operate from carriers or did they operate from land bases?

A. At least until our operations against HANKOW commenced, the Navy used almost exclusively seaplanes based around SHANGHAI, and some were seaplane carriers or tenders which we took up the river some distance. After the fall of HANKOW, the Navy did use land planes to some extent, but, generally speaking, land planes were mostly operated by the Army, while the Navy confined its efforts more or less to seaplanes.

Q. Were the Naval air forces always under the operational control of the Navy or were they sometimes put under the operational control of the Army?

A. No, it was always under control and command of the Navy. There was some cooperation, but the command was always made very distinct.

- Q. Could the Admiral give me in rough figures an idea of the number of planes that he had under his command during this period? There may have been some major change--a jump up. If so, you might indicate?
- A. These are very rough estimates; I don't recollect--I can't approximate the number; Up to the fall of HANKOW I think that the total number of Naval planes did not exceed 100. Those were all seaplanes. After the fall of HANKOW there was a gradual increase in the number, especially after the addition of the land-based planes, and I think we might have gone up to as large a number as four or five hundred, but there was considerable variation in the total number over the different periods.
- Q. Do you consider that the Naval air arm made any important contribution to operation in CHINA?
- A. Yes, I believe that it made a very important contribution to our CHINA operation.
- Q. Was that in period after the fall of HANKOW, or when you increased the force, or throughout the campaign?
- A. Throughout the campaign, both before and after the fall of HANKOW.
- Q. In what particular way: By destroying enemy airplanes or by destroying enemy ground objectives, or by destroying enemy troops, or what?
- A. In both respects--that is, in the destruction of Chinese air force and in the destruction of land objects, and in addition, for instance around KUKING There were certain instances where our Naval aircraft were able to rescue land forces which had been surrounded by Chinese forces, and particularly at the siege of NANKING, I think, that under my predecessor, our Naval air force operated very effectively.
- Q. Did the Naval air force encounter any opposition worth mentioning in the air during this period?
- A. From Chinese air forces?
- Q. From any air forces; from the Chinese or from the American Volunteer Group.
- A. No, I do not think that there was any opposition worth mentioning.
- Q. Did the Naval air force participate in the MANCHURIAN Incident (NOMONHAN Incident) during 1939?
- A. It took no part in the operations.
- Q. Did operations in CHINA have any effect upon the Naval air force training methods or tactical doctrine?
- A. I think there was no great effort on any important aspects of training or tactics.
- Q. Admiral, you have the reputation of being quite an authority on Chinese affairs, and I would like to ask you to comment generally upon the situation in CHINA up to the beginning of the war with AMERICA. In other words, What were the reasons for not pushing through to conclusion? Why wasn't Chaing-Kai-Shek completely conquered?
- A. Frankly I find it difficult to understand why I should get such a reputation as an authority on CHINA because I have made no particular study of the subject; About the only connection that I had with CHINA which the ordinary Japanese might not have, is that I have done some reading of Chinese classics, but those classics have no application whatever to the CHINA of today.

As regards the reason for our inability to drive Chiang-Kai-Shek out of CHINA prior to commencement of the World War, I realized, as did others in the Navy at the time, the desirability of bringing the CHINA affair--CHINESE Incident--to a close at as early a date as possible, but unfortunately, owing to opposition from certain quarters, our desires were not realized, and I think that our inability to bring the CHINESE Incident to a close at an early date was one of the reasons that led up to the World War.

Q. You speak of opposition from certain quarters: Would you mind indicating what those quarters were?

A. Principally the Army circles

Col COLE: I wonder if it would be a fair question to inquire as to the Admiral's opinion as to why the Army desired to make a long drawn-out affair of it, instead of concluding it?

A. My answer might have been slightly misleading: It isn't that the Army wanted a long protracted war. I think that the difference between the Army and the Navy in that respect was that the Army's desires or ambitions in respect to the CHINA Incident were so great that they could not be satisfied or realized. In other words: I think that it was even unreasonable, and that is the reason that it kept on, dragging on and on.

Col COLE: Do you mean us to understand that the Army wanted to get too much of CHINA, they weren't satisfied when they had a reasonable amount, that their ambition was over-weening--that their ambition was too great?

A. More than could be reasonably realized.

Q. In answer to the question previously posed: Why wasn't the Army able to realize the ambition in CHINA? Why couldn't the Army gain a complete victory? What factors stood in the way?

