

HEADQUARTERS
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INTERROGATION NO. 489

PLACE: TOKYO, JAPAN,
DATE: 20, 23 Nov. 1945.

Division of Origin: Overall Economics Effects.
Subject: Personal Views on Social and Economic
Development during the War.
Personnel interrogated: Baron HIRANUMA, Kitchiro,
President of Privy Council.
Where interviewed: Privy Council Chambers, Imperial Palace.
Interrogators: Mr. BISSON.
Interpreter: Mr. MILLARD.
Allied Officers Present: 2nd Lt. Wenner.
Ch. Sh. Clk. Ordell.
Mr. Gilbert.

SUMMARY

Baron Hiranuma's statements regarding the military alliance with Germany fall in the political background between August 1939 (when the alliance was turned down) and September 1940 (when it was concluded).

He justifies the Kokuhensha on moral grounds as an organization which strove to establish right instead of might as the basis of Japanese policy.

His views on the Cabinet Planning Board's program of economic control (November - December 1940) are typical. He tries to deny that the Army-Navy were defeated on this issue, but gets involved in contradictions (that the Army-Navy supported a "Communist" plan; that this "Communist" plan was later adopted in practice). His problem here is that opponents of a "national socialist" plan labeled it "Communist" to defeat it. Like Hoshino, he denies that later (April 1941) arrests in the Cabinet Planning Board could be traced to the previous fight over "Communist" control plans. The circumstantial evidence indicates a rather close connection.

He mentions the possibility of a secret pact on details of military operations concluded by Japanese and German military men.

His views on the end of the war are thoroughly orthodox, in keeping with those of Kido, Kenoye, etc.

Baron Hirannuma Kitchiro

- Born: September 28, 1865 (Who's Who of Japan 1940-41)
September 28, 1867 (Japan-Manchukuo Year Book 1939 and
article from OSAKA MAINICHI 3/31/36) Okayama-ken;
2nd son of HIRANUMA Shin.
- Career:
- 1888 Graduate of Tokyo Imperial University, Law. Entered Justice Ministry upon graduation.
- 1890 Judge of Tokyo Local Court.
Judge and Department Director of Tokyo Court of Appeals.
Councillor of Justice Ministry.
- 1905 Director of Civil and Criminal Affairs Bureau of Justice Ministry.
- 1906 Went to Europe and America.
- 1907 Received doctorate degree.
- Aug. 1911 Vice Minister of Justice in 2nd SATONJI Cabinet serving under Justice Minister MATSUIA.
- 1912 Appointed Procurator General; Vice-President, Privy Council.
- 1918 Referred to as head of Tokyo University.
"In this period Baron HIRANUMA, head of Tokyo University lent his support to the society KOKUKU DOSHikai, founded by Professor FUSEGI the purpose of which was to combat Left tendencies among students. Two leaders made themselves prominent in the Kokoku Tesikai. OJI (OTA, Kozo Minister of Education SUZUKI Cabinet appointed 4/7/45) and TARANICHI. Together with them HIRANUMA began forming a group to carry its reactionary nationalist propaganda beyond the University. This group formed the basis of the Kokukonsva (or Kukuhonsha)."

(Militarism and Fascism in Japan - Yehan and Tanin, 1934).
Chairman of Religious System Investigation Committee.
Member of Shrine Investigation Committee;
Chairman, Religious System Investigation Committee.
- 1921 Appointed Chief Justice of Supreme Court.
- 1923-24 Minister of Justice in 2nd YAMAMOTO Cabinet.
"HIRANUMA one of the founders of Kokuhonsha.....The Kokuhonsha claims to promote a compromise between capital and labor, as one of the means of strengthening the foundations of the state. But in practice the society has subordinated democratic principles to blind laudation of the Imperial Throne. There is a mysterious element in the society supplied by its intimate connection with the Army and Navy. While Baron HIRANUMA may be but a puppet groomed for the figure-head of a fascist dictatorship, the figures of General ARAKI and Admiral KATO, Kenji lurk in the background. Undoubtedly, Baron HIRANUMA has the support of military and bureaucratic interests which have tried to thrust him into the premiership."
- 1924 Nominated to House of Peers.
- 1924 Appointed to Privy Council.
Lecturer at Tokyo Imperial University.

Baron HIRANUMA Kichiro (Cont'd)

1926 Appointed Vice-President of Privy Council.

1926 Created Baron.

1936 Elected President of Privy Council.

1924-1936 President of Kokuhonsha; resigned when he became President of Privy Council.

