

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)

RESTRICTED.

C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO.

INTERROGATION NO: 506

PLACE: Tokyo (Meiji Bldg)
Date: 19 Nov 1945

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: Special Studies

SUBJECT: Plans and Operations in the Defense of the Philippines; Oct- Dec 1944

Persons Interrogated:

Major-General NISHIMURA, Staff officer of the 14th Army at the time of the LEYTE campaign.

Lt. Col. MATSUMAE, Staff officer of the Fourth Air Army.

Comdr. OTANI, Staff Officer of the Second Fleet.

Interrogators:

Col. Philip Cole GSC, USA

Col. Wolfe USA

Col. RODENHAUSER USA

Interpreter:

Lt. Comdr. NICHOLS USNR

Allied Officer Present:

Lt(jg) NEWELL USNR

Summary:

General NISHIMURA was on the staff of the 14th Army under General YAMASHITA from the middle of October until the end of December, the period of the LEYTE campaign, and is familiar with the problems faced by that command during this operation. He briefly outlined the general plan for the defense of the Philippine Islands. The basic plan had been drawn up by the staff of General KURODA, whom YAMASHITA relieved as commander of the 14th Army on October 5, 1944. The plan called for the decisive battle with the enemy to be fought wherever he might land. General NISHIMURA laid particular stress on the difference of opinion between YAMASHITA and his superior, Count Field-Marshal TERAUCHI, Supreme Commander of the Southern areas. The former wanted to fight the decisive battle of the Philippines on Luzon where he felt he had room to maneuver sufficient men and equipment to achieve victory. The latter held to the original plan which envisaged joining the decisive battle at the point of the enemy landings. Therefore, YAMASHITA was forced to carry out this plan, which compelled him to throw everything he could at the American forces on LEYTE; a plan which he felt was doomed to failure. He felt that the problems of supply, requiring as they did a good deal of transport over water, would be an insurmountable hurdle. This problem was further complicated by a complex command set-up in which YAMASHITA had direct command only of the ground forces. Air support would have to come from the Fourth Air Army, directly responsible to TERAUCHI and over which YAMASHITA had no direct control; transport ships could be procured only from the Third Shipping Headquarters at Manila, which was directly responsible to Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo, and naval support came from the Second Fleet, responsible only to naval authorities.

RESTRICTED

General NISHIMURA outlined the difficulties of reinforcing the forces on LEYTE from MANILA. By means of graphs, he depicted the severe attrition suffered by the Japanese in their many attempts to send forces there. There were 4 hand-drawn charts submitted. These will be published when re-drawn. Almost eighty percent of the vessels sent to ORMOC were sunk enroute, resulting in a staggering loss in equipment. Most of the vessels were sunk close enough to LEYTE for many of the troops to swim ashore, but the equipment could not be replaced, resulting in a tremendous superiority for the American forces in the Field.

In discussing the effect of these losses during the Leyte operation on the later LUZON campaign, the General implied that the possibility of a favorable outcome on LUZON had been compromised by the expenditure of men and material at LEYTE. A concomitant factor was the effective isolation of Luzon by American air power, which rendered it impossible for the Japanese to send further supplies to Manila. In a situation analogous to that which prevailed off ORMOC, the transports carrying reinforcements from China were sunk close enough to the LUZON coast for many of the troops safely to reach shore, but resulting in a complete loss of equipment. The command in Manila had to re-equip these by-now-amphibious Japanese soldiers-survivors from its stocks which had been already depleted of the best equipment in the futile attempts to support LEYTE. The net result was a serious shortage of supplies and a very thin dispersion of the limited stores which remain. It was this shortage of equipment and supplies which motivated the decision to withdraw from Manila to Santa Cruz and the hills of Baguio. However, here again, the Japanese found themselves plagued by problems in logistics. By equating their estimate of when we would land on LUZON (estimated to occur during the latter part of January) and the capacity of their overland transportation system (which could move only 500 tons of equipment per day) it was felt that about one-fifth of the equipment and supplies then in Manila could be moved to the desired locations. However, our landings on LUZON occurred during the every part of January by which time the Japanese had succeeded in moving only about one-tenth of the stores in Manila.