A. Considering the expanse of the battlefield, I think that the Army did not have enough manpower nor the power necessary to support it, behind it, in the country.

Q. Logistical support?

A. Logistical support, yes.

Q. In joint planning prior to the outbreak of war with AMERICA, did the Army ever make specific proposals for bringing the war in CHINA to a conclusion? Did they clearly define what their objective was after which they would cease hostilities?

A. During the time that I was with the fleet in CHINA, the feeling in the Army as well as in the Navy was, that there should not be a war undertaken with AMERICA, so at that time, of course, the idea of bringing the CHINESE Incident to a close under certain conditions did not come up from the Army.

Q. I'm sorry, but I have a little difficulty in following that line of thought: Neither the Army nor the Navy wanted war with AMERICA at that time. Do you mean, then, that operations in CHINA were not pushed as far as they might have been because of the fear that it would precipitate a war with AMERICA?

A. That is quite possible because particular attention was paid at the various fronts not to commit breaches of rights of third parties, especially, I think--and such was the actual order from GHQ in Tokyo--and naturally, it was bound to lead to less forceful carrying out of operations than would otherwise have been the case.

- Q. I'd like to pass on to the period now where the Admiral became MINISTER OF THE NAVY: AT the time you took over the position, were you given any specific directive to draw up war plans of any kind or did you initiate, during your tenure of office, any planning in regard to operations against AMERICA?
- A. As you are doubtless already aware, the Japanese Navy annually drew up operational plans with imaginative enemies, and such plans would be drawn up in respect of every nation that had a Navy, but never during the time that I was MINISTER OF THE NAVY did I receive orders for special plans to be drawn up for operations against either the UNITED STATES or GREAT BRITAIN, nor did I myself draw up or give orders that they should be drawn up, for the reason that it is quite beyond the competence of the NAVY Minister to draw up plans of naval operations. This is distinctly a function of the GENERAL STAFF.
- Q. And the Combined Fleet?
- A. The GENERAL STAFF, and once a plan for operations is drawn up, the MINISTER's function is to get the equipment and the personnel necessary. My function does not go beyond that so far as operations are concerned. The line is very distinctly drawn there. As I stated, at the time my principal concern was how to bring the CHINESE Incident to a close and how not to make the problem any larger than it already was, so that every effort was being made to avoid further trouble with third powers.
- Q. In attempting to bring the CHINA INCIDENT to a close, what steps did you take and what forces opposed you?
- A. Referring to my last answer, I think it would have been most apropos that it was the CABINET rather than the NAVY MINISTER who was making every effort to bring the HANOI incident to a close.
- Q. We have been told that, in general planning prior to the outbreak of war, certain segments of the Army--strong influences in the Army--proposed that, in coordination with GERMANY an attack should be made on RUSSIA, and that expansion should be purely and simply on the continent of ASIA. Would you comment on that? Do you know anything about those plans?
- A. If there was such a plan in any section of the Army, I was never aware of it, and as a matter of fact, the second KONOYE cabinet sent its Foreign Minister MATSUOKAE to Europe, and during the trip he advised GERMANY not to start trouble with RUSSIA, and on his way back, signed a treaty of Non-Agression with RUSSIA: So certainly, the policy of the Cabinet was not in that direction.
- Q. What interpretation, what appraisal, did the Naval circles place upon the MANCHURIAN INCIDENT of the early Fall of 1939?
- A. You mean the AMUR RIVER--
- Q. Yes, how did the Naval circles analyze that operation which was purely an Army operation? They must have made some appraisal of it in Naval circles:
- A. This took place at the time while I was still with the CHINA SEAS fleet, and the Naval opinion at the time seemed to be, that it was a blunder.
- Q. Did the Japanese Naval circles hold the opinion that the action was initiated by the RUSSIANS or that the local Japanese Army commander might have touched off the conflict?
- A. The only thing I heard was that the RUSSIANS had started it, but the reason for the Navy looking upon our action there as a blunder was that they used an army where the question could have been settled through diplomatic channels.

Q. During the time that you were Minister of the Navy, were any efforts made to coordinate Army and Navy procurement and supplies under one agency?

A. No, no suggestion was made for unification or coordination.

Q. Did any of the members of the Government or the Cabinet at that time see the need for a common procurement agency in drawing on the nation's industrial resources?