"Basic membership of Kokuhonsha Society consisted of important monarchistic officials - principally belonging to Ministry of Justice - grouped around HIRANUMA. By 1924 were grouped not only representatives of the military and official bureaucracy but also SUZUKI Kisaburo (President of Seiyukai Party - party back by interests) and IKEDA Seihin (rated as one of the 'Big Three' of Japan's financiers and leading director of head HITSUI firm) 1924-26 the leadership was definitely in the hands of the monarchist bureaucracy. Transfer of leadership of reactionary organizations from SUZUKI and other leaders of Seiyukai to HIRANUMA merits close attention, for it is significant of movement of the military - bureaucratic wing at the expense of the bourgeois wing. The section HIRANUMA represented endeavored to advance him to leading positions in the institutions created by the Japanese constitution for the purpose of circumscribing the influence of parliament, which might become dangerous to the monarchist bureaucracy with the introduction of universal suffrage and the growing influence of the bourgeoisie within the parliament."

"As chairman of the House of Peers in 1924 and Vice-President of the Privy Council in 1926, under his guidance these institutions restrained even the insignificant attempts of the YATO and YAMATSUKI cabinets to introduce reforms. Finally, in connection with the conflict arising between the Privy Council and the YAMATSUKI Cabinet over the question of granting aid to the bankrupt Bank of Taiwan, HIRANUMA secured the fall of the YAMATSUKI Cabinet and the assumption of the premiership by the leader of the most reactionary wing of the Japanese bourgeoisie, General TANAKA."

Period

1924-1932 "Period that made Western liberals believe that constitutional government had come to stay in Japan. Yet .. even these eight years were nothing of which party cabinets could boast."

April 1927-1929 - Premier General TANAKA, avowed militarist and advocate of a "Strong China policy."

July 1929 - April 14, 1931, Premier HAMAGUCHI. Shot in 1930 and died in following year.

April 14, 1931 - December 12, 1931, Premier YAMATSUKI overthrown two months after outbreak of Manchurian Incident.

December 13, 1931 - May 15, 1932 Premier IWANO assassinated May 25, 1932 by young Army officers.

May, 1934 HIRANUMA passed over as Vice-President of Privy Council in appointment of Baron IFFI Kitokuro on nomination by Prince SAIONJI. "Commonly said that Genro (Prince SAIONJI) disapproved of HIRANUMA'S close connection with the reactionary KOKUONSEI (Nationalistic Society)

Baron HIRANUMA Kitchiro (Cont'd)

"Whenever politicians do win control, the aristocrats operating from vantage point of the House of Peers; the bureaucrats from the privy Council; and the militarists from the Supreme War Council, General Staff, and War and Navy Ministries can often separately, and always collectively overthrow the Cabinet abruptly, should it pursue policies that meet with their disapproval."

Jan. 1939
Aug 1939

Premier; succeeded KONOYE when it became clear that KONOYE could not liquidate the China War. Opposed military alliance with Germany.

Dec 1940
July 1941

Home Minister in 2nd KONOYE Cabinet.

July 1941

Appointed Minister without Portfolio in 3rd KONOYE Cabinet.

Aug 1941

Wounded by an assassin.

1942

Went on official visit to Nanking.

1943-45

Referred to as "Elder Statesman" attending meetings and banquets. His henchmen also in Koiso and Suzuki Cabinets - a wing slightly apart (but working with) the dominant Konoye-Kido faction of Elder Statesmen.

Aug (7) 1945

President, Privy Council.

Last two Cabinets of the war (KOISO, SUZUKI) and first two of the peace (HIGASHI-KUNI, SHIBUYAMA) a creation of KONOYE-KIDO, HIRANUMA, and (to lesser extent) OKADA, SUZUKI, AKATSUKI, the leading "Elder Statesmen" of this (immediate postwar) period.

N.B.

Hiranuma's reactionary extremism toned down to cautious conservatism by 1939, when he opposed military alliance with Germany.

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Q. In the period before the Pacific War, in Baron Hiranuma's Cabinet of 1939, it was reported that many Ministers in that Cabinet opposed the conclusion of a military alliance with Germany. We would appreciate it very much if Baron Hiranuma would comment on that development in this Cabinet.

A. The negotiations for closer alliance with Germany had begun some time prior to my Cabinet and I only learned of them as I got into the work of the Cabinet. Most of these negotiations were initiated and carried on by the Army itself. While some of this was done through the Foreign Office, many contacts were made with the German Foreign Office through the military attache and also by General Oshima. I know very little of those developments, as I said before, until it became part of my official duties to learn what was going on.

