

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

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INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 359)
NAV NO. 70

Place: Karuizawa
Date: 11 November 1947

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Observations on the Course of the War.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Vice Admiral WENEKER, Paul H., former Naval Attache, left JAPAN in 1937 to command the pocket battleship DEUTCHLAND. He returned to JAPAN in February 1940 and has been here since

Where interviewed: Karuizawa

Interrogator: Rear Admiral R. A. Ofstie

Interpreter: None

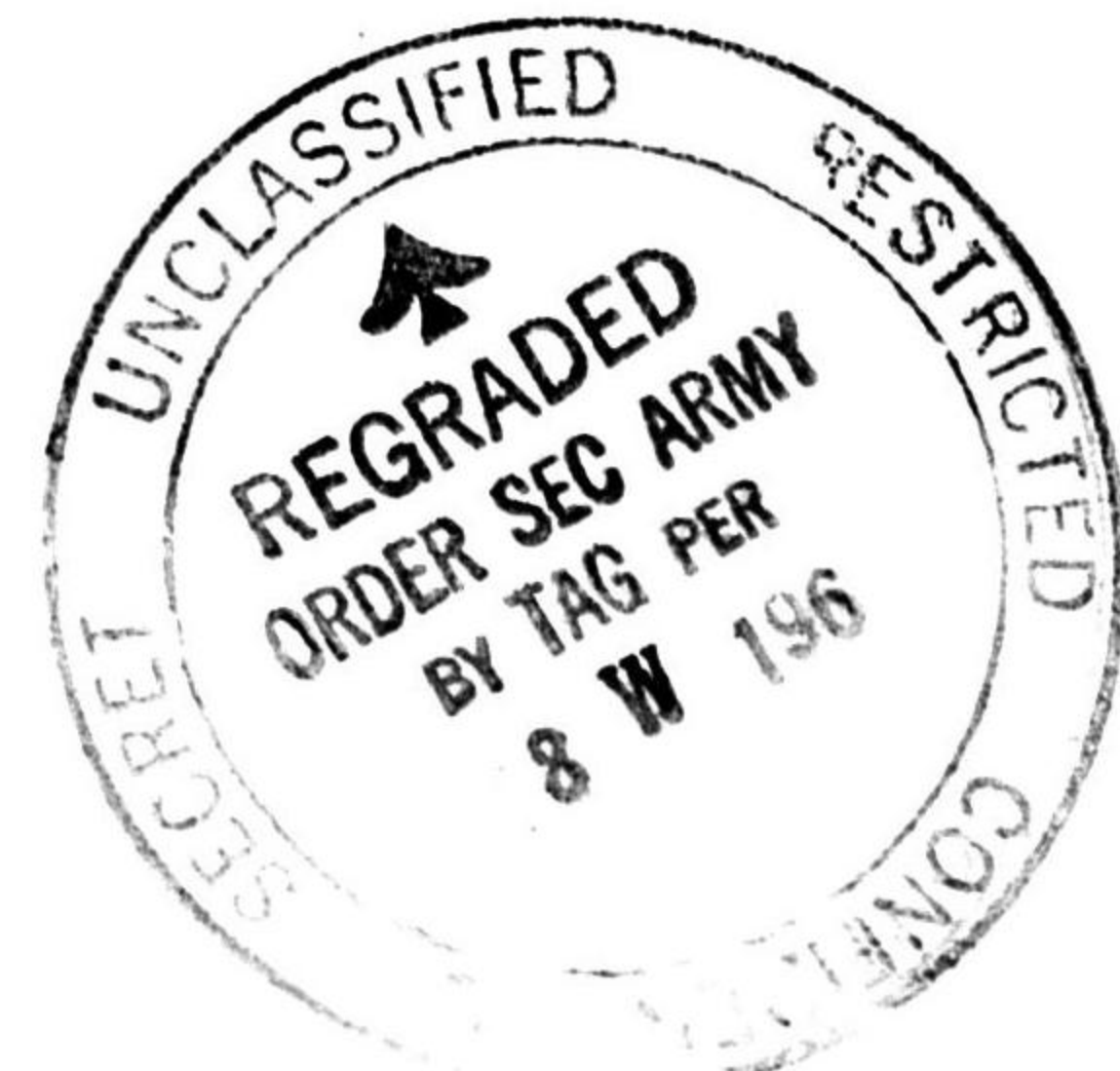
Allied Officers Present: None

SUMMARY

Admiral WENEKER discusses various features of the war as he saw it here, with particular reference to submarine warfare, both that of JAPAN and of the UNITED STATES.