A. No, there was not, and the reason was that the war scale was very much smaller than after the World War started, so apparently the necessity for such coordination was not felt at the time. However, there was some sentiment favoring the strengthening of the DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY, but that had not reached the stage of conversation leading to the MUNITIONS MINISTRY. There was also some question of the desirability of the idea of converting the DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY to something that might be called the "FOOD MINISTRY", but that also was just stuff to make headlines.

Q. In approving the imaginary plan for the attack on PEARL HARBOR, was any serious thought given by the MINISTRY to an alternate plan of driving straight down into the SOUTHERN RESOURCES AREA, by-passing the PHILIPPINES and not attacking HAWAII on the way?

A. The KONOYE cabinet throughout maintained the stand that war with AMERICA must be avoided at all possible cost. It was for that reason that the Cabinet sought every possible means of reaching a satisfactory compromise of some kind through diplomatic negotiations, and that has reference not only to the United States but also to the NETHERLANDS. We felt need of the resources in the South but we wanted to get that by negotiation through diplomatic channels, and to that end the KONOYE Cabinet dispatched Mr KOBIASHI, then MINISTER OF INDUSTRY & COMMERCE, to the DUTCH INDIES for negotiations. The Third KONOYE Cabinet, when it finally came up against the demand, principally from the Army section, that we must engage in war with the UNITED STATES, brought about the resignation of the Cabinet.

Q. Admiral NAGANO said that there was a plan to drive into the SOUTHERN RESOURCES AREA and by-pass the PHILIPPINES, drawn up in 1941. I just wondered if that plan ever came to your attention, and what was the discussion of the relative merit of one plan as opposed to the other in case you did go to war, in case you couldn't get oil by diplomatic means and had to take the resources?

A. I believe that the discussion you speak of took place after I left office, after October.

Q. During your term as NAVY MINISTER, what particular items did you have trouble procuring for the Navy in the way of supplies, etc.?

A. The thing that worried me most, I think, was oil. Although we did have considerable stock on hand, international relations had already been cut off, so that was the source of my greatest worry.

Q. Would you then consider that oil was the major reason why Japan went to war, the need for oil?

A. I don't think that is the whole story, but I believe that was one important reason.

Q. In procuring oil supplies, was the Army just as much interested or was it peculiarly a Naval problem?

A. I believe the Army was greatly interested because of the need of aviation oil, but probably not to the same extent as the Navy because, after all, so far as total quantity was concerned, bunker oil far exceeded aviation oil. In addition of course there was great need for fuel oil for civilian use.

- Q. Were any plans drawn up, either by the NAVYMINISTRY or by the ARMY & NAVY MINISTRY jointly, to fully exploit--that is, to fully attain the oil, to ship it, to refine it, and put it to final use--in case you should go into the SOUTHERN RESOURCES AREA? During the time you were in office, were any such plans made, worked out in detail, to exploit the area?
- A. No, there was no such program during the time I was Navy Minister. However, since we had been getting some oil from BORNEO already and the refinery capacity there was not sufficient for needs, we used to bring crude oil to JAPAN and refine it here.
- Q. Then up until October of 1941 you had no detailed plans for operating refineries and shipping oil back to JAPAN in great quantities, etc.?
- A. Refining it there?
- Q. Refining it there or shipping it here and refining it here in JAPAN, foreseeing an eventual control of the area by JAPAN?
- A. None whatever.
- Q. Was any study made of the number of available tankers for shipping oil from the area back to JAPAN?
- A. I do not know.
- Q. In 1941 when--leaving out the question of attack upon any particular country--in making a plan, a war plan, on a theoretical basis as every country does, was the question of tankers to ship oil supplies taken into consideration as a major factor?
- A. I think the situation was that operational plans of such limited scope as those prior to October 1941 could be well taken care of by the number of Naval and Civilian tankers we had on hand.
- Q. In other words, the plans that were drawn up were purely and simply plans for military operations, and they did not visualize a campaign where there would be an attrition of the tanker force which would have to be replenished by continual production here in JAPAN?
- A. By attrition, you mean loss.
- Q. Yes, continual loss to submarines or airplanes--wastage which would have to be planned for by production here in JAPAN?
- A. The replacement program as scheduled is made separately each year; replacement of various categories that are lost.
- Q. Who decides what the replacement reconstruction program for tankers will be?
- A. The NAVAL GENERAL STAFF.
- Q. And the office of the Ministry of the Navy has no connection with that except to approve it?
- A. In addition to approving, he does receive reports as to the consultations that lead up to the decision on the figures.
- Q. In the Naval building program in September 1940 to October 1941, what was the order of emphasis on different types of Naval vessels--battleships, cruisers, carriers, destroyers, submarines, tenders, etc.?
- A. That is, for one year prior to the beginning of the war,
- Q. Yes, for one year prior?