Q. What was the issue, or the difficulty, as it developed within the Cabinet during the summer of 1939?

A. The paramount issue in the Cabinet at that time was a study of an overall pact with Germany, negotiations for which had already been instituted by the military on their own. As you will recall, if you read the papers at that time, a great many sessions were held on this issue - I don't remember exactly how many, but it was 60 or 70 meetings on this particular problem. There were a great many opinions on the matter - some were against it some for it, but as you also know, the military at that time were very strong and they had a great deal of influence over the civilians as well, and they could not be stopped just by a word.

Q. What were the arguments which were presented in favor of the alliance?

A. The biggest argument favoring such an alliance was that it would guarantee Japan's position and her security to be allied with a powerful European nation.

Q. Was that argument presented by the War Minister? What other advocates of that policy were there?

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- A. The chief proponents were the military, i.e., the Army - the Navy was not too strong for it.
- Q. What Army men were they?
- A. I don't remember the names of the particular individuals, but it was the leaders in general.
- Q. Does that mean the Minister of War and Chief of the General Staff?
- A. Yes, that is right. I don't know exactly who were all the individuals involved in it, but they were represented in these arguments by the Minister of War and the Chief of Staff.
- Q. Did any civilians favor the alliance with Germany?
- A. Again, I repeat - I don't remember the exact individuals, but I do know it is what we call the Rightist elements which favored it.
- Q. Were they in the Cabinet?
- A. No, they were not in the Cabinet.

(At this point, Mr. Takeshige Ishiguro, Chief Secretary of the Privy Council, added the following comments).

I should point out that when His Excellency says he does not remember, he should say he does not know. Even the War Minister, himself, was not a man of great authority, but a mouthpiece for the elements in authority.

- A. (Continued by Baron Hiranuma) - If I give you a frank opinion of this thing, the leaders themselves were influenced by the lower elements, i.e., the lower ranks in the Gumbu.
- Q. Why was it, at this period, that the arguments of the militarists did not prevail and they did not sign a military alliance?
- A. The arguments against the alliance with Germany and Italy which were put forth at that time were first - That to conclude such an alliance would bring about unrest in the whole world and lead to serious disorder. The other was, that such a move would bring into Japan, Fascism and Nazism, i.e. the totalitarian system. If I may speak frankly, there were very strong advocates for such things at that time, but we felt that these elements or systems would not be conducive to good for Japan, and I opposed them and even talked against them in the Diet.

- Q. Why does he think the military was not strong enough to force the pact then?
- A. Even though we admit that the military is all-powerful, it does not necessarily follow that the Cabinet had to follow them blindly. They did not rule the Cabinet at that time.
- Q. One year later, in September 1940, this military alliance was concluded with Germany. What changes had taken place to make it possible to conclude the alliance a year later?
- A. As you know, my Cabinet resigned and was followed by the Abe and Yonai Cabinets, and then under the Konoya Cabinet, when ^Matauaka became Foreign Minister, the agreement was made. At that time also, Stahmer came to Japan as a Special Representative from Germany and while I do not know all the details of the situation which prevailed at that time, I do know that these developments led to conclusion of the pact.
- Q. Was it also felt by the Army that Germany had showed herself to be very strong in the first year of war in Europe?
- A. I cannot state positively but I would think that that might have had some influence. However, it is more likely in my opinion that the arguments of the military, which I stated before, finally prevailed and carried the thing to the decision.
- Q. In that final period in September 1940, who were the opponents of the Army then - in concluding this alliance?
- Q. I don't know what went on in the Cabinet at that time, but it is my own opinion that there were no opponents. The Konoye Cabinet seemed to be pretty well united on the question.
- Q. Would he think that included the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister too?
- A. To speak frankly on the matter, I don't think the Foreign Minister or Premier could stand in the way of it very much.
- Q. What it really means is not that they were forced into it against their will, but that they, themselves, were in favor of it at that time?