When questioned as to the relatively limited number of men and material on LEYTE, certainly a likely landing point, the general explained that it was necessary to spread the forces over a wide area and the mobility of these forces was fendered negligible because of the necessity to move them over considerable distances by sea transport. The shortage of ships and the superiority of the American navy made the waterways of the Philippines anything but a Mare Nostrum for the Japanese. This lack of mobility made it essential that the limited number of men deployed to oppose potential landings at a number of places with the resultant dispersion of forces.

When questioned as to the mission of the Fourth Air Army, Lt. Col. MATSUMAI stated that its primary mission was to attack enemy shipping and next to support the movement of reinforcements from Manila to Leyte. He made some heroic claims about the effectiveness of the Fourth Air Army in accomplishing its primary mission and stated that its operations were satisfactory. However, 1600 aircraft were lost.

Q. What was the position of General Nishimura at the time the plans for the defense of the Philippines were drawn up?

A. I was a staff officer with the Kwantung Army in Manchuria.

Q. When did you first have contact with this plan?

A. Not until the Leyte Operations in October 1944.

Q. What was your job at this time?

A. I was on the staff of the 14th Army under General Yamshita.

Q. When did you leave from Manchuria?

A. From Manchuria, I went to Chishima (Kurile I slands) where I commanded the 5th Air Bombing Brigade (Dai Go Bakugeki Hikodan), and from there I went to the Philippine Islands. I went in October of 1944, and although the Fifth Bombing Brigade moved to Luzon in the early part of November, I had nothing to do with this move, having joined Yamshita's staff in the first part of October.

REPORT (CONT'D)

I was not in charge of the movement of the brigade. I arrived in the Philippines about one week before the Leyte campaign (the Leyte campaign started Oct. 20, 1944) I left the Philippines in the latter part of December for Tokyo. It was intended that I should go to Moscow, but I never made this trip. All I know about the Philippine campaign is what happened from the initial landings on Leyte until December 31, 1944. Some two months later. I know nothing about the Lingayen Operations.

Q. Was there a plan in writing for the defense of the Philippine Islands; if so, what was it, in outline?

A. The original plan for the defense of the Philippine Islands involved fifteen divisions. Five divisions were to be stationed in Luzon; five in the Southern Philippines, and five divisions from the China, Korea, and Formosa area were to be sent to the Philippines to meet the American forces wherever they should land in the Philippines. These divisions were to be sent to the area where the enemy landed just as soon as possible. When the American army landed, a decisive battle would be joined at once and all fifteen divisions would participate in it if need be. This plan was drawn up in Manila, but it was never carried out.

Q. Who prepared the Plan?

A. Military Headquarters in Manila. Lt. Gen. Kuroda was the commander of the Philippine groundforces in the Philippines at the time and probably had a great deal to do with these plans.

Q. Who was Kuroda under?

A. Kuroda was under Field Marshall Count Terauchi, the commander of the entire Southern Area. Yamashita took command of the 14th Army on the fifth of October relieving Kuroda. At this time, Terauchi's headquarters were in Manila, but he transferred his headquarters to Saigon in the early part of November.

Q. What is this group down here? (referring to one of General Nishimura's charts)

A. This is a diagram of the overall command set-up. The 35th Army (which latter moved its headquarters from Cebu to Ormoc) was under the 14th Army (commanded by Yamashita) which in turn was under Count Terauchi. The commander of the 35th Army was General Suzuki. The Fourth Air Army was quite a different organization, being a separate force under Terauchi. The Fourth Air Army was commanded by General Tomonaga. It was composed of two air divisions, one at Bacaled and one at Manila. The Fourth Air Army was not under the Fourteenth Army.

Q. What is the army in the North?

A. Originally, there were to be two armies, but Yamashita did not organize another army in the north. He retained direct command over the forces in Luzon.