- A. I think--I am not at all certain about this, but I think--that first and second places were taken by battleships and aircraft carriers respectively.
- Q. In that order--battleships first?
- A. Yes, carriers second.
- Q. Do you know what order of priority was given to the construction of submarines?
- A. It was looked upon as being of considerable importance, but just what position it took in rank I could not venture an opinion.
- Q. Was the building program, related to war planes as drawn up, for operations against the UNITED STATES or against BRITAIN or against some other foreign power? Was this building program closely related to the respective war plans?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Was it related to the prospect of a war against the UNITED STATES specifically?
- A. Yes, I believe every year our building program was directly linked up with various operation programs we studied against the various countries.
- Q. Why then wasn't the submarine given a higher standing in the priority list?
- A. That is, if it was connected up with our plans.
- Q. Your war plans. You will remember that Admiral NAGANO said you were to hold a perimeter and make any foes come to you, and if that were true, would have to bring supplies over great distances. Why, then, weren't submarines given a high priority?
- A. The only answer I can give to that is that primary importance was attached to the larger types in the building program because such types were ordered by those in charge of operation plans.
- Q. Then I am given to understand that the Navy building program is decided entirely by the men who make operational plans and the NAVAL MINISTRY has no power to alter that plan?
- A. Of course the NAVY MINISTER has power to demand changes where he sees that such changes are essential, but generally speaking, categories and tonnages are determined on the basis of the operation plans plus considerations of material necessary and available, international political situation, and other factors.
- Q. Was the Navy building program coordinated with the Army building program? In other words, was the Army told of what the Navy building program was? Was there any review of both programs by a common agency, by either the NAVY MINISTER and WAR MINISTER sitting together with the Cabinet, or by a special board which reviewed the programs together?
- A. I don't understand what you mean by "Army Building Program".
- Q. The Army has to construct certain weapons of war; they have to make tanks and artillery pieces and airplanes, just as the Navy has to make guns and ships and airplanes. The Nation has so much in the way of construction capacity; it can build so much--the industry of the country can only build so much. Now was there any board at this time that took both programs and reviewed them with the idea of coordinating the two?

- A. Wherever deemed necessary a coordinated study would be made between the two general staffs, but unlike in your country, our Navy builds practically all of its vessels--around 80 to 90 percent--in its own dockyards, while the Army constructs their own weapons in their arsenals; that is, up to the beginning of the war; so that the only collision between the two might arise in the raw materials. In case of necessity, consultation would be held between the two general staffs as regards the fair allocation of raw materials to be procured from the DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE & INDUSTRY, but such cases were extremely rare. There might further further be consultation between the two services as regards the number of airplanes needed for a certain operation, of which the Army would attain a certain percent and the Navy its percent. Cooperation between the two services, furthermore, was effected in construction of the Navy's rifle by the Army and the construction by the Navy of special transports which the Army needed.

(Note: Col COLE departed at this time. Interrogation continued.)