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NARRATIVE

Narrative of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Weneker, Paul H., IJN)

JAPANESE SUBMARINE WARFARE

It was the expressed desire of the German Naval Ministry that every possible effort be made to induce the Japanese to exert their maximum effort in attack against United States merchant shipping in the PACIFIC. Notes were repeatedly exchanged between my office and BERLIN on this subject and directives from home instructed me to press the matter further. The Japanese had one invariable answer, namely, that they must conserve their submarines for attack against the United States Fleet. They argued that merchant shipping could be easily replaced with the great American production capacity, but that naval vessels represented the real power against what they fought and that these vessels and their trained crews were most difficult to replace and hence were the one logical target. If, therefore, they were to hazard their subs it must be against the United States Navy.

The Japanese Navy thought always of the United States carriers. They talked about how many were building, and how many were in the PACIFIC and that these must be sunk; but it was always carriers they talked about. Next after that they would attack battleships and lesser ships but never the merchantmen except under most favorable conditions. On instructions from BERLIN I suggested specifically that they concentrate on certain supply lines, with a chance of attacking tankers and transports, but they refused. I suggested the desirability of attacking the route between HONOLULU and the West Coast because that would force the use of convoys and would force the withdrawal of many escorts from the Western PACIFIC. Again the answer was negative; the mission was the American carriers and they could not be changed on this principle.

As a matter of fact they had much the same attitude towards the employment of the air forces. They felt they could only be risked against the major threat, which was the American Fleet. The enemy fleet, they said, was bound to attack JAPAN; therefore they must destroy it first.

The Japanese had poor types of submarines in this war. First of all they were too big for easy handling under water when under attack, and consequently were too easily destroyed. Then the asdic and sonic and radar equipment was very far behind in development. We therefore arranged to bring over here a type D-9 boat which would be best for them. We brought it to KURE, to the Navy Yard, where the Japanese studied it very carefully, removing the engines and much of the equipment and looked into every part of the construction. But they then came to the conclusion that this type boat was too complicated for construction in JAPAN at this time.

We arranged for one full Japanese sub crew to be sent to GERMANY, (via the west coast of FRANCE), for training. They had, I think, very good training in German boats and in German attack methods; but unfortunately they got caught in the North ATLANTIC in early 1944 while returning here.

Blockade running by Submarines between JAPAN and GERMANY

Throughout the war I was in charge of this operation. Usually the boats coming from GERMANY came to PENANG or SINGAPORE and I arranged to ship the vital Japanese materials down for loading and to bring what came from GERMANY up to JAPAN. I had representatives down south to handle matters there. These people also brought me information on the latest submarine war methods.

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We shipped from JAPAN quinine and tin and other vital materials in exchange for some optical goods, plans for airplanes, and machine tool equipment. Also, we exchanged special personnel this way.

But this was not so easy an arrangement because of the American submarines on the route between JAPAN and the South. I knew much of this because of the shipping for which I was responsible, which I have mentioned. It was terrible. Sometimes the entire convoy including all my material would be lost. It seemed that nothing could get through.

JAPANESE ATTITUDE AND CAPABILITIES

Early in the war I made a trip through the South Sea Islands (NEI) and up through the Marianas to see conditions with my own eyes. I was astounded in the South Seas. The Japanese there were thoroughly enjoying the lush life. They had parties continually and were drinking all the liquor they had captured. I asked them why they did not prepare fortifications and do something to make these places stronger, but they said that the Americans would never come, that they could not fight in the jungle and that they were not the kind of people who could stand warfare in the South. As far as I know all those people in those places, both Army and Navy, once they had got into a place where there was no fighting, would do nothing more about the war.

Obviously, in such time the war effort must be the maximum of the country, but here in JAPAN it was very difficult because of the corruption on every hand and the continual fighting for position. Anything would be done to get power during the war. Sometimes very good men were kept at their work only a very few weeks or a very few months because some one else would get the job through corruption. You cannot be efficient with key positions constantly changing.

IMPRESSIONS AND LESSONS OF THE WAR

About the Battle of MIDWAY, not so many people knew how things had gone there but there was some depression among those who did know. However, they were still too proud about their early success and these people simply said that they would work harder and would be O.K. again.