Q. What is this symbol at the top?

A. Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo.

It is important to remember that the Fourth Air Army was an independent branch under Terauchi. Yamashita did not command it. At the time of the Leyte operation, there was the Fourth Air Army commanded by Terauchi and the 14th Army commanded by Yamashita, who was in turn responsible to Terauchi and under him. Yamashita commanded all groundforces in the Philippines directly, but it was necessary to have a liaison between Yamashita and Terauchi as regards the Fourth Air Army. This was provided by the Fourth Air Army and the 14th Army each having one staff officer on the other organization's staff. There was also a member of Japanese Navy's First Air Fleet on the staff of the Fourth Air Army.

Q. Did this liaison exist from the original planning stage?

A. Yes.

REPORT (CONT'D)

Q. Were there any difficulties in obtaining agreement between the three forces, Army, Navy and Air Forces, on the original plan? Did anybody have any reservation concerning the wisdom of this plan? That is to say, if there was agreement between the forces, was it a genuine agreement?

A. (Colonel Matsumae) There were no difficulties during the planning. During the actual operation, there were difficulties. (General Nishimura was not in the Philippines when the original plan was drawn up)

Q. In this plan, what was the mission of the Fourth Air Army?

A. Its primary objective was to destroy the enemy transports in the event of a landing operation; its secondary objective was to provide air cover for the five divisions moving from the China area and to cover their landing should they make one. This naturally involved attacking enemy airfields.

Q. Was there any commitment to assist the forces of Admiral Toyoda?

A. No. At the time the original plans were drawn up, there was an officer from the Southwestern Area Fleet and an officer from the First Air Fleet on the Army staff. There was no representatives from Combined Fleet Headquarters on the staff at that time.

Q. Was the navy to be covered by land-based planes?

A. (Commander Otani) The fleet operation did not figure in the general plan for the defense of the Philippine Islands. After this plan was drawn up, it was given to the Navy, and the navy was to make its own plans independently to support the army plan. The navy was to provide its own air cover, using its own planes. (The plan was drawn up by the ground force and involved only the ground forces and the army air forces)

Q. On Oct. 24th, Kurita's naval force had an action with American naval forces south of Leyte Gulf. He got badly hurt and probably did not realize how much damage he had inflicted on the American force, which was operating behind a smoke screen. Did the Fourth Air Army receive any of Kurita's messages requesting aid? Did the Fourth Air Army know Kurita was in bad shape? Was there any question at any time whether army planes should go to his help, since he was getting no support from naval planes?

A. (Commander Otani) As far as I know, no request was made that army planes be sent. Requests were made to Manila for navy planes, but it was a joint operation and Kurita would not request army planes. To do so, he would have to advise Toyoda (Cinic Combined Fleet) that he was in trouble, and the latter would do what he could about sending more navy planes or else contact the army and see what support they could provide.

Q. Did this occur?

A. (Commander Otani) No such message was sent in my opinion. Kurita's only request was to the First Air Fleet in Manila (Colonel Matsumae concurred that no request was made of the army).

Q. Did the navy ask the army for support at any time? Was any request made to the Fourth Air Army for help?

A. (Col. Matsumae) No. Army reconnaissance planes reported to the army that the navy was in bad shape in the Surigao Straits area, but army air did nothing about it.

Col. Cole: It is important to notice that the operations were very highly compartmentalized in that the army and navy were operating independently and each was running its own show. There was no cooperation.

RESTRICTED

REPORT (CONT'D)

Q. How did the Fourth Air Army make out against the U.S. transports at Leyte?

A. (Colonel Matsumae) Considerable damage was inflicted, I think. We believed we sunk 150 transports.

Q. Was the mission proceeding satisfactorily?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the five divisions from China over land?