- Q. I wonder if you would procure for me a flow chart showing how the planning for construction was done in 1940-41; that is, where the plan for Naval vessels originated in the General Staff?
- A. I'll see if such a chart can be procured from the Navy Department.
- Q. You see, that is a national problem; I want to know where a plan is first drafted, where any revision is made, and where it is finally adopted; Where does it have to go before it can then be put into execution?
- A. The building program, may I point out, must be divided into two kinds; the peacetime program and the wartime program. In the peacetime program, of course, the officers have in mind an imaginary war, but in wartime, the change from peacetime to wartime program is not made until the operation has been decided upon.
- Q. Well, I'd like to have an idea of the program in peacetime and then the changes that were made; how the changes were made and how it was done under the stress of war?
- A. Yes, I think it can be worked out.
- Q. I wonder if the Admiral could tell me at what time during the war it was realized that the tanker fleet was a critical vulnerable link in the economy?
- A. That period came before I assumed my position of responsibility as CHIEF of the GENERAL STAFF, so I don't know for certain and could hardly venture a guess; but if I had to make a guess I would say that it was as soon as your air bombing became so heavy and we lost so many tankers as a result.
- Q. Tankers as a result of bombing?
- A. I think as a result of bombing, more so than from the submarines?
- Q. More than from the submarines? Are you speaking of bombings other than in the home islands?
- A. Yes, as far back as the time of GUADALCANAL I think we lost many tankers to your air fleet.
- Q. Going on to the period when the Admiral became CHIEF of the NAVAL GENERAL STAFF, I'd like him to give me his estimate of the military situation at the time he took over that post and was charged with that responsibility?
- A. I took over from Admiral SHIMADA just after we lost SAIPAN. In the short interval between that and the Battle of LEYTE, the war had already

reached a very critical stage. Our plan at that time was to throw everything into the struggle to defend LEYTE.

Q. Did you consider the loss of SAIPAN as extremely critical, as the turning point in the war?

A. As a turning point I would place the loss of SAIPAN as second in importance to the Battle of MIDWAY, but certainly one of the turning points. Another reason for my so considering is that, through its loss it became possible for you to make air raids on Japan proper directly from a land base. Of course you were in a position to bomb Japan from the CHINESE Continent, but against that, defense was relatively easy, because we were given far greater opportunity to get information in advance, and there was also some chance of intercepting before you reached JAPAN proper; but from the South, principally due to poor radar facilities, we were not able to know of a raid from the South several hours in advance, for instance--it was only very short notice that we'd have of raids from the South--and we were further exposed to the possibility of air raids from two directions; that is, from the South as well as from the West.

Q. When the plans were drawn up for defense of the PHILIPPINES, was it done in the very beginning in joint consultation--i.e., the Army and Navy--or did the Navy draw its plan and the Army draw its plan, and they just put the two together?

A. On the large points it was a joint draft; but on their respective responsibilities, separate plans.

Q. Were both the Army and the Navy agreed on making this a decisive stand, especially with regard to the use of the two air forces?

A. Yes, there was an agreement of opinion on that point.

Q. The next point I am going to bring up is a rather tenuous one, and I'll have to do a little explaining to get my point across: In 1916, the Germans had a fleet which they sortied out into the North Sea once and had an engagement and then retired. At the end of the war they still had their fleet intact sitting in harbors. During this war, the Italians had a fleet, sortied out a few times, then they put it back in the harbor, and the larger portion of it was sunk by aircraft--British aircraft mainly. I would like to know if those two historic examples of what happens to a fleet that is merely held in waiting, you might say, had anything to do with the commitment of the fleet to an all-out engagement in the PHILIPPINES?

A. It possible that the authorities concerned might have feared that our fleet might meet the same fate as did the German fleet in the first World War and the Italian fleet in the last world War; but I think that it would be a mistake to say that those in command made the decision to send the complete fleet down there because of those two historical instances, because we must take into consideration the various attending circumstances, of which the most important in this particular case was the difference in the characteristics of the people, the national characteristic. I believe that the fleet authorities decided to take that step in the belief that they had reasonable chances for success. Unfortunately, it so happened that, because of radar inferiority and other defects, on our side, the ultimate result was extremely unfortunate. Does that answer your question?

Q. Yes, I'd like to follow it by one question: Did the realization of the striking power of the airplane, even at great ranges; influence the decision to get the fleet out and have it fighting a decisive engagement before we could dispose our air forces around the islands?

