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PLACE: TOKYO  
DATE: 22 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Japanese Intelligence Section, G-2, USSBS.

Subject: Information Available to the Navy.

Person Interrogated and Background:

Mr. E. SONE - A member of the Foreign Office, has served many years in diplomatic work, for the most part in the home office in Tokyo. He has had further experience in the field, however, in SHANGHAI, and in FRANCE.

Where Interviewed: Meiji Building

Interrogators: Lt. Comdr. WILLIAM H. BOTZER, USNR  
Lt. Comdr. F. SHACKELFORD, USNR

Interpreter: Major JOHN C. PELZEL, USMCR

Allied Officers Present: None

SUMMARY

Mr. SONE gives a picture of the low estate of intelligence in Japan during the war, due largely to the suspicion of Army and Navy authorities to the diplomatic agents abroad. Contrary to the American opinion that the Japanese citizens resident abroad with business or diplomatic business were all part of the gigantic spy ring, Mr. SONE maintains that there was no coordination of such information to the advantage of Japanese Military Intelligence. He was not connected with the military interests abroad, and therefore takes no interest or responsibility for anything they did or might have done, and dismisses the whole problem as the concern of someone else.

To illustrate this attitude, he says that it would be up to the military and naval people to report on such matters of intelligence duties as the attaches were merely kept informed of the limited side of such activities. What information was collected by the military agents was jealously guarded by the military interests, even from the military and naval attaches. Such information as came from Germany was discounted for possible Nazi propaganda, and in general the intelligence was discredited whenever it reflected unsatisfactorily on the success and welfare of the Greater East Asia movement. TOJO did not wish to have home-front morale influenced by any form of bad news, and all such intelligence as would become "bad news" was kept in the higher echelons.

R E S T R I C T E D

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Transcript of Interrogation of Mr. SONE, E.

Q.1. What are the specific duties of the Military Attaches assigned to posts in foreign countries?

A. It is rather up to the military and naval people to report fully because they are aware of all the activities of the military and naval attaches abroad, and we are kept informed of the limited side of the activities of these people abroad. They are very jealous that the information is collected by their own agents abroad. As to the military intelligence and information collected by these military and naval personnel abroad, I do not believe, in general, that the foreign office was kept informed. The only exception was, perhaps, in Germany because of their good relationship with Lt. Gen. OSHIMA, the Ambassador. The information collected by the Empire and military and naval attaches office there was exchanged very freely; but in other countries, I do not remember any important military reports being given to the foreign office. I do not know if they reported to their own chiefs in Tokyo; but as to the foreign office, I do not recollect any important or valuable military information given by these people. On one occasion, there was a military attache in TANGIERS, but after the severance of the diplomatic relations between Spain and Japan, he was interned in Spain. That was a very important post. The people there can report the movement of transports and naval vessels around GIBRALTER. Otherwise, it was very difficult for the attaches in other countries to collect information, in countries like SWEDEN, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, SWITZERLAND. The collaboration between the military and naval attaches office and diplomatic missions varied according to the relationship between the diplomats and the officers there.

Q.2. At the beginning of the war, you were the Consul General in SHANGHAI? Did you have military attaches attached there at that time?

A. CHINA is in a unique position. We had our troops there. We had some amount of military and naval officers for intelligence and so forth; but we had troops and the Japanese fleet there, too, and these people, on land in the offices, were not ordinary attaches. The situation is similar to that of the U.S. troops in Japan. Normally, we had military and naval attaches in NANKING, but they were concurrently staff officers of the headquarters. In SHANGHAI, we had a military and naval officers' Bureau, but in diplomatic language they are not exactly naval attaches. For instance, they are not listed in the China Diplomatic Corps; they are not members of the diplomatic corps. They had, naturally, in China several sources of information like the Japanese KEMPEITAI, TOKUMU KIKAN, and others.

Q.3. Did the Navy have an organization similar to TOKUMU KIKAN in China?

A. They did not have a TOKUMU KIKAN in various places, but they had a kind of TOKUMU KIKAN or Resident Officers' Bureau in important places like SHANGHAI, PEKING, and RANGOON, I believe. Even before the China incident they had a naval resident officers' Bureau in these places but their activities were not so extended in general as those of the Army TOKUMU KIKAN. These officers were primarily concerned with the liaison between themselves and the naval landing party or the naval units around that place. These places are posted primarily in important ports. They collected intelligence and so forth. They were not so much interested in administration, but the Army was very keen on it. The Army TOKUMU KIKAN interfered very often in administration by the Chinese local government, but the Navy was not so much interested.

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Q.4. What was the primary purpose of the Army TOKUMU KIKAN in China?

