

INTERROGATION OF

OTA, Kozo

Date and Time: 23 January 1946, 1415-1645 hours  
Place : Sugamo Prison, Tokyo, Japan.  
Present : OTA, Kozo  
Lieutenant Samuel E. Healey, Interrogator.  
T/3 Tom Yonehara, Interpreter.  
Miss Lucille C. Brunner, Stenographer.

Questions by : Lieutenant Healey.

OATH OF INTERPRETER

Lieut. Healey:

"Do you solemnly swear, by Almighty God, that you will truly and accurately interpret and translate from English into Japanese and from Japanese into English, as may be required of you, in this proceeding?"

T/3 Yonehara:

"I do."

Q: This is OTA, Kozo?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any variation in the spelling of your name?  
Are you known by any other name?

A. The only name I am known by is OTA, Kozo.

Q. Give an autobiography, beginning with the date and place of your birth.

A. I was born in 1889 in the city of Fukushima, Fukushima Prefecture.

Q. What was your wife's maiden name?

A. TAKANI, Fumiko.

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- Q. What are the names of your brothers and sisters are they living or dead?
- A. The eldest sister is NAGATO, Tsuyu; the second sister OISHI, Sayo; the elder brother Kumazo; the next brother is ISHIKAWA, Teisuke. Teisuke is the youngest member of the family.
- Q. Are you a relative of OTA, Ichiro?
- A. I do not know him.
- Q. What schools did you attend after the middle school?
- A. I graduated from the fourth middle school in Kanazawa Shi and then I went to the Imperial University in Tokyo.
- Q. Did you graduate from the University?
- A. Yes, in 1920.
- Q. What was your career after graduation from the University?
- A. I was a lawyer.
- Q. Did you have a practice of your own?
- A. I had my own practice until 1939.
- Q. Did you have any business outside of the practice of law?
- A. I had no connection with any other business outside of the practice of law.
- Q. Did you have any government position during those years?
- A. No connection with the government during that time. I had no government position until I was selected as Chief Secretary in Hiranuma's Cabinet.
- Q. On what date were you selected to be Chief Secretary?
- A. January 5, 1939.
- Q. Did you defend participants in the May 15, 1932 incident in which Premier INUKAI was assassinated?
- A. I defended HOMMA, Kenichiro, who was <sup>not</sup> one of the assassins but who had aided the movement by giving money to the clique of young officers who actually committed the crime.
- Q. Did you remain in the Hiranuma Cabinet as Chief Secretary until it was dissolved?

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- A. Yes, I served as Chief Secretary of the Cabinet until the Hiranuma Cabinet was dissolved.
- Q. Was that on August 29, 1939?
- A. Yes, it was.
- Q. Then what was your career?
- A. I became a member in the House of Peers.
- Q. For how long?
- A. I resigned my position when I was taken in as prisoner here on December 23, 1945.
- Q. Did you have any other position when you were in the Government besides being Chief Secretary in the Hiranuma Cabinet and a member of the House of Peers?
- A. I was Minister of Education in the Suzuki Cabinet on April 7, 1945, and resigned in the same year, August 1945. I had no other government position during that period.
- Q. Why were you picked to be Chief Secretary in the Hiranuma Cabinet?
- A. I think it was because I knew Mr. Hiranuma from before; I have known Hiranuma for over twenty years.
- Q. Did you have any other relationship with Hiranuma besides the relation of friendship during the years before you became Chief Secretary of his Cabinet?
- A. I had no other connection besides pure friendship.
- Q. How many Cabinet meetings were held while you were Chief Secretary in the Hiranuma Cabinet between January 5 and August 29, 1939?
- A. They had two regular Cabinet meetings weekly; that is, twice a week. There were special meetings; all the Cabinet members were not present at these. They were conducted by the five principal members of the Cabinet. I do not know how many special meetings there were and I did not attend any of them.
- Q. Did you attend any of the regular meetings?
- A. I attended all of the regular Cabinet meetings.

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- Q. Was there a Cabinet meeting as the result of the notification from the United States Government that the Japanese Commercial Treaty had been abrogated?
- A. In a regular meeting of the Cabinet in July 1939, Foreign Minister ARITA, Hachiro reported the abrogation of the Japanese-American Commercial Treaty.
- Q. What was the reaction of members of the Cabinet to the announcement of the abrogation of the Japanese-American Commercial Treaty on July 26, 1939.
- A. The last I remember - the only thing the members of the Cabinet could say was they were very disappointed that this Treaty had been done away with and Foreign Minister ARITA stated that he would try to find some way to renew it. After the following month I was not Secretary to the Cabinet anymore, so do not know what followed.
- Q. Did anyone mention the possibility of eventual war with the United States at that particular meeting after the announcement made by the Foreign Minister.
- A. None of the Cabinet members thought there would be war with the United States at that time.
- Q. What was said in the Cabinet meetings which you attended concerning the affair in China?
- A. There was nothing said in the Cabinet meetings about the affair, but the Tientsin incident was brought to Tokyo and discussed between Foreign Minister ARITA and British Ambassador Craig.
- Q. Were you present at the conference?
- A. No, but I heard about it.
- Q. What did you hear?
- A. I do not know the full details of the talk between ARITA and Craig, but it was rumored that the conference did not reach a favorable conclusion.
- Q. Did you ever have a private or unofficial conversation with Premier Hiranuma at any time concerning Japanese policy concerning China.
- A. In all of my personal talks with Hiranuma and also with Ambassador Grew and Dumont, chargé d'affaires,

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there were mentioned only possibilities of peaceful settlement of affairs with other countries, including the United States. There was no talk at all that they wanted to continue anything rash about the matter, but only about ironing it out smoothly. It is understood by people who know Mr. Hiranuma that his policy towards China has always been one of a peaceful nature and my personal talks with him have always been about a peaceful settlement between China and Japan.