- A. In other words, did our realization of the striking power of the aircraft at long range lead us to decide to fight this Naval engagement?
- Q. Yes, rather than keeping your fleet in reserve, in waiting in the home islands?
- A. No, I think the idea was not such a passive one, that the decision to send them down there was more an active idea of getting a striking opportunity.
- Q. Under a condition that would give them a fair chance for success?
- A. Yes, another factor which might have led to that decision was the fact that oil supply bases down South were closer than in JAPAN proper, so that it would be to the advantage of the fleet to remain as far South as possible.
- Q. What does the Admiral consider to have been the decisive factor or factors in the loss of the PHILIPPINE Battle?
- A. The fleet engagement?
- Q. The fleet, our landings, the whole thing--just an estimate of what the decisive factors were?
- A. The loss of LEYTE.
- Q. I wonder if you could give me an idea, not so much to physical fact of the loss of LEYTE, but why did they lose LEYTE? Was it a tactical surprise on our part, was it inability to transport troops to LEYTE, was it loss of carrier-based airplanes? What relative weight would you give to all these various factors?
- A. I think the principal cause of the loss of LEYTE was inability to send reinforcements, but behind that there was one important factor; the difference in the viewpoint strategically between the Army and Navy as regards future plans; The Army, thinking even after the loss of LEYTE that they might successfully pursue their original LUZON operations, whereas the Navy, once we had lost LEYTE, gave up all hope of carrying out the LUZON operations.
- Q. Was the sinking of transports in ORMOC BAY a decisive factor? They were trying to bring transports across to LEYTE and many of those transports were sunk?
- A. Yes, to some extent. Of course we didn't expect to be able to send reinforcements there through that Bay without any losses; we expected some losses; but we wanted to send more, and I think if the Army had agreed with us, we might have been able to hold onto LEYTE for much longer than we did.
- Q. At what time after the Admiral became CHIEF OF STAFF did the Navy contemplate bringing the war to an end and suggest certain plans of that sort?
- A. It may simply be said that the desire to end war, should a favorable opportunity for it appear, was realized a considerable time before I became CHIEF OF THE NAVAL GENERAL STAFF, perhaps going back as far as the Battle of MIDWAY, but the idea of wanting to end the hostilities because it appeared that we could not possibly escape defeat, that idea was not born until after I had left office. It is true not only of this war but of any war that, not only (for) the side against whom it is going adversely but the side for whom the war is going very favorably, the leaders are constantly looking for an opportunity to bring it to a close if a favorable opportunity should arise. That is a duty of leaders even before a war is started--to have in their minds under what conditions and when war should be brought to an end if possible.

Q. At no time during your tenure of office as CHIEF of the NAVAL GENERAL STAFF, then, did the Navy favor a plan to bring the war to an end on the basis of the announced terms of unconditional surrender?

A. No, I think that it never came up as a problem at all.

Q. Does the Admiral know at what time the Navy Command began generally to favor the conclusion of the war on the basis of the terms as announced?

A. I think that the Navy opinion did not turn in that direction even to the very last. Even the POTSDAM DECLARATION, when it was first announced, sounded so abstract to our Navy that it did not enter our minds apparently as a concrete thing, and it was only after some time had elapsed that a study of the terms began to be seriously made, and opinion gradually changed to the point where we became ready to accept.

Q. Then you feel that the Navy was in favor of continuing the war right up to the point at which the EMPEROR made the decision to terminate the war?

A. My understanding of the situation was that all the Navy's forces--on water and land, and even among the young officers in the Navy Department--were determined to carry the war through the bitter end. The only exception was in the case of the officers whose duty it was to consider and study the implications of the POTSDAM DECLARATION, such, for instance, as the NAVY MINISTER who began to consider the possibility of terminating the war through the acceptance of those terms.

Q. Was the Navy generally in favor of ending the war when it did end or would they like to have kept on fighting?

A. As a whole?

Q. Well, the command of the Navy--the Naval General Staff and the Field Commanders of the fleets--CinC of the Combined Fleet, etc?

A. Were they in favor of continuing the war--

Q. Beyond August 15?

A. This is prior to the Imperial Rescript?

Q. Yes; after the Rescript was issued, of course, we know that that was the end, but did they want to go ahead, were they disappointed in other words that they were ordered to stop?

A. Yes, I think that this was the case, that they considered it their duty to continue until the EMPEROR issued his Rescript.

Q. What effect did the bombings of the urban areas have on the Admiral's opinion as to when the war should come to an end?

A. While I was in office as CHIEF of the NAVAL GENERAL STAFF, your bombing, while it had done considerable damage in spots, had not greatly affected our production capacity. Plans were already on foot for dispersal of important production plants so that I felt at the time that we could continue production of weapons sufficient to carry on our operations for a long time. However it so turned out that those dispersal plans could not be smoothly carried out, and the effect of your bombing became more and more serious. While looking back upon it now, I might be able to say that, as the result of the damage from bombing we should give up the fight at a certain time, I could not have said that or even hazarded a guess at the time I was in the office.