A. Before the China incident they were primarily concerned with military intelligence because there were no Japanese troops over there except in the Japanese garrison, which like the U.S. garrison was recognized by the BOXER Treaty. Even before the China incident, I remember part of North China was occupied by the Japanese Army. In those places, under the Japanese occupation, or more exactly where Japanese troops are present, the activities of TOKUMU KIKAN are much more extended. They consisted not only of the military intelligence but also various diplomatic and political activities. After the China incident, Japanese troops were all over there, then TOKUMU KIKAN is an agent of the Japanese Army of Occupation for the administration of the occupied territory; but soon, the Chinese government, local or regional, was set up, and then the activities of the TOKUMU KIKAN were transferred to the supervisory position of the activities of the Chinese government. (Political control). When there is no Chinese government, then the TOKUMU KIKAN is the administrator rather than the controlling body, but after the occupation naturally some kind of local or regional government is set up. The relationships between China and Japan are diplomatic. Although China is occupied by Japanese troops, the troops must keep themselves out of local activities. However, it so happens that the Army did not keep aloof from administration.

Q.5. Did the foreign office have any direct administrative connection with the TOKUMU KIKAN, or was it purely under Army control?

A. It was purely under Army control. There was another body that was responsible for the administration of China side by side with the foreign office. It is the body called the "China Development Board" under the cabinet, under the prime minister. This board had its agents in China, not only in NANKING, but in various places. This body was more directly connected with the Army. Before setting up the Greater East Asia Ministry, which is also outside the foreign office, the foreign minister could, for purely diplomatic questions, supervise or direct the activity of the ambassador and his agents. Japanese agents in China were, moreover, under the direct control of this board, which in turn is more directly connected with the Army and Navy because the president of this board was always a general or admiral. Its branch office in China also had an admiral or general as chief and the other officers of the Navy and Army participated in the administration of this board.

Q.6. Have you ever visited the United States?

A. No, never.

Q.7. You learned to speak English through study?

A. In SHANGHAI. I was in France and my French is better than my English. I have been in France, Tokyo, and SHANGHAI.

Q.8. What contribution did the military attaches in ARGENTINA, MEXICO, and SPAIN make in the way of military intelligence?

A. As I told you, when I came back to Tokyo, our diplomatic relations with South America were already severed, except in ARGENTINA; but even there the relationship was practically severed, so I am not in a position to tell you about our diplomatic missions activities. In SPAIN or PORTUGAL, however, we naturally collected

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information, including military information, but this came primarily from the study of papers and magazines and so forth. I believe that in LISBON, for instance, we had somewhat more important matters to study: economic questions, and political questions. We found it rather difficult in Japan to get magazines and papers; and these outposts in Europe collected papers, some of them being sent by post to Tokyo. They studied the questions on this post in LISBON, MADRID, and SWITZERLAND. Concerning questions of the new world, especially the UNITED STATES, the best places for such study are LISBON and SPAIN, with SWITZERLAND and SWEDEN next best. This distinction is not too strict, but roughly speaking, LISBON and SPAIN were America-minded while other places are RUSSIA-minded or EUROPE-minded. But we are not primarily concerned in military intelligence. That is the business of these naval military attaches. We are more interested in political, economic questions. We naturally studied what is the strong point or weak point of American resources, etc. The sources were rather open. By studying the papers and magazines and books, we collected more precise information than the information as given by Spanish people or other international agents who sell information. These sources are not very good, generally speaking.

Q.9. During the time that you were able to keep a diplomatic mission in ARGENTINA and MEXICO, your contacts would naturally have been wide with many people. What provision was made for keeping in touch with those contacts after diplomatic relations were severed?

A. There can be no contact possible after diplomatic relations are severed. It is not possible.

Q.10. Prior to the war various Japanese interests sponsored meetings for the purpose of polling U.S. public opinion on questions relating to the Japanese. Was this arranged through diplomatic channels?

A. I am not in a position to tell you, but generally speaking, I believe that the foreign office also was interested in organizing or giving facilities and assistance to such meetings for the better understanding between that country and Japan. I do not think that was very important, but we are interested in the promotion of character understanding and development between Japan and each country, every country. As to the cultural activities of Japan and the U.S., I am not versed in the matter. We had other agencies of the government also concerned with the propaganda of Japan. For instance, I believe, Mr. MAEDA who is the present ambassador of Education was posted in NEW YORK. He was head of the "Japanese Cultural Institution" in the U.S. We had such associations for cultural development and promotion in foreign countries, called "Association for the Decelopment of International Culture". We had one such, a civil organization, but naturally it obtained subsidies from the government. Such associations are not interested in collecting information or intelligence. Their activities are naturally open, nothing concealed. You cannot compare Japan to the Nazis. Diplomats are agents of the government, and according to the govt instructions, we are interested in intelligence also.