The Japanese were just not fitted for large scale operations as other countries. GUADALCANAL was an example, where they kept putting in their strength little by little to see it all destroyed without any benefit.

SAIPAN was really understood to be a matter of life or death. About that time they began telling the people the truth about the war. They began preparing them for whatever must happen. Before that, they had been doing nothing but fooling the people.

It was ridiculous the way the Japanese Army planes made exaggerated reports of the enemy ships they had sunk. I think it must have been because they felt they had to report successes to compare favorably with the Navy. This foolishness I think had bad results.

After the Battle of LEYTE the Japanese surface Navy was destroyed and it was decided to make the Navy only aviation. Most of the remaining ships were put out of commission in various places and the crews were used for all kinds of aviation work. Those who could not be used for naval aviation were transferred to the Army. This was in preparation for the final battle, but of course it was too late and it was not pushed ahead enough. It was the idea that the Special Attack Force would be trained especially to attack your carriers.

Narrative of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Weicker, Paul H., IJN)

There was no real Imperial Headquarters. The Chiefs of Staff of the Navy and of the Army would get together to discuss some matters where both were interested. That then was a meeting of the Imperial Headquarters; but when they adjourned the Headquarters was no more.

MISCELLANEOUS

Of course the Japanese over-estimated their own strength and underestimated the enemy. Then, they had very long supply lines which they could not protect; they admitted this in a pre-war statement. These were basic reasons for their failure to do better in the war. After that, I would say the reasons for their disaster could be classed about as follows in order of importance: First, and by far the worse, were the attacks of the highly efficient American submarines on the merchant shipping. Most serious of all here was the sinking of tankers and hence the loss of oil from the South. The second factor in importance was the destruction of the Japanese Navy, so they knew they could then not stop the enemy from coming to these vital areas. The third, which no doubt had some affect to close the war, was the air bombing attack on this country.

This was predominantly a naval war, and although JAPAN lost the war I do not think their Navy lost prestige with the people who know. The Army was very poor in cooperating. I heard there was much friction because the Army sometimes had to protect their own transports on the sea, but then the Navy had no escorts except some small boats such as converted fishing vessels and the like which were not much good. I have not heard what you suggest, namely that the Army was building its own escort carriers. I think perhaps this is not true because I would have known of it.

EFFORTS FOR PEACE

This was subject which you might say was of mutual interest. The Japanese desired GERMANY to make peace with RUSSIA. Of course this was impossible. Then they wanted to make some agreement with RUSSIA which would possibly assist them, that RUSSIA at least should withdraw three-quarters of a million men and her planes from MANCHURIA so the Japanese could employ their opposing forces elsewhere. To reach an agreement with RUSSIA, the Japanese were willing to sacrifice MANCHURIA, CHINA and KOREA. Next they would reach an understanding with the UNITED STATES, the plan being like this:

- (A) JAPAN would renounce her position in the NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES and generally in the South.
- (B) They would keep their armed forces except in the areas renounced.
- (C) The bargaining for a compromise peace would be based on the desirability of both sides stopping the war to avoid the heavy losses which would result if the war should continue. These early negotiations for peace I understand were handled through STOCKHOLM.

It was because of General OTT's efforts toward peace that he got in trouble with Von Ribbentrop and was forced out of his position as German Ambassador to JAPAN. This came about because of reports sent to BERLIN by Meissinger who was the Party representative here and who had access to direct communication with the head of the Reich. Ambassador Ott was then replaced by Stammer and went to PEKING, CHINA where he now is.

GERMAN RAIDERS

In 1943 a passenger liner was fitted up here as an auxiliary cruiser, with German crew.

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She went around the world to the west, down to MADAGASCAR and around the Cape, up in the ATLANTIC around Cape HORN and got back as far as an island near CHICHI JIMA where she stopped to refuel. She had fair success on the trip, destroying some ships. But shortly after leaving this last port for KOBE, at the end of her voyage, she was suddenly torpedoed in September 1943. We later picked up some 70-80 of the crew who said that the submarine had surfaced after sinking the ship and had taken two German prisoners. Since we never heard of them again we wonder if possibly the ship may have been sunk by a Japanese submarine. (Interrogator explained to Admiral Weneker that in September 1943, the UNITED STATES had none of its own merchantmen sailing so close the coast of JAPAN, and that it was therefore doubtful that the Japanese had mistaken the identify of the vessel. Will inquire if United States sub sank it and what happened to prisoners).

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