

U.S.S.B.S.
Morale

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Goto
Interview with CAPT. TAKASE, (IJN) Demobilization Ministry

SUBJECT: Control of Morale in Japan
TIME: 9:30 - 11:30 , December 22, 1945
PLACE: Meiji Building
INTERVIEWER: Capt. Wm. Magistretti
INTERPRETER: None
ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Y. Harashima accompanied Capt. Takase.

BACKGROUND:

Captain Takase graduated from Naval College in 1922, becoming a Senior Lt. in 1927, attached to Naval Operations after duty aboard a cruiser. He was at this time assigned to the study of the history of war. In 1929 he went to Naval War College, where he studied the history of war and became a Lt. Commander in 1932, when he boarded the cruiser "Ashigara". The following year he entered the Naval Affairs Propagation Section, which was later to become the Naval Public Relations Office. With the formation of the Board of Information in 1940, the then Commander Takase became a member of the Second Division, which was charged with magazines, radio broadcasts and newspapers. In September of the following year he became Executive Officer of the cruiser "Kinu", returning to the Board of Information in October 1942. He became head of the First Section of the First Division. In April 1943 the Army and Navy pulled out of the Board of Information and the then Captain returned to the Public Relations Office. The Army and Navy re-entered the Board of Information in June 1944, when Takase returned to become the head of the First Section of the First Division, extending until the end of the war, when he joined the Demobilization Ministry.

SUMMARY: M - Magistretti, T - Takase

Structure and controls of Japanese propaganda system.
Changes in public opinion during the war.
Effective bombing on public opinion.

INTERVIEW:

- M - What was the center of Japanese propaganda control?
- T - Control in general centered about the Board of Information. Of course, during the war the greatest amount of strength centered in Imperial Headquarters.
- M - What about the Army and Navy representatives from the Army Staff and Naval Operations?
- T - Under the Imperial HQ set-up an Army representative of the Chief of Staff and the Gummuka and Navy Operations and Gummuka would participate in the so-called inner cabinet (Senso Saiko Shido Kaigi). There were usually two or three officers in these respective Army and Navy groups who did the background work for the general or admiral participating in the Inner Cabinet. They made decisions with reference to all over-all policy, as well as propaganda. From the Inner Cabinet decisions would be referred to the Cabinet and then to the Board of Information. The lowest rank of this group of two or three officers was

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that of colonel or captain. The Board of Information position was often a difficult one because policy was imposed upon it from above.

M - Can you give me an example of the type of problem which the Inner Cabinet decided?

T - They decided the government's propaganda policy with regard to the Chinese government of Wang Chin Wei. Only very large problems. For instance, in the case of the bombing, the policy was decided by the Board of Information. They stated that the people should not be defeated by the bombing. However, the people's morale did drop a good deal because of the bombing. With reference to American propaganda leaflets, the Board of Information decided the policy regarding how to proceed against them. Another instance of policy decision by the Inner Cabinet was with reference to the GEA Conference and how it was to be treated. They also decided the policy with reference to the Guadalcanal battle.

M - Who decided on the bamboo spear line?

T - As the bamboo spears were passed out by the Army, I would suggest you ask them about it. It was started about three years ago by Army Reservists. It was a bad propaganda line, and was strengthened because Imperial Headquarters supported it.

M - Can you tell me more about the handling of propaganda by the Inner Cabinet?

T - Oh, it was just a very broad and haphazard way of handling it. The Board of Information was more or less the center, with reference to the thought warfare.

M - Were there any specialists on thought warfare?

T - We studied thought stratagems, but we did not do much about it.

M - What were the usual lines in thought warfare?

T - It was to keep the people's spirit up and all grouped together for waging the war. The Japanese people had not been defeated before so they did not think much about being defeated. Most of the people were optimists. They did not think too much of thought warfare. The Shiso or the Kyogaku Section of the Education Ministry and the Home Ministry studied thought warfare. However, the government did not centralize its efforts in this respect.

M - Were any propaganda directives received from General Tojo?

T - No, but his opinions were strongly represented in Army HQ, so there was a strong influence on propaganda policies. Tojo's aide had a great deal of influence in this respect. He was an Army Colonel or a Lt. Col. We were in most difficulties when they said that Tojo wanted it a certain way. However, Tojo's influence did not spread to the Navy, in such ways as sending an officer to some undesirable duty because of opposition to Tojo.

M - What about opposition between the Army and Navy Public Relations?