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- A. Of course, I cannot tell what went on in their minds, but on the surface at least, they did not put up any opposition.
- Q. Outside the Cabinet, were there any powerful forces that were fighting against the alliances?
- A. There were a number of us who were opposed to it, but at that time no open opposition was voiced.
- Q. To what extent do you think the Japanese planning - programming - of war preparations in the year that followed, was coordinated with German preparations?
- A. I could not put my finger on any specific example of it, but it would seem to me that there was more or less such cooperation as you suggest.
- Q. Would Baron Hiranuma venture to indicate whether the fact that Germany seemed to be strong and winning the war in Europe, was an important factor in the decision to attack Pearl Harbor - or how significant was that in the decision for war with the U.S.?
- A. The attitude of the military leaders on this matter is something beyond my knowledge, but I would venture my own opinion. First of all, Japan was not bound by the terms of her pact with Germany to enter the war. In the second place, even though Japan was allied with Germany, Germany could not give much help to Japan in the Pacific because of the fact she had no appreciable Navy, so Japan could not look to her for any help along that line.
- Q. Was it felt that a great part of the U.S. strength would be diverted to the European struggle?
- A. The Army probably had such ideas, but I don't think they were shared to a great extent by the Navy.
- Q. Baron Hiranuma has spoken here many times of the strength and political importance of the Army in effecting these decisions - why was the Army so strong - how did it achieve such a position of political strength?
- A. This military power, of which we have been talking, is not something that developed overnight. To find its true significance,

and power, we have to go back to Japan's middle ages. The policy of the Imperial House has always been one of peace; that the country should be ruled not by might but by right. However, there were certain elements in those early times which developed power through their retainers - the large number of troops which they had. This developed into the feudal system and was the beginning of Japan's militarists. This power was dominant, as you know, until the time of the Meiji Restoration, and while during that period the power of the military seemed to have decreased, we cannot say there was any period in Japan's history when the military were out, for while they did come to the surface at times, they always existed as a potential force. These are simply my own frank opinions.

Q. Many people would say that such organizations as the Kokuhonsha helped the militarists to establish their strength in recent years. What would Baron Hiranuma comment on that?

A. While it may appear on the surface that the Kokuhonsha did strengthen the hand of the military, basically this society was never established for any such purpose. It was the thought of this organization that the country should not be ruled by might, whether it be military might or the might of any strong factions, or even by wealth. It was the principle of this organization to establish the Emperor as the strong element in the political government of the country. The whole principle advocated was one of rule on a moral rather than a military basis. At the time this society was organized, it was felt that there were elements which threatened the Imperial House.

Q. On that point, it is often very difficult to be certain exactly what aim one may be following when one is attempting to deal with the Imperial position. For instance, I recall such a thing as the Shows Restoration movement (in the 'thirties, Ed) which also involved making the Emperor supreme. Baron Hiranuma does not mean that the aim of this group was for a Shows Restoration?

The basis of our organization was one of rule by right rather than by might - a principle which we emphasized - and we were in fact greatly

opposed by the faction which called for a Shows Restoration.

Q. Were there not many military and naval leaders in the Kokuhonsha?

A. Yes, there were.

Q. And, what was his opinion of these military and naval leaders?

A. These men came in with my approval and while I don't know what they may have said in other places - still I know that there they fully supported the principles of the Kokuhonsha.

Q. Were Generals ARAKI, Sadao and Mazaki, Jinzaburo members of the Kokuhonsha?

A. Yes, they were members. (At the start of the second session, Baron Hiranuma retracted this answer. Ed.).

Q. Would he regard their activities as fully supporting the activities of the Kokuhonsha as he outlined it?

A. Yes, when they entered the society, of course they supported it.

Q. I would like to ask Baron Hiranuma in what he said about the power of the militarists and the necessity to maintain a government by moral principles rather than force - does he feel that a government centered on the Emperor - what you did you would call a Kodo or an imperial rule - that the realization of that was possible with the militarists exercising considerable strength as they did?

A. Of course, it would not be possible without a change in the military, a spiritual change in the military. There have been times in Japan when leaders such as General Nogi and General Togo and General Kurogi supported fully such principles as were held by the Kokuhonsha. However, I must admit that the military leaders, while they may have agreed in principle with the fundamental conception of Kokuhonsha, were influenced by the young officers who clamored for exercise of power, not only in diplomatic circles but also internal affairs as well.

Q. Does the Baron know whether the German Alliance was first proposed by the Germans or by the Japanese military?

A. The formal proposal was made by Germany. Of course, I don't know what had gone on before that.

Q. And, what were the advantages which the Germans proposed to Japan - what were the selling points, as far as Japan was concerned?

A. I don't know that we could point out any specific advantages which were advocated. Perhaps those which were stressed were in the spiritual rather than in any concrete proposals. It was urged that an alliance between Germany and Japan would give Japan an advantage in any negotiations with other powerful countries.