Q.11. Did the representatives of Japanese industry who had offices in the U.S., report directly to your embassy there on information which they had secured?

A. I know approximately nothing about our activities in the U.S. Generally speaking, they are not ordered to report to the embassy. Their activities are quite free, and if there is no understanding between these concerns and the government, there is no reason these

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people have to report to the embassy. There might be some local understanding between the Embassy and these branch offices in each country as to the extent of the information, but generally speaking, these people are not assigned to such duties of collecting information.

Q.12. Would it be possible for the Japanese foreign office to assign personnel to the American branch offices of manufacturing concerns for the purpose of securing better sources of information for the Japanese foreign office?

A. Such an idea cannot be excluded as a means of getting information, but I do not know if such occurred in reality. Getting information does not exclude such devices. Generally speaking, Japanese diplomats are not as expert in collecting intelligence information as that.

Q.13. What useful information did you receive from Germany?

A. We received from the Military and Naval Attaches Bureau of our Embassy in Berlin various kinds of information including military information. We were keen about Germany's ability to continue the war, and defeat Russia. Our diplomats over there were instructed to report as fully and as objectively as possible. The general impression we had was very bad as to the activities of these people for most of them are influenced by Nazi propaganda and this information which they collected was always tainted with propaganda. That was the impression we had in Tokyo. It is impossible to convert these people. We always had to discount Germany's ability to keep up the war. To the information we got from these people about the damage done by Allied bombing and so forth, we had to add more damage. That was the general impression. They were in good relations naturally with the German government, but information collected from these sources was not so accurate. There was always an element of propaganda.

Q.14. What about technical information?

A. We naturally had an exchange of technical knowledge between Germany and Japan, and military technical questions were fairly well exchanged between Japan and Germany, mostly by the military and Naval Attaches Bureau. We got "samples" through the submarines. Operations in that field were not unsatisfactory, but information about German policy was very poor. In Germany, it is very difficult to get information from sources which are not Nazi or government sources. Even if these Japanese agents tried very hard to be objective, and if they are not influenced by Nazis, it is also difficult to get accurate information in a country so regimented.

Q.15. Was Germany successful in sending in technical people and equipment to Japan after Germany surrendered?

A. I do not believe any submarines or any airplanes came from Germany after the defeat. I recollect a report in Allied newspapers that one German submarine surrendered with two Japanese Naval technical officers on board who had committed hari-kari. I believe that is correct. It was naturally intended by the Japanese navy to get as many submarines as possible from Germany after the defeat. This was not successful at all, and we could not get any technical men or equipment or patents. I believe my statement is correct although I am not in a position to ascertain.

Q.16. That is true of the period prior to German's surrender?

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A. I am not very sure about that. I do not know if some submarines came from Germany. There were no airplanes. I think it must have been very difficult for German submarines to come to Japan during that period. They came more freely before; 6 months before, I doubt if one submarine came from Germany during that time.

Q.17. The purpose of the conversation this morning is to develop the contribution of the Japanese Diplomatic activities to Japanese military and operational intelligence. Do you care to add to the remarks you have already made?

A. I am not inclined to gainsay what ARISUE and these people told you, but in fairness to this question, I must emphasize I am not representing in any way, the Japanese foreign office. You should question army and navy people because, as I told you at the outset, owing to the peculiar interpretation of the situation, our army and navy kept a position independent of the government; and the military and naval attaches abroad also worked independent of the foreign office. Their activities were quite independent of the diplomatic mission so we are not at all in a position to tell you about the activities of these military and naval agents. Perhaps the only exception, as I told you, is in Germany. The ambassador was set up by the army - OSHIMA.

Q.18. Was Admiral ABE there?

A. Yes, he was the naval attache.

Q.19. Was he as effective as General OSHIMA?

A. He could not represent, in any way, the Japanese government, because he was not an ambassador. The collaboration between OSHIMA and ABE was very good. I think you would get better information on military attaches if you would question General ARISUE.

Q.20. I believe that covers all of the questions. Do you wish to add anything?