A. Because of a shortage of shipping and air and naval support, they were very late in landing. As a matter of fact, of the five divisions, the 19th division did not land in the Philippine Islands until January 1, 1945. The reinforcement of Leyte was in five phases. The 16th division of the 35th Army (Southern part of Yamashita's forces) was in Leyte at the time for the American landing there. First, the 35th Army moved as many of its forces as it could, moving brigades from Panay and Cebu, Second, the 26th Division was sent down. Third, the 1st Division. Fourth, the 6th Brigade, and finally, one-third of the 8th Division on Luzon was sent to Leyte.

Q. Was there a definite time at which Yamashita knew that the naval forces were smashed and would be of no help to him?

A. Yes. He did not expect the navy to help him. Yamashita's headquarters were advised of the navy's intention to attack the American forces in Leyte Gulf on the 23rd of October, the day before the engagement actually took place. Moreover, he was advised of the progress of the engagement as it took place. When he found out that the navy was defeated, he knew that the navy support would be alight, if any.

When Yamashita arrived on Luzon (he assumed command on Oct. 5th), he looked over the plan which envisaged fighting the decisive battle with the enemy forces wherever they might land. Yamashita wanted to change this plan and contacted Terauchi about so doing. Yamashita wanted to fight the decisive battle on Luzon, but Terauchi would not change the original plan. When the Americans landed on Leyte, they made rapid progress during the first week, being almost entirely across the island in only four of five days. It was quite clear to Yamashita that a decisive battle could not be joined on Leyte with much change of success. Yamashita first tried to effect a change in the plan, by contacting Terauchi's staff. This was unsuccessful so he then sent his Chief-of-Staff to Terauchi's Headquarters, who was also unsuccessful in getting the plan changed. Finally, on the twenty-third of October, I accompanied General Yamashita over to Terauchi's house where we conferred for three hours in the hope that we could persuade the latter to permit us to alter the original plan. However, we did not succeed in our attempt. Terauchi said that the plan was a joint operation and that it was too late to change it. Tokyo concurred with him in this matter. The result was that Yamashita had to operate under a plan that he knew was doomed to failure.

Q. Did Yamashita's plan involve a withdrawal of the forces in the southern Philippines or Luzon?

A. Not necessarily. Yamashita wanted to hit the American forces as hard as he could when they landed with what forces he had on the spot; He also wanted to fight the final battle for the Philippines on Luzon. Naturally, he would have withdrawn the forces from the southern Philippines if he had shipping enough to do so. However, shipping had to be requested from the Third Shipping Headquarters, with whom Yamashita had no liaison.

Yamashita felt that the problem of transporting men and material was the primary obstacle in carrying out the original plan. Had the Philippines been just one island, he would have gladly fought the decisive battle in the southern part or anywhere else that the Americans might land. But the fact that the original plan called for a considerable amount of travel over water precipitated several problems;

REPORT (CONT'D)

(1). Shipping: From Manila to Leyte involved a sea voyage of two days and two nights duration. During this long voyage, both naval and air cover were necessary. All Yamashita had under his command were men and equipment. He had no planes or ships under his command. The Third Shipping Headquarters were in Manila under the command of Admiral Inada. He was directly responsible to the Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo, having little contact with the 14th Army.

(2). Planes: To get planes from the Fourth Air Army, Yamashita would have to go thru Terauchi.

(3). Escort Vessels: These could be procured only by contacting the headquarters of the Southwest Area Fleet.

Hence, Yamashita thought that it was too late to start the wheels moving to acquire the ships and planes necessary to reinforce Leyte. He felt that the logistics problem was of such magnitude that it would be adequate for the task, and where there would be no shipping problem with its attendant risks. The original plan was made before Yamashita arrived in the Philippine Islands. Q. Couldn't the drafters of the plan have foreseen the logistics problem and the necessity for cooperation between the forces?

A. There was plenty of cooperation on paper when the plan was drafted, but in actual practice, a good deal of red tape was involved in procuring ships and planes. It was necessary to go to Tokyo to get the ships, in spite of the fact that Terauchi was to have complete charge of the overall operations in the south and presumably would be able to get whatever cooperation was necessary. In actual practice, he had no control over the navy or over shipping. Yamashita recognized this as limiting factor, particularly in view of the progress of the United States forces in the Leyte operation.