Q. Does that imply that Germany was to support some Japanese position which was specifically stated?

A. It was also felt that if Japan were to align herself with the Nazi and Fascist principles, she would participate in world leadership.

Q. Then, it was expected this was part of a general scheme whereby Germany, Italy and Japan would become the dominant powers of the entire world?

A. Yes, I felt that way.

Q. Is that the argument that the Army advanced as a reason for entering into the alliance?

A. Yes, they used that as an argument.

Q. The Japanese Army accepted that as a possibility?

A. I imagine that is right. I would like to suggest that rather than dominate the world, the goal was to lead the world.

Q. In the Army's view, was the alliance directed toward strengthening relations with any particular country or countries? Was it directed against Russia, Britain and the U.S., or was it just a general proposition of strengthening their hand throughout the world? In the discussions, where the Army was proposing that the alliance be concluded, was it argued that this alliance would help them specifically in getting what they wanted from Britain, U.S. and Holland on the one hand, as against Russia on the other?

A. As far as I know, they made no declaration on this matter, but it is quite likely they did have something like this in their minds.

Q. Was there anything in the nature of a secret pact, possibly between the German military and Japanese military, such as a division of the Dutch East Indies?

A. I know of no such secret alliance, nor do I know of any concrete proposals in the alliance.

Q. Did those who opposed the alliance suggest that it would not be able to produce this condition of world leadership which the Army proposed?

A. Yes, many of us opposed it on the principle that the world cannot be ruled correctly by might but only by moral principles. I pointed out that the principles held by Germany and Italy were based upon the domination of superior powers rather than a general alliance of our powers in moral cooperation.

Q. What about the other side of it - were there questions raised on the ground that it was not practical anyway, because Germany and Japan did not have the strength to attain this leadership?

A. I don't know whether they were or not. The principle is wrong - even if it could, it should not, be used.

Q. Does that mean it was never suggested that a possible danger of this alliance would be getting into a war which Japan could not win?

A. Yes, many of us felt there was a prospective danger along that line.

Q. And presented those views to the Army?

A. This was not done openly but I am sure it was done on the side a great deal.

Q. There are the minutes of those 60 or 70 Cabinet sessions held during the summer of 1939 kept?

A. There are no such records that I know of. While some notes may have been taken by individuals, there were no official minutes. I might explain that those many meetings or conferences that I mentioned were not formal affairs - sometimes it only involved the Premier, Navy and Army Ministers and just a few people like that so no formal minutes were taken.

Q. Were the meetings on occasion, formal?

A. Yes, there were probably two or three such meetings.

Q. And there are no minutes of those meetings?

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A. No records were made. I have attended a number of Cabinet meetings and no minutes were taken. (This by the Chief Secretary)

Q. Were there reports or documents presented by the different participants in the meetings?

A. Yes, there probably were documents brought in but as far as I remember, they were not made formal. They simply were the basis of verbal presentations.

Q. Where are those documents? Did they go back to the various Ministries?

A. Yes, that is correct.

(Baron Hiranuma here said that he was mistaken in his previous statement that Generals Araki and Mazaki had been members of the Kokuhonsha).

Q. We discussed in considerable detail the struggle over the military alliance with Germany in Baron Hiranuma's Cabinet. When you entered the Konoye Cabinet in December 1940, the military alliance with Germany had already been concluded. Would the Baron comment on any change in the atmosphere as a result of the conclusion of that military alliance - any new stepping-up of any military or economic developments during that period?

A. As I told you the other day, I don't know a great deal about military affairs and anything I say would be pure guess on my part. No doubt there was some influence on Japan's military operations and plans as a result of concluding the Alliance. I wonder too if there wasn't a military agreement with Germany at the same time? Since Germany was principally concerned with the situation in Europe, the Japanese Army could not give her much assistance. On the other hand, if Japan were to go to war, her fighting would be mainly in the Pacific, where Germany would be unable to give much help. So, on the whole, I don't think there was any great change in the general military situation as a result of the alliance but, of course, it did help foster the preparation for war. Now, regarding the effect on the economic situation, again I have to say that I don't know very much about that field and cannot point out any specific influences although there undoubtedly were some.

Q. In the reference to a military agreement - I would like to understand more clearly what that means. The original pact of September 1940 was a military alliance. Was this something additional to it?

A. While it is true that the alliance was military in nature, the agreement that I speak of concerned details - a more detailed and specific agreement touching on military affairs.