A. I believe that Japan was not very well equipped with military intelligence after the war began. I believe that is partly the case because of the army's "blind-mindedness". For instance, if we talk about the B-29, its design and mass production, General TOJO was displeased because he thought that we were U.S. propaganda agents. Mentality is very important to consider in evaluating the military intelligence activity after the war. If I am not mistaken, I saw in the STARS AND STRIPES, a statement about Japanese military intelligence after the start of the war, and I think the writer said that generally speaking Japanese military intelligence was very poor. That is true. We diplomats are not interested in military intelligence. We did get some information about American plane production, especially the B-29, which might very well bomb the Japanese mainland. We were inclined naturally to emphasize the importance of the B-29 activity, but military people never like that. They are inclined to ignore such unpleasant news which might make them lose prestige. If the military people are so inclined, they cannot objectively collect good information. They are rather inclined to ignore the dark side of the war. I do not think the military people were very effective in military intelligence after the beginning of the war. We had a better picture of the dark side of the war with diplomats who can see objectively, but unfortunately, we were not equipped to collect military intelligence, so the net result is that military intelligence during the war was very poor.

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The Japanese High Command is very capable, I believe, able to study the question with the information collected through diplomatic mission, but from open sources. They may, perhaps, have other sources, such as communications that might help their study, but I do not think it means that military intelligence or operational intelligence was very effective. That was due to the ability of these people to study and estimate your communications. That can be studied with the information which can be very well collected in reading newspapers, etc.

Q.21. There is a popular conception concerning Japanese Intelligence which claims that you were successful in securing information by devious underground means, in addition to the open means you mention. In your opinion, is that conception wrong?

A. I do not say so, but I should like to say that before the outbreak of war, I believe that the Navy was very keen on military intelligence because it was necessary for them to strike a heavy and, if possible, fatal blow on the American fleet. I believe the intelligence then was very much better. Afterwards, owing to the wrong and optimistic picture of the army, owing to the successful continuation of the war, they were not so much interested in military intelligence as they were before the war began. I believe the effectiveness of military intelligence was very much lower after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Q.22. Would you say the reason for that might be the success of the attack?

A. That is one cause of the poorness of military intelligence. Another was that secret military intelligence cannot be successfully planned owing to this physical handicap: We cannot succeed in sending a Japanese spy to the U.S. Had we been Germans, we could very well have sent spies or saboteurs to the U.S. by submarine.

Q.23. However, were there not available to the Japanese a rather large number of westerners friendly to the Japanese who could be obtained in Japan to do that work for them?

A. Yes. That is quite true.

Q.24. Was that possibility ever exploited?

A. Not as far as the diplomatic mission was concerned. As for the army and Navy, I do not know. That is the only source of secret information.

Q.25. The Pearl Harbor attack was well planned, was it not?

A. It was rather a mental surprise for the U.S. to think that Japan would stake her fate on that surprise attack. I think your country was aware of the possibility of attack by Japan against the Philippines, but open attack and the declaration of war which came after the attack was rather too bold for Japan according to your own appraisal.

Q.26. The factor that has interested me most about our conversation were your remarks about the mental attitude of the Japanese and the attitude of the military toward the subject of intelligence, and the fact that the military rather resented information which made the picture look dark.

A. General TOJO was especially very much interested in keeping

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all the dark opinions out of the reach of Japanese general public. I am sure that General ARISUE's division was much more enlightened than the General Staff, but he couldn't very well exploit his information. General TOJO was very much afraid of defeatism in Japan. We in the foreign office got information from our missions abroad, in neutral countries, and also from the listening posts we had in Japan. These were very important.

Q.27. Was short wave or intermediate broadcast more valuable to you?

A. The short wave was the quickest source of new information for Japan. We also had other sources of information more complete.

Q.28. Did you receive the intermediate broadcasts here in Japan?

A. I think so.

Q.29. Who was your favorite news announcer?

A. I was not very keen about that. We were much more concerned with information rather than comments.

Q.30. Would you care to say anything about the mental qualities of the Japanese or why it was that the Japanese did not put greater emphasis on intelligence than they did?

A. An important thing on that point is due to the political non-preparedness of the army and navy to exploit good information, even though it was diminishing in quantity with the general public as well as army navy personnel. You must evaluate important statements side by side with the fact that in Japan, especially during the war, there was no freedom of press, and so the public was kept ignorant of the world situation, and the strategically decisive and dark picture of the war. The War Ministry was trying very hard to exterminate any kind of defeatism in Japan. It must be very difficult for the army intelligence office to confess to General TOJO or the War Ministry the real picture of the situation, and to emphasize the importance of intelligence. If the army was not so much interested in internal administration, it might have been much more observing. As you told me, generally speaking, the military and naval people were very keen on military intelligence. They kept attaches, particularly in countries where such things were possible - they kept resident officers in China to collect military information, so there is no reason why the Japanese military and naval people lacked knowledge or appreciation or importance of military intelligence. When these people are running the Japanese government, they are inclined not to divulge decision of the military situation to the people, suppressing the information that came into Japan, and influencing the public was second nature of the Japanese military people, and gradually they became blind to objective intelligence.