Terauchi's counter-argument was that although there might be a better chance of winning Luzon, if the southern part of the Philippine Islands were to be abandoned, the Americans would rapidly establish airfields in sufficient quantity to effectively isolate Luzon. Rather than become involved in a costly campaign of attrition, Terauchi preferred to engage the enemy from the outset. He felt that to let the Americans get a single base in the Philippines would be tantamount to writing off the entire area. Lt. Gen. Tomiage, commander of the Fourth Air Army, supported Terauchi in this contention.

(General Nishimura then explained the difficulties the Japanese experienced in attempting to carry out the original plan as follows):

Yamashita estimated that to effectively support his forces on Leyte would require 200,000 tons of shipping. He was given only 25 ships of over 3,000 tons, considerably less than he felt was required. The Fourth Air Army estimated that it had sunk about 150 American transports and other vessels, but even so, it could count 1500 ships in the Leyte Gulf area. Hence, upon the basis of its own calculations, it was sinking only 10% of the American ships. On the other hand, of the aforementioned 25 Japanese ships, only six ever reached Leyte. Nineteen vessels were sunk on their way there.

This loss naturally had a tremendous effect on the reinforcements reaching Leyte (depicted graphically by one of the General's charts). The diagram shows the comparative manpower situation between the opposing forces, as estimated by the Japanese. Of the Japanese forces; the 16th Division was chewed up first then the 26th Division, the 1st Division, and the 60th Brigade in turn. A part of the 8th Division was able to get to Leyte intact, the only one of the five reinforcing units to do so. By the end of November, the Japanese had only one and one-half divisions on the island; whereas, it was calculated that the Americans were employing eight divisions in the operation of which six were actually opposing the Japanese. The net result was that by the end of November, the Japanese were outnumbered roughly by a ratio of five to one.

REPORT (CONT'D)

On the route from Manila to Ormoc, the convoys usually left Manila at night. The entire voyage took two days and two nights. The convoys were generally spotted the first day, but were not attacked very heavily during either the first day or the second night. However, they were under almost continuous attack the second day. Just about all of the ships sunk were sunk right in the neighborhood of Ormoc, and a good many of the troops were able to swim ashore. However, guns can't swim so the men had no equipment with which to oppose the enemy.

(General Mishimura then produced another graph showing the comparative gun power of the Japanese and American forces during the month of November)

At the beginning of the Leyte operation, the Japanese forces had only 30 field pieces of over seven centimeters bore. Larger ones were sent down later, but by November 30th, there were only 6 operational field guns. However, the American army had 300 field pieces by the end of November. After the first week, the Japanese were outnumbered three to one in the category of field-pieces, and by the end of November, this ratio had become 50 to 1.

Q. On the twenty-fourth of October, the carrier planes from Admiral Ozawa's task force sortied. Due to bad weather, the fact that the carriers turned around and headed northward, and for other reasons, most of these planes never got back to their ships. Some of them did succeed in landing on Luzon. Were any of these afterward operational as navy land-based planes? If so, what was done with them?

A. (Commander Otani) I don't know.

(Colonel Matsumae) The Fourth Air Army did not use any of these planes.

(Commander Otani) The planes were probably not used. There weren't many and what there were probably were ferried back.

Colonel Cole: Were these planes never used after they left their carriers? The army made no attempt to use them?

A. No.

Q. Col. Cole: Discuss briefly the aircraft status of the Fourth Air Army and what happened to its planes?

A. Col. Matsumae) From Oct. 20th to Oct. 28th, our air force concentrated on attacking enemy shipping. After that, we attacked enemy airbases on Leyte in support of our reinforcement operations. After the twenty-eighth, our main attacks were on airfields with only occasional sorties against enemy shipping.