Q. That would be between the German military men and Japanese military men secretly?

A. Yes, that is what I think.

Q. What would be the best source to find out the terms of such an agreement if it was made? Where could you go to get details on such a secret agreement?

A. I would not know. That would be something known only to the army and navy authorities.

Q. Well, would it be among the General Staff people in charge of strategic planning at that time?

A. Yes, in the General Staff or in the High Command somewhere.

Q. Now, turning to the field of economic preparations during that period - there is a great deal of evidence to show that during this period, i. e., from about November 1940 until the spring of 1941, there was a rather significant struggle going on over what kind of control should be applied to Japanese industry. To what extent did the Baron observe this struggle and what did he see were the issues involved?

A. I was not in the department at that time and cannot give any concrete evidence on the question, but from my own observations I know that there was a great deal of bitter opposition to the development of these controls. However, such controls did become stronger and stronger, and many of them went to extremes in their control.

Q. Would he say that the most intense phase of this struggle occurred when the Cabinet Planning Board proposed its measures for control of industry in the fall of 1940?

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A. Yes, the struggle was intense at that time. There was considerably difference of opinion between the various Ministers, but the plan as proposed by the Planning Board finally carried after some revisions.

Q. Who were the Ministers that forced the revision?

A. I was not in the Cabinet at that time and again must confess I don't know all the details but I recall that Kobayashi, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and perhaps others, called for those revisions.

Q. The War and Navy Ministers made a joint statement, supporting the Planning Board's program. Why was it the War and Navy Ministers were not strong enough to have their plan carried through?

A. In my own opinion, the Army and Navy were generally in favor of the original plan and since the revised plan was not too far off from the original, they perhaps were agreed to that.

Q. I don't quite see that, because the struggle was very bitter and the revisions very great. Why should the Army and Navy, with their great power, have to accept changes in what they wanted?

A. It is a little hard for me to speak on some of these points but in regard to this revised plan, the Army and Navy did agree to it eventually but when the thing was carried out, regardless of the specifications of the revised plan, the original plan was really the one put into effect, so while the revised plan appeared on the surface the original plan was the one actually carried out - or very near to the original plan.

Q. I think the original plan called for straight government appointment to the Control Associations of the officials, but that the revision enabled the business leaders to control such appointments in the final control association law which was adopted in August or September, 1941. Even admitting that, what interests me is, that on this revision issue which was a stiff fight, we have an instance in which the Army and Navy were not powerful enough to have their way. They did not get exactly what they wanted. What would you give as the reasons for this?

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A. I was not in the Cabinet as I mentioned a moment ago, but I did hear some of these Ministers talking about the proposition. I think the Army and Navy were generally agreed with the plan but they could not oppose it on the surface. However, in those days, there were many instances where the Planning board's plans were not actually put into operation. The tendency was for the lower officials to use their own discretion at times and even in this instance, the original plan was the one that was virtually put into operation. After all, if I understand your point correctly, there was opposition on the part of the military, but by the time the plan was finally revised, it is my opinion that the military was generally in agreement with the new plan so that their opposition had somewhat been taken care of.

Q. Why was it that the business leaders in an editorial in the "Oriental Economist" maintained that the original plan was a Communistic plan and would separate capital from management, but the final plan was one which they, the business leaders, were quite willing to accept?

A. And, what would they imply?

Q. I think the implication here is that on an issue in which the Army and Navy Ministers issued a statement supporting the Cabinet Board's original plan, they finally accepted these revisions which were very basic - the revisions the business leaders wanted. To my mind, here is an issue in which the Army and Navy leaders did not have their way in a very important matter.

A. The majority of the business world and many other sources as well opposed the original plan on the basis of its Communistic nature and I, myself, believed that such a proposal, based as it was on Communistic principles, would not stand up against the strong arguments put up by the Ministers who opposed the plan.

Q. Why did the Army and Navy Ministers support a Communistic plan?

A. The leaders in the Army and Navy had never been in favor of Communistic principles and it certainly wasn't in their minds to produce a proposal which was Communistic in nature. This proposal, itself, was drawn up and prepared by lesser officials in the War and Navy Departments (actually presented by the Planning Board, however: Ed.) and was simply presented by the leaders. When the opposition developed on the part of the other Ministers, there was nothing for them to do but to accede to it.

Q. A few months later, in April 1941, when Baron Hiranuma had become Home Minister, Mr. Hoshino, who was Chief of the Planning Board that had sponsored this plan, withdrew from his post and there were a number of arrests made in the Cabinet Planning Board. Presumably, Baron Hiranuma ordered these arrests - what was the reason for these arrests and Mr. Hoshino's resignation?