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- T - Just before the Marshalls Campaign the Navy considered the loss of these various islands to be quite important, whereas Tojo thought they were not important at all. It was the opposition of the so-called "continental" or land thoughts as opposed to "sea" thoughts. One instance of Tojo's anger at a newspaper came when he got angry at the Mainichi because of its editorially pointing out that so-called "bamboo spear" warfare could do Japan no great good. The head of the Mainichi was called in to the government and bawled out on this occasion.
- M - What was the function of the Deliberative Chamber of the Board of Information?
- T - The function was to handle every-day problems and to coordinate the activities of the various sections of the Board of Information, as well as the propaganda activities of the various ministries represented in the Board of Information.
- M - What about opposition in the Board of Information between the various ministries?
- T - There were various ministries represented so that all of them reflected the opinions or desires of their own ministries. They all tried to get the most done along lines of the desires of their own ministry. There was also a fundamental division of opinion between the Army and Navy, or the opposition between "sea" thoughts and "land" thoughts.
- M - Can you give me an explanation of the distinction between sea and land thoughts?
- T - Well, in the war against America it was the Navy policy to keep the enemy as far away as possible; to fight for strategic islands and to place more and greater strength in planes for the defense of these islands. In opposition to this the Army placed its main strength in the so-called decisive battle of the homeland and did not place great importance on the retention of these island bases.
- M - What about the effect of bombing on public opinion?
- T - The Navy viewed the bases lost as being most important, whereas the Army stated they were not so important and emphasized the battle of the homeland. Intelligent people understood the situation quite well, whereas the great masses of the people were stupid about it. So, when the bombing came the people's spirit fell to an amazing degree. Their reaction was "How can we win in these circumstances".
- M - Did this attitude become manifest in anti-war thoughts?
- T - They couldn't criticize the government. If they did they would be taken in by the police.
- M - Did the Board of Information conduct a public opinion survey?
- T - No, it did not. The higher police of the Home Ministry and the Army MP collected materials as well as the news agencies.
- M - What type of reports did you receive on it.
- T - These various reports from the Home Ministry and the Military Police were put out in monthly bulletin form. There were also special reports such as ones on the bombing or the fall of Saipan.

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M - Do you have any of these now?

T - No, they were all burned.

M - Did you have any way of utilizing these reports?

T - We had an intelligence collecting section (Joko Shushu Ka) which was headed by a Mr. Tashiro. This group had various attaches, scholars and newspapermen, who volunteered materials.

M - What was the function of the Planning Section of the Board of Information.

T - It decided policy on a yearly basis. For instance, it decided big policy on the basis of internal and external conditions, as, what would be done on the anniversary of the China Incident, or what would be done on Kigensetsu.

M - What about the personnel of the Planning Section.

T - There was one Section Chief and five Sub-Section Chiefs. This was later resolved to three, the First Section having to do with military matters; the second, with internal press relations, and the third; with external press relations. Our propaganda in general was poor. The superior officers did not regard it with any great importance. Good people were not sent to the Board of Information, and the structure was extremely poor. This condition got better in the final stages, when the Board of Information chief was, at the same time, the Home Minister and could speak up in Cabinet meetings.

M - Was this all the work that the Planning Section did?

T - Yes, that was all, but for that they received big pay. This is one of the defects of the Japanese government. If a person worked too hard or too good he would be pushed out. A good many people felt that it would have been just as well to do away with the Board of Information. This is now being discussed.

M - What about the functions of the Deliberative Chamber?

T - They decided every-day problems and how to put large-scale policy into action.

M - What about public opinion of the Japanese masses?

T - The public by and large are simple people. They are not trained in politics. They are too regimented and if they voiced an opinion they were liable to be taken in by the MP or the Thought Police.

M - Have you been abroad?

T - Yes, I was on a cruise to Brazil.

M - What foreign language have you studied?

T - German.

M - Can you tell me about changes in Japanese public opinion during the war?

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- T - In regard to the Tri-Partite Agreement, the Japanese people were not very much in favor of it and were rather drawn into it. At the beginning of the war the people became drunk with the victories and our propaganda line was to brake this feeling. The propaganda line at this time was also one of Hakko Ichiu. At about the time of Guadalcanal and Bougainville people began to feel that the situation was getting grave and our propaganda line at this time was "You must fight on and on". At the time of the Marianas people were more concerned, and we said that they had to give more and more of their blood for the battle. With the beginning of the bombing people became desperate. They did not openly speak anti-war thoughts, but there was a good deal of gloom among the intellectuals. The people were surprised the government could not down the B-29's and wondered why the fleet was of no help. The propaganda line was that they were trying to down the planes, but in actuality, they did not knock them down, so the propaganda line was very poor. The American posters ~~XXX~~ telling which cities were to be bombed next were very effective. People would run to the hills and would no longer work in the factories. Some of the others appealed to the intelligencia. The Mariana Johe was well written. The earlier ones about overcoming the military were not too effective because we had told the people that the enemy would take this line.
- M - What about short-wave radio?
- T - Most of the people did not hear the broadcasts, just the Foreign Office, Domei and some of the wealthy people.
- M - What about the Emperor's position?
- T - I believe we should keep the Emperor.
- M - What was Japan's greatest strength?
- T - The people all grouped as a solid entity around the Emperor.
- M - What was Japan's greatest weakness?
- T - The fact that the people were as a frog in the wall. They had no concept of really wide-scale warfare and no preparation for a great war. People had no experience with a great war and made no distinction between a battle and a war.
- M - What are your hopes for the future?
- T - That the Potsdam Declaration will be completely carried out and Japan can once again take an honorable position as a member of the world. By and large the Japanese people do not have much hope right now.
- M - What do you think of politics?
- T - As a naval man I have had no interest in politics, but would like to see the Diet get into more practical matters, however. The Japanese at the present time do not understand democracy. They should be educated with regard to the obligations of freedom and liberty. At the present time the people confuse freedom with selfishness.