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

INTERROGATION NO. 153

PLACE: TOKYO

DATE Oct. 27, 1945

Division of Origin: Basic Materials  
Subject: Army's part in Coal Supply and Consumption.  
Personnel Interrogated: Col. SATO, Chief of Staff, Gummu Kyoku, Army  
Ministry Lt.Col. TOMITSUKA, assistant  
to SATO  
Where Interviewed: Meiji Building.  
Interrogator: Lt. Cdr. Burr, Lt. Burnes  
Interpreter: Capt. SUYEMASA, Jap. Military Ordnance Bureau;  
Lt. Manning  
Allied Officers Present: No others

Summary: The Army did not directly operate any coal mines, but facilitated production in China and Manchuria by helping to supply equipment and shipping, and by "maintaining order". In later stages of war Army took over operation of railroads in China, (details to be supplied by SATO). Army backed allocation of machinery, etc. for continental mines.

Even Army did not appreciate importance of fuel and oil supply early in war, and drafted labor from mines, although "recognised principle" that miners should be exempt. In 1945 refused to accept further enlistment of miners, and discharged 5,000 for return to mines. Army had little to do with production in Japan proper except to maintain order among foreign miners.

Request was made for detailed statistics of Army's use of coal for 1. Arsenals, 2. Shipping, 3. Heating and other uses.

Distribution: All Divisions



Col. SATO stated that it was of course appreciated that Japan faced a shortage of coal, particularly since 1939 when due to rainfall deficiency the demands for thermal electric plants were above normal. The shortage was considered primarily a question of transportation from the continent and Karafuto, however, as the domestic reserves were insufficient alone.

In the early stages of the war, the greatest concern was for increasing shipping from N. China and Manchuria; by 1944, however, it was realized that greater effort should be devoted to increasing domestic production, but not much progress could be made because of the poor condition of rail transport. The earthquake of December, 1944, caused a two week interruption in traffic over the Tokaido line between Nagoya and Toyohashi, and caused a shortage in delivery which had lasting effect on supply. Toward the end of the war the railroads could only haul enough coal for their own consumption.

A conflict between the demands of iron and steel makers for North China coking coal, and the Army's desire to take shipping off the Yellow Sea route, was indicated. The Army advocated shipment overland to Korean ports, and the substitution of Manchurian coal, but were for a while overruled in the Mobilization Board by the steel manufacturers "who could not appreciate the future course of strategy".

Col. SATO stated that the course of failure to increase and maintain production in Japan proper were: (1) Shortage of skilled miners. (2) Insufficient food supply for miners. (3) On account of increased demands for munitions, mine repair was neglected, due to shortage of materials. (4) Imperfection of the control system, red tape in government and Tosaikai administration. The Army tried to remedy by adopting a policy of exempting skilled miners from its draft; this was not carried fully into effect, however, as the policy was not strictly observed by local authorities and enlistments were permitted. There was no exemption for unskilled miners. (It was stated that the Navy pursued a similar policy). In the first quarter of 1945, some 5000 miners were discharged to return to the mines. The Army also "helped supply Korean and Chinese laborers"; Col. SATO explained that Japanese do not like the work, and it has been the practice to employ many Koreans and Chinese "who are willing to work for lower wages". Koreans made up some 40% of the miners, but they used to like to move around from one mine to another, so the Army was "helpful in making them stay in one place and maintaining civil order".

The Army did not directly control mining in North China, which was directed by the GEA ministry and the Embassy in Peking. The Army helped, however, by expediting acquisition and shipping of material, especially machinery from Japan and timber from Manchuria, and in maintaining order. The Embassy took over Chinese owned mines in 1937, and those belonging to British and other foreigners in 1941. Transport from mine to port was controlled by the North China Transportation Co., until interruptions due to air raids and guerrillas became so critical in late 1944 that the Army took over the railroads. Coal was recognized as the basis for development of Manchurian industry, and hence mining projects had full support of the government and the Kwantung Army, but there also the Army did not actually take over the operation of the miners.



In response to a direct question, Col. SATO would not state definitely that the policy was to concentrate on developing increased production from continental mines at the expense of expanding and improving domestic production. He replied that highest priority in machinery allocation was given to the continental mines, the Army frequently considering these demands as their own, but stated that the amount was only a small part of the total production of such machinery. It further developed, however, that Japan's reserves were, until late in the war, considered to be so inadequate that almost exclusive attention was devoted to developing first the mines in Southern Sakalin, then those in Manchuria, and in 1937 "the China incident came along and we got those in China".

Col. SATO stated that it became apparent to the Army planners in 1944 that the supply from the continent was in danger of being cut off, and the decision was made to turn attention to domestic production.

The sending of Japanese mining engineers and production specialists to the continental mines was handled by the GEA Ministry. They went as civilians, but the Army provided air travel, etc.

When asked what coal production levels the Army's war plans called for, Col. SATO replied that this was considered a function of transportation, and that in the early war years was not considered a problem.

A table of Army consumption figures for years 1931-45 was requested and promised.