A. These arrests were ordered not by the Home Ministry alone, but by the Department of Justice as well. The matter was discussed between the two Ministries and these men were arrested because it was discovered they were Communists, although their Communistic principles had not been openly declared. As to Mr. Hoshino's resignation as President of the Planning Board, nothing was ever said to me about it. He undoubtedly talked to the Premier, but I would think that he resigned partially because of this situation which had developed, feeling perhaps that he was responsible for permitting such a situation to develop.

Q. Would he say that these men who were arrested had anything to do with the original Planning Board proposition?

A. I don't know what went on in the Planning Board - who led out in discussions or who wrote up the results. I know nothing at all about those details.

Q. In the period that followed, Baron Hiranuma became Minister without Portfolio in the third Konoye Cabinet - during this period, what comment would he make on the developing situation between the U.S.

and Japan as it became more critical - were there indications that this situation was rapidly leading to war?

A. The situation was critical as you say, but the general feeling was that we should avoid war if possible and personally I felt that we could find points for a compromise between the two countries. I often talked to Foreign Minister Matsueka and he did not oppose my views at all. I felt that we should carry on our efforts through the diplomats of the two countries to work out some sort of agreement. It was at that time, as you probably recall, that an attempt was made on my life, and I was in bed for sometime. During that time, I did not know what was going on at all. Following Matsueka, Toyoda became Foreign Minister, but he, too, was in complete agreement with my views.

Q. What terms was Japan prepared to offer in order to come to this agreement?

A. I was wounded and out of touch with everything at that time and do not know what was contained in the compromise proposal which the Cabinet drew up and discussed. It is my observation that the Konoye Cabinet fell because its proposals could not be carried out.

Q. Were these proposals, which the Foreign Minister made, ones which the Army and Navy would support.

A. I don't know what the points in their proposal were, but I would judge that the Army and Navy must have supported it since such a proposal could not have been made without general agreement of all the Ministers.

Q. Would this mean that the Army and Navy would have supported a withdrawal from Indo-China and China?

A. This question of withdrawal of troops from French Indo-China and from China was a paramount issue at the time and it is probably due to the opposition of the militarists to such a withdrawal that the compromise, which I so much desired, could not be worked out.

Q. Well, this really means that Foreign Minister Toyoda had no real power to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion?

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- A. Yes, I would think so. On that point, the Cabinet could not get together.
- Q. Passing on to a later period during the war - when would you say it had become fairly general opinion among the Japanese officials that it was necessary to withdraw from the war?
- A. Before the beginning of the war the majority, I think, were opposed to it, and opposition was voiced, but once the war was under way, no such sentiment was ever expressed openly.
- Q. My question was - when did it become the general feeling that it would be necessary to withdraw from the war?
- A. The ordinary people of Japan were not aware of the turn of affairs in the war. I believe for my part that I was fairly well in touch with developments. I had realized that for Japan to carry on a successful war in the Pacific she must have naval and air supremacy. Such supremacy was maintained at the beginning of the war but was gradually lost. For another thing, Japan's military forces were scattered over a wide area - extending eventually into India and far into the south. With these conditions, I realized personally that it was extremely difficult for Japan to carry on - in fact, if I speak frankly, it was impossible. There were undoubtedly others who shared my opinions but they never made them public.
- Q. At what time did the senior statesmen, including Baron Hiranuma, begin to discuss practical measures for getting out of the war?
- A. There were no such discussions among the senior statesmen.
- Q. You mean that the measures which were taken to get out of the war were not discussed at all among the Chief Advisers to the Emperor?
- A. The term "Elder Statesmen" is one that is generally applied to those older men, but there was no formal meeting of this group for the purpose of discussing the proposition of ending the war. There were individual discussions and talks but certainly nothing ever of a formal measure.
- Q. Who were the men who participated in these informal talks?
- A. These were such men as Konoze and Okada and Takatsuki.

Q. What was the nature of these discussions - were they planning the steps which should be taken in order to get Japan out of the war?

A. I don't know that any specific ways for getting out of the war were discussed in these personal contacts, although I myself did have some ideas.

Q. What were your ideas?

A. I, of course, from the beginning, did not want the war and wanted to effect a compromise. I was willing and ready to withdraw the troops from China. Then, when the war developed, and reached the point of which we are speaking now, I felt we should make no conditions to end the war so long as the national polity, i.e., the position of the Emperor, was not guaranteed.