Q. I would like to ask the Admiral if he would tell me what he considers to have been the most important element to control during the war, the surface of the land, the sea, or the air? Would he say that any one of those three was more important than the others?

A. Our officers have always proceeded on the idea that, in order to control the land, control of the sea is necessary; and that in turn, in order to control the sea, control of the air is necessary. Consequently, the conclusion is, then, that air control is the most important, and to that end we devoted our efforts to developing our air force. I believe that our inability to accomplish that object was one of the leading cause for our defeat.

Q. Does the Admiral believe that if Japan had been able to control the air within the perimeter as circumscribed that she could have prevented us from advancing with any of our forces into that perimeter?

A. That is the perimeter down South.

Q. Well, yes: The one outlined by that blue line--if he had controlled the air within that, could he have kept us out?

(Note: The "blue line" mentioned is described on a map as one beginning at PARAMUSHIRO and extending S by E to 167° E 19° N (East of WAKE) then S by E thru TAONGI and BIKAR then in a 1/4-circle through MALIOLAP, ARNO, and MILI TO 169° E 4° N (Southeast of EBON) then WSW to South Coast of NEW BRITAIN, W to NEW GUINEA, through the Central Range of NEW GUINEA, then SW through TRANGAN, TANIMBAR, POELAN-SERIATA, to and along the North coast of TIMOR.)

A. At least we certainly could have fought a much more favorable battle if we had had control of the air throughout that perimeter.

Q. I wonder if, as a member of the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL, the Admiral knows the background of events that took place immediately prior to the surrender and if he could trace those as he viewed it from where he sat?

A. I cannot because the SUPREME MILITARY MEMBERS are entirely independent of the SUPREME WAR GUIDANCE COUNCIL. They made the decision regarding the termination of the war. The SUPREME WAR COUNCIL differs from the FLEET ADMIRAL COUNCIL in that there is an indirect relation between the SUPREME WAR GUIDANCE COUNCIL and the EMPEROR; but the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL serves as an organ for advising the EMPEROR only as a member of their respective services. A Naval member of the SUPREME COUNCIL advises the EMPEROR on purely Naval matters.

Q. And doesn't try to advise on matters of a more general National concern?

A. No, his advice is not asked.

Q. I think that more or less concludes the series of questions. I wonder if the Admiral has any comments he'd like to make or any opinion he'd like to add?

A. No, there is nothing in particular that I would like to comment on.

END OF INTERROGATION

Special Note: Two appendices, not available at the time of reproduction of this interrogation, will be added at a future date and should be taken into consideration when referring to this paper. They are:

A. Admiral OIKAWA's reply to Col POTTS (prepared by Capt YOSHIDA) re "Drafting, Revision, and final determination of shipbuilding program in the Japanese Navy." (See Page 11 of interview.)

B. Table showing transition of Naval War preparations during 1941.

APPENDIX A INTERROGATION 494.

Admiral OIKAWA'S reply to Colonel Potts
(Prepared by Captain YOSHIDA).

Re Drafting, revision and final determination of shipbuilding program in the Japanese Navy.

1. The Naval General Staff prepares a draft of the shipbuilding program on the basis of fleet operational demands. This draft is submitted to, and preliminary discussions thereof are held with, the Navy Department (Bureau of Military Affairs).
2. After the Bureau of Military Affairs, Navy Department, has examined with the various departments which are responsible for the execution of the program, such matters as the materials in stock and their supply prospects, the engineering problems involved, shipyard capacity, etc., further study is made of the program by the Naval General Staff and the Navy Department jointly from the standpoint of the relative facility of execution of the various suggestions made, the advantages and disadvantages involved, etc.
3. Formal decision on the program is made by discussion between the Chief of the Naval General Staff and the Navy Minister. (Problems involving minor revisions of the program are sometimes disposed of by discussions between the Deputy Chief of the Naval General Staff and the Vice Minister, or between sectional heads.)
4. The Bureau of Military Affairs, Navy Department, draws up a plan for the execution of the shipbuilding program as adopted, and after examining it with the various sections concerned, submits it to the Navy Minister for approval.
5. The Navy Minister submits the plan of execution as approved by him to the Chief of Naval General Staff. (This step constitutes the final adoption of the shipbuilding program to be executed.) The Navy Minister at the same time issues the necessary directives to the various sections responsible for the execution of the program.