Q. (Colonel Wolfe): How were the nineteen transport ships sunk?

A. All of the nineteen large ships were sunk by aircraft. Of the one hundred small vessels employed in transport operations, about one third were sunk. Most of these smaller vessels were sunk by PT boats operating at night.

Q. (Col. Cole): What sort of aircraft sunk the larger ships?

A. Most of them were sunk by dive bombing. B-24's sunk practically none of these ships. I think that originally the aircraft that did the most damage were naval aircraft and later, army fighter planes.

Q. What kind of fighter planes?

A. I don't know.

REPORT (CONT'D)

Q. How many planes did you lose?

A. During October and November, we lost 1600 planes.

Q. How many planes did you have at the beginning of the campaign?

A. 400 Planes.

(The next questions were posed by Col. Rodenhauser)

Q. What was your supply situation before the American invasion of Leyte?

A. There were plenty of supplies of all kinds in Manila and the whole of Luzon, and during the operation, we did receive supplies at Manila from Japan. However, these accumulated in Manila and were of no use in the Leyte operations.

Q. Were there any shortages of any kind at any time? What were the scarce items?

A. Supplies from Japan all came to Manila, which was the main supply depot for all of Borneo, the Halmeyheras, and Celebes area, and so there was plenty of most everything there. There was enough for Leyte, as far as that goes, but the poor transportation resulted in shortages down there. The transportation problem was a knotty one. The difficulties encountered in getting supplies directly from Manila to Ormoc made it necessary to improvise a substitute means of transportation. We decided to send the supplies by rail down the Legaspi Peninsula and then ship them across the San Bernadino Straits. The American landings on Samar Island severed this supply line. Next, we decided to set up a series shuttle runs from Batangas to Kaligala Gulf. We established ten small stations and provided them with a garrison force of twenty-five men each. We planned on sending small boats on this run, and they were to operate only at night, making one shuttle hop each night, as it were. However, natives murdered every single man of our garrison forces before the plan ever got into operation.

Q. You say there were plenty of supplies at Manila. Did the losses you incurred at Leyte have any affect on the situation at Manila?

A. I forgot to mention that the twenty-five vessels I referred to before were all troop transports. We also operated a considerable number of transport vessels, which we used to move equipment. The loss ratio as regards these transports was the same as for the troop transports. We sent much of our best equipment to Leyte and a major part of it was lost on the way to Ormoc. Furthermore, our shipping losses along the Borneo coast had a direct affect on the shipping situation between Manila and Japan. We received fewer and fewer supplies from the homeland. We expected the enemy to land somewhere on Luzon by the end of January. We didn't know just where, but we know that we had insufficient supplies with which to oppose the landings. We were particularly short of ammunition of all sorts.

Q. How about tanks?

A. There was one tank division in Luzon (the Second Tank Division) and it was intact. However, by the time the Luzon landings came we had sent so much fuel to Leyte that there was only enough fuel to move the entire division for just seven hours.

REPORT (CONT'D)

Q. What about ammunition?

A. There was a shortage in all types.

At the time that Yamashita was trying to persuade Terauchi to change his plans, the former argued that since there was plenty of everything in Luzon, he should fight the main battle there. Yamashita thought that he could win that battle. Terauchi said that the Leyte Campaign was the decisive campaign and that Luzon was lost if Leyte was lost. By the time the Luzon campaign began, Yamashita had lost the most of the best equipment he had, and knew he couldn't effectively oppose the landings so he withdrew to the mountains and held out there as long as he could.

Q. Of the stores remaining on Luzon, how much was destroyed by air power?

A. Bombing actually caused very little damage--at the most 10% at the least, 5%. The prime reason for the shortages was due to the fact that of the three remaining divisions coming from China, two-thirds of the troop transports and supply vessels were sunk enroute. Again, they were sunk very close to Luzon and as a rule, most of the troops were able to swim ashore. Since they arrived without equipment, we had to supply them to the best of our ability. For example, the 19th and 23rd Divisions did not have a single field piece when they arrived on Luzon. Our shortages were caused primarily by having to supply these troops.