- Q. In respect to talk of peaceful settlement according to the policy of Premier Hiranuma, what would be the conditions under which Japan would consider peace with China?
- A. Mr. Hiranuma had no concrete plans in regard to peaceful settlement with China, but Mr. Hiranuma has expressed to me that even though he would have plans everything must be brought up to the Cabinet members and approved by the Army.
- Q. Did Premier Hiranuma ever attempt to bring up before the Cabinet plans or policies concerning China?
- A. No, he did not. Mr. Hiranuma expressed to me that since it was impossible to solve the China incident by itself because of the country's connection with Germany and Italy, the whole problem must be solved together.
- Q. Why did the connection of Japan with Germany and Italy prevent the settlement of the China affair?
- A. Hiranuma said that before any steps could be taken to iron out the China incident there must be an understanding of all the nations of Japan's true aims of forming a co-prosperity sphere in East Asia.
- Q. What was Premier Hiranuma's attitude towards the setting up of the independent state of Manchoukuo.
- A. Premier Hiranuma regarded Manchoukuo as an independent nation.
- Q. What was Premier Hiranuma's attitude regarding the statement of the Japanese Government on Japan's future policy for the settlement of the China

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- affair issued on November 3, 1938?
- A. When Hiranuma became Premier he had no attitude or views of his own in regard to the China affair, but a policy that former Premier KONOYE had favored was followed through. I do not remember any statement of the Japanese Government on November 3, 1938. The statement of KONOYE which Premier Hiranuma favored was published about Dec. 22, 1938.
- Q. Did you ever hear anyone in the Hiranuma Cabinet speak at a Cabinet meeting or to you privately or officially as to whether or not they favored the operations of the Japanese army in China?
- A. Because the war had just started and Mr. Hiranuma's policy was to continue those policies of Premier KONOYE there were no voices either opposing or in favor of the war in China.
- Q. Were you ever present at a meeting of the Advisory Council?
- A. No, I know nothing about the Advisory Council.
- Q. When did you first become connected with the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (the national movement for assisting the throne) (TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI)?
- A. I became a member of the association upon request by letter from Premier KONOYE when the movement was organized September 1940.
- Q. What position did you hold in the TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI?
- A. I held no position within this association, but I did attend some of the parties held by the members.
- Q. You were a member of the preparatory committee for working out the details of organizing the TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI in 1940, were you not?
- A. I was not a member of that committee. I do not know of any such committee. I first knew about this organization when I received the invitation from Prince KONOYE. Those present at the first meeting after the invitation to join (about 50) were prominent businessmen and newspapermen and politicians. Some of the members from the House of Representatives and the House of Peers were also present. This was a preliminary meeting held about two months before September 1940.

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- Q. Who were the speakers at that preliminary meeting?  
A. Prince KONOYE was the speaker - because he was the one that invited all of us to this first meeting. Questions were asked of KONOYE as to what was the exact purpose of this organization. His reply was to promote a national spiritual monopoly.
- Q. Did Premier KONOYE explain what he meant by a national spiritual monopoly?  
A. Premier KONOYE's definition of the national spiritual monopoly was as follows: the movement of this organization will be one of a moral uplift and unity in the national spirit and there will be no connections whatsoever with political parties or national policies.
- Q. When did you become a councillor of the TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI?  
A. I had no special duty as a councillor in this organization, as all the members who attended the first meeting were called councillors to this organization. All those who attended the preliminary meeting were given the title of councillor (Somu), but it had no significance so far as any activities in the organization were concerned.
- Q. When did you become Chief of the General Affairs Bureau of the TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI?  
A. There was another OTA in the organization that you might have mistaken for me. I was never Chief of the General Affairs Bureau.
- Q. Were you not an official of the Executive Council of the TAISEI YOKUSAN KAI (Political Rule Assistance Society).  
A. I had no other office except as councillor, which was only a title.
- Q. Was the KOKUHONSHA Patriotic Organization formed by Baron (Premier) Hiranuma disbanded?  
A. It was, in 1936.
- Q. You were an organizer and officer of the KOKUHONSHA Patriotic Organization, were you not?  
A. I assisted Hiranuma as a lawyer and published a few books supporting his organization.

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- Q. When was the DAI NIPPON Wartime Religious Patriotic Service Association formed?  
A. I do not recall such a society.

CERTIFICATE OF INTERPRETER

I, Tom Yonehara, Serial No. 35931414, being sworn on oath, state that I truly translated the questions and answers given from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English respectively, and that the above transcription of such questions and answers, consisting of seven (plus) pages, are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Tom Yonehara

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30<sup>th</sup> day of January 1946

Samuel E. Healey  
1st Lt. ITC.

Duly Detailed Investigating  
Officer International Prosecution  
Section, GHQ, SCAP.

CERTIFICATE OF STENOGRAPHER

I, Lucille C. Brunner, hereby certify that I acted as stenographer at the interrogation set out above, and that I transcribed the foregoing questions and answers, and that the transcription is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Lucille C. Brunner



CERTIFICATE OF INTERROGATOR

I, Samuel E. Healey, 1st Lieutenant, T. C.,  
Serial No. O-337897, certify that on twenty-third  
day of January, 1946, personally appeared before  
me OTA, Kozo, and according to T/3 Tom Yonehara,  
Interpreter, gave the foregoing answers to the  
several questions set forth therein.

Sugamo Prison, Tokyo, Japan

Samuel E. Healey  
Name

30 January 1945  
Date

1st Lt.  
Rank