

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

INTERROGATION NO. 218

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE: 2 November 1945
TIME: 0930

Division of Origin: Basic Materials

Subject: The Coal Mining Industry in North China,
Manchuria and Korea.

Personnel interrogated:

Mr. T. NUMABE GEA Ministry's coal mining department - 1941-1945.
Mr. H. OTA Assistant to Chief of Economic Department, GEA
Ministry - 1941-1945.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building, Room 748

Interrogator: Lt. BURNES

Interpreter: Lt. BOHANNON

SUMMARY

1. Connection between GEA Ministry and the coal mining industry in Manchuria and Korea.
2. Coal production in North China.
3. Coal exports.
4. Effects of bombing attacks on North China Coal Industry.

Background of men interviewed

Mr. T. Numabe was a member of the Greater East Asia Ministry's coal mining department from November 1941 until the end of September 1945. During that time his chief concern was the development of the coal industry in North China. On the first of October he was transferred to the Foreign Office where he served until the first of November, at which time he was again transferred to the Hokkaido Department of the Mining Bureau in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Mr. H. Ota served from November 1941 until 30 September 1945 as assistant to Mr. K. Aichi, the Chief of the Economic Department of the Greater East Asia Ministry. Since then his career has been similar to that of Mr. Numabe, as outlined above.

1. Connection between the Greater East Asia Ministry and the coal mining industry in Manchuria and Korea.

According to Mr. Numabe, the Greater East Asia Ministry had no direct connection with the coal mining industry in either Manchuria or Korea. In Manchuria the Ministry operated through the Japanese embassy and gave assistance by helping to secure coal for Manchuria from North China. Coal production in Manchuria was the responsibility of the Manchurian government, which furnished periodic reports to the Ministry through the Japan-Manchuria Trading Company.

In like manner coal production in Korea was primarily the responsibility of the Korean Government-General. Data on Korean Coal production and exports might be obtained, Mr. Numabe thought, from the Tokyo office of the Korean Government-General, although there is the strong possibility that such information was burned.

According to Mr. Numabe, the Ministry tried to integrate the coal supplies of North China, Manchuria, Korea and Japan. Periodic conferences were held in Hsinking, Keijo or Peking and were attended by representatives of the Korean Government-General, the Manchurian Government, the Kwantung Army, the Japanese Embassy in Peking and the GEA Ministry. Japanese officials from the General Mobilization Board in Tokyo would present to the conference the Board's overall program for the allocation and distribution of coal among the areas represented. Such proposals were considered by the representatives in the light of (a) the production and supply situation in each of the areas and (b) available transportation. The conference then reached a decision on the amount of coal to be shipped to the various areas and the means of transportation to be employed.

2. Coal production in North China

The Ministry appeared to be chiefly concerned with the coal mining industry in North China. Its main interest lay in increasing production, and in order to aid the Japanese Embassy in Peking in the development of the North China coal mines the Ministry performed the following functions among others:

- (a) Had mining engineers sent from Japan.
- (b) Had mining machinery and equipment sent from Japan.
- (c) Imported food for the miners from Manchuria.
- (d) Assisted in the acquisition of an adequate supply of mine pillars from Japan.
- (e) Raised workers' wages to combat inflation

In an attempt to increase production, the main emphasis was placed on raising the output of old mines by improved techniques, etc. rather than trying to develop new mines. Immediately after 1937 the Japanese endeavored to increase overall production rather than merely the output of high-quality coal from certain mines. However, the increasing shortage of coking coal in Japan necessitated a shift of emphasis after 1943 to the production of those higher quality coking coals. At this point Mr. Numabe agreed to furnish data on production of coal in North China, Manchuria and Korea from 1931-1945, broken down by mining districts and by types of coal.

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Mr. Numabe stated that the Japanese program in North China met with fair success through 1942, the peak year, but that thereafter production began to decline for the following reasons:

(1) Labor troubles

Plenty of Chinese labor was available, but the Japanese were unable in many cases to get adequate numbers to work in the mines. Wages and food were always a problem, because with the inflationary rise in prices the currency had less and less value. The workers that could be obtained were of inferior quality and the rate of efficiency was consistently low.

(2) Machinery

The supply of essential machinery became critically short. Equipment which was utilized deteriorated steadily, and accidents and break downs became more frequent. The supply of new machinery from Japan dwindled away to nothing.

(3) Guerrilla attacks on the mines.

According to Mr. Numabe, these attacks, which affected practically all of the major mines, reached their height in 1943. They tempered off somewhat during 1944 and 1945, but always constituted a threat.

(4) Transportation difficulties.

Owing to (a) a shortage of locomotives and rolling stock and (b) labor troubles among the railway employees, railway transportation difficulties multiplied and adversely affected production as well as exports.

3. Coal Exports

Mr. Numabe agreed to furnish detailed data on exports from North China, Manchuria and Korea from 1931-1945. He stated that the decline in the volume of coal shipments from North China was caused chiefly by the loss of shipping and the breakdown of the North China railroads. Beginning with the fall of 1944 the Japanese attempted to relieve the shipping shortage by transporting North China coal overland through Manchuria to Korean ports on the Sea of Japan. The data will reflect the extent of that shift, which, according to Mr. Numabe, never achieved the desired results.

4. Effects of bombing attacks on the North China coal industry.

Mr. Numabe stated that few attacks had been carried out on actual mining installations. A few of the mines, chiefly the Kailan and Tatung mines, had suffered some damage, but, on the whole, production was not seriously affected. In general, it can also be stated that bombing attacks did not disturb the workers. The chief effect was on transportation. Attacks on the Tientsin-Pukow and the Peking-Hankow railways interfered to a considerable degree with the movement of coal from North to Central China. The extent of damage from air attacks on the Peking-Mukden railway, on the other hand, was believed to be relatively slight.