

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

INTERROGATION NO. 260

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE: 6 November 1945
TIME:

Division of Origin: Basic Materials

Subject: Coal Production

Personnel interrogated:

KOMURA

President of Mitsubishi Mining Co. since 1941;
member of Mitsubishi firms for 35 years.

Where interviewed: His office

Interrogator: Lt. Comdr. D. A. BURR, Lt. R. E. BURNES

Interpreter: Lt. B. A. MANNING

Allied Officers Present: No others.

SUMMARY

Interview for primary purpose of requesting preparation of statistics on company's mines.

In general discussion, it was developed that Japan had overproduction of coal until 1937, except for period during 1915-1918. In 1940 production reached highest point, and has declined 5 to 10 percent per year since then, due to lack of labor and materials. Shortage began to be critical in 1941, but the government's mobilization plans concentrated on end-products, neglecting the basic supplies.

Labor:

It was pointed out that one reason for Japan's failure to have an effective deferment program for coal workers was the "tradition" that every man is first of all a warrior, and that the idea of a man's being more valuable to the country in an industrial capacity was never completely reconciled with that tradition. Also, of course, there was failure on the part of the military to appreciate the critical nature of coal production until late in the war.

Rationalization:

Between 1937 and 1942, the government sponsored the opening of many small mines in an effort to boost overall production. Although it became apparent, with the increasing shortage of labor and materials, that production would benefit by closing inefficient, low-quality mines and concentrating men and equipment in the larger operators, this move was never successfully carried out due to (1) immediate loss of production in moving equipment and labor, (2) cost of compensating owners of closed mines, (3) political opposition to reversing the government's former policy and increasing concentration in hands of Zaibatsu.

Air raids in Kyushu damaged all three power stations at the company's Takashina mines, shutting them down for periods of two to eight weeks. Some flooding of the pits resulted. Detailed information will be submitted. Operations in mines were not halted by alerts. The company's other mines were not seriously affected by attacks on the electric power system, as they had their own generating plants.

Lack of transportation did not materially reduce production, as the government established storage dumps to take excess stocks.

DISTRIBUTION:

All Divisions.