Q. Could the equipment be adequately maintained? If not, why not?

A. Manila was the main maintenance center for all of the Bornio, Celebes etc. As a result, there were adequate maintenance facilities in Manila. In fact, Manila was the only large maintenance center in the whole area. This meant that when we withdrew from Manila, we could no longer do the necessary maintenance, especially on heavy equipment. There was never any shortage in trained men, but after we moved from Manila, we experienced shortages in spare parts for all equipment. When we made the decision to withdraw from Manila, we decided to move all of the heavy equipment we could to the Baguio Hills and to ward Santa Cruz, twenty kilometers east of Manila. We expected enemy landings by the end of January or the first of February at one of four places, Manila, Lingayen, Batangas, or Santa Cruz. We could move three hundred tons of equipment per day by rail and two hundred tons per day by motor vehicle, making a total of five hundred tons of equipment per day that we could transport. On December 10th, we figured that we had fifty days of grace before the landings. This meant that we could transport only 25,000 tons of equipment from Manila or about one-fifth of the amount we had there. When I left Luzon for Japan at the end of December, we had transported only 10,000 tons, and the American landings in early January further upset our calculations.

Q. If Terauchi was adamant on the point that a decisive engagement should be joined at the original point of the enemy landings, why did he leave so pregnant a possibility as Leyte so relatively undefended?

A. To begin with, from the standpoint of a ground force operation, it was very difficult to prepare thorough defenses everywhere in the Philippines because so much sea travel was involved. It is true that at this time, the Japanese navy was relatively intact, but it could under no circumstances hope to oppose so vastly superior force as the American navy. We figured that enemy landings were possible at the following places: Zamboanga, Davao, Leyte, Santa Cruz, or Apari.

REPORT (CONT'D)

In our position, although we could foresee the possibility of landings on Leyte, we couldn't see why it would be favoured over any of these other places. We had to spread the 35th Army over a fairly wide area, and as a result, it was spread rather thinly. However, we did put our best troops on Leyte--so much so in fact, that when we were informed of the American landing operation there, one staff officer jumped up and shouted, "Good! Our best troops are there! "

It may be that as a staff officer under him, NISHIMURA is playing the role of apologist for the failure of YAMASHITA on Luzon. However, it is more plausible to concede that YAMASHITA grasped fully the overwhelming difficulties involved in any attempt to make a decisive stand on Leyte, especially after our initial success the first week in cutting the island in two. He could appreciate, as we can, what is required to take an island away from well-equipped, determined enemy. His problem was not simplified by a complex command organization which would necessarily obstruct the rapid intergration of army, navy, and air force into a single body for a particular mission, particularly one as large as that required to hold Leyte. While we might not doubt the eventual outcome, one can't help wondering what would have resulted had YAMASHITA been able to persuade TER UCHI to alter his decision to abide by the original plan. We would have found ourselves making the voyage by sea and then landing on an island against a well-equipped enemy in considerable strength. The 1600 planes expended in the Leyte Campaign would presumably have been thrown against us, and with a moderate development in Kamikaze technique, might have inflicted considerable damage upon our invasion forces. Then, when our troops got ashore, they would have faced the bulk of the Japanese Army in the Philippines. It is scarcely possible that Yamashita could have fought and won a decisive battle for the Philippines on Luzon, the last retreat, but he could have made the occupation of the islands a good deal more costly and prolonged.

Another point brought out in the interview was the complete failure of the Japanese Fourth Air Army to accomplish either its primary or secondary missions, in spite of a considerable expenditure of planes. It failed completely to disrupt the landing forces, and was even less effective in providing cover for the Japanese transport ships making the run to Ormoc. The complete and total breakdown of the original Japanese plan for the defense of the Philippines is spelled in this failure of the 4th Air Army. In sharp contrast is the success of the American air forces in successfully carrying out identical missions in both the Leyte and Luzon campaigns.

RESTRICTED