Q. What practical proposals did you suggest to stop the war?

A. I did not take part in those talks.

Q. What practical steps did you suggest to bring the war to an end?

A. I learned of the plan to send Konoye to Russia in the hope of effecting a peace through that medium only after the proposal was made and as far as other proposals, I never made any on my own. Following the Potsdam Declaration, I felt we should accept it since it did state that the position of the Imperial House would be maintained. The matter of accepting that Declaration was up to His Majesty, the Emperor, and he made the final decision.

Q. What would you say were the factors which led to the decision to end the war - were they predominately military factors because the Army could not carry on the war any longer, or were there other factors such as morale?

A. The biggest factor was possibly a military factor. As I said before, air and naval supremacy were gone - Japanese Armies were scattered over a wide area - home defenses were completely inadequate and on top of that, bombing had been increased to such an extent that whole cities were wiped out, as you can see right around us here, with 80% of this city gone - then there came the atomic bomb, so that the country was faced with terrible destructive

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powers and Japan's ability to wage war was really at an end,

- Q. Did that include concern over the attitude of the people toward continuing the war?
- A. The general population was not aware of the war situation and many of them undoubtedly felt that Japan was still able to wage war since they did not know the over-all situation. In fact, they did not know it until the war was brought to an end by declaration from the Emperor, himself, and for the first time these people learned of the true situation. And, when Higashi-Kuni explained the situation in the Diet, then they learned what was going on.
- Q. Baron Hiranuma believes that the decision to end the war was primarily a decision by the army on the grounds it could no longer fight the war under conditions as they existed?
- A. I don't know how the military, themselves, felt in their own hearts, but as far as any outward expressions were concerned, they maintained until the very last that they were able to carry on the war.
- A. It was changed by the decision of the Emperor, himself.
- Q. Would he say that the Army was virtually isolated - that all other responsible officials believed the war should be brought to an end.
- A. Among the officials, that is true. Outside of the Army and Navy, they were agreed that the war should be stopped, but even in the Cabinet Meetings, the military still maintained they could carry on and it was because of the clash of opinion there that the Emperor finally rendered his judgment.
- Q. I would like to know the precise difference between the matters considered by the Jushin and the matters considered by Sumitsuin.
- A. As I stated awhile ago, these elder statesmen, the Jushin, of which you speak, have neither official position nor authority. They are only called upon for their counsel on very special occasions.
- Q. Such as?

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A. Such as the question of continuing or ending a war. Now, regarding the Privy Council itself, this body gives advice to the Emperor on specified times and does not take up matters outside of that stipulated field. They have a special field and don't go outside of that.

Q. What is the precise relation between the Naidaijin and the Jushin?

A. The Lord Privy Seal may seek counsel from the elder statesmen on occasion before advising the Throne, but the Naidaijin has no connection whatsoever with the Privy Council.

Q. Earlier it was said that the Jushin were not consulted on the ending of the war but as has just been said now, that should have been one of its specific functions.

A. What I mean is that the individual advice of these elder statesmen would be sought on such occasion. There would be no formal assembly or discussion.

Q. Was Baron Hiranuma's advice sought by the Premier or Emperor in this case?

A. My counsel was not sought prior to the decision of the Emperor. After that decision, I was consulted. That was immediately preceding the broadcast when I was consulted.

Q. What was the reason for his being consulted then?

A. The decision had already been made, but we were individually asked whether we supported it or not. Of course, I supported it.

Q. I had formerly believed that problems would be laid before Jushin by Naidaijin, acting for the Emperor. I now understand that the Emperor did desire Sumitsuin to advise him without going before Naidaijin. How would the desire of the Emperor be passed from the Emperor to Baron Hiranuma?

A. When the Emperor seeks counsel of the Privy Council, there are specified ways for doing it. It goes through the regular channel and the Naidaijin has nothing to do with it. However, when the Emperor wishes to speak to me, personally, he might do it directly

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with me or through the Naidaijin. However, when the Emperor sought my counsel at the end of the war, he came to me directly.

Q. Can he briefly give me the channels for getting from the Emperor to the Privy Council?

A. In Japanese Law, political matters are completely in the hands of the Cabinet and the Cabinet in presenting matters to the Throne, requests in writing that it be taken up with the Privy Council so all matters coming to the Privy Council are at the instigation of the Cabinet. There are also matters relating to the Imperial Household. These things, in a similar way, are presented to the Throne through the Minister of the Imperial Household.