

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO 234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO: 118

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE : 10 Oct 45

Division of Origin: Civilian Defense

SUBJECT: Civilian Defense during SUZUKI Cabinet, April
to August 1945

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Mr ABE, Genki, Minister of Home Affairs in the
SUZUKI Cabinet from April to August 1945.

Where Interviewed: Meiji Building, Tokyo.

Interrogator: Col John B. Warden

Interpreter: Lt (jg) Gorham

Allied Officers Present: Vice Chairman Paul H. Nitze.
General Grandison Gardner
Lt. F. H. Lewis
Ensign D. P. Hornstein.

SUMMARY:

Mr ABE believed that the year 1937 marked the inception of civilian defense in Japan when a small city planning bureau was established in the Ministry of Home Affairs. It was decided to place control of civilian defense matters in the hands of the police because they were organized nationally from the state down to the local level; because they had authority over the people and also possessed one of the best communication systems in the Empire.

During his regime there were no noteworthy changes in national planning although dispersion or evacuation of the civil populace from urban areas subject to intensive bombing continued to receive greater consideration. At first, evacuation of civil populace was on the voluntary basis but later the evacuation of school children was made mandatory. Emergency housing and food supply continued to give great concern. The national government received many complaints and special requests for assistance but they were too busy to give consideration to such requests and sent food to places considered to be most important at the moment.

No definite policy of air raid shelter protection for the public was established because they feared public reaction would interfere with normal routine life. Citizens who could afford it were encouraged to build their own.

Because the Americans did not use gas in Europe, they were confident it would not be used against Japan.

After the American invasion of the Marianas Islands, the people started to take a real interest in air-raid protection measures.

INTERROGATION

Purpose: To secure basic information at the national level to determine what changes, if any, were made in civilian defense policy during the brief term of the Suzuki regime, and to seek a clearer definition of national planning during the same period.

Introduction: At the time of the interrogation Mr ABE was not officially connected with the Japanese Government, and appeared voluntarily at our request in the capacity of a private citizen. He was made acquainted with the purpose and objective of the U.S. strategic Bombing Survey, and the type of information concerning plans and policy of the Japanese Government for civilian defense that the Survey desired to seek.

Symbols: Q - Question by the interrogator.
A - Answer by the witness.
AI - Answer supplied by the interpreter.

Q. Trace the history of Japanese civilian defense development from its beginning?

AI. The witness indicated that he was not familiar with the progress of civilian defense planning in the Empire from its beginning, and was not fully informed concerning measures taken prior to his entry into the cabinet as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1941. He stated that he thought as early as 1937 civilian defense was the responsibility of a small City Planning Bureau in the Ministry of Home Affairs at that time. This date appears to mark the conception of the first steps taken toward the defense of the civil populace. Mr ABE stated, however, that he would endeavor to seek from the official records more information for us on this subject.

Q. Please give us the reasons for any subsequent changes civilian defense might have undergone during your regime?

AI. The witness reported no noteworthy changes in the national planning, but stated that dispersion or evacuation of the civil populace from the urban areas subject to intensive bombing continued to receive greater consideration of the government. At first, evacuation of the civil populace was on the voluntary basis, but later it was decided to make the evacuation of children of school age mandatory. He was not responsible for the actual accomplishment of the plan as this was a matter of responsibility of the governors of the various prefectures, but his Ministry assisted in every way possible.

Q. What were the principal problems or difficulties confronting the Civilian Defense Section of your Ministry?

A. The solution of such important and pressing problems as emergency housing and the supply of food for the bombed out populace continued to give us great concern. Also the military defense of our home islands continued to be one of our principal problems. We generally felt that the success of civilian defense depended upon

the ability of our military forces to break up the B-29 raids before their arrival over the target. There were also great demands from all parts of the country for more fire apparatus, and I have personal knowledge that many fire trucks were sent from the city of Tokyo to other areas because the fire houses in our city had been burned out. We usually shipped these trucks by rail freight to other cities.

AI. Mr ABE continued to comment on the subject of food supply and the demands for various commodities from stricken cities throughout the Empire. He stated the national government did everything they possibly could, and while receiving many complaints and special requests for assistance, they were entirely too busy to give any consideration to such requests, and sent the food to places they considered to be the most important at the moment.

Q. How much importance was attached to civilian defense by the heads of the Army and the Navy, and how did they cooperate with your plans?

AI. The witness stated that during his regime no major difficulties arose with the Army and Navy authorities in civilian defense matters. He felt that they were fully cognizant of the necessity for the prompt execution of all defense measures, and stated that on the whole, cooperation with the military forces was very good.

Q. Did civilian defense measures undergo any change with the change of Prime Ministers?

A. There was no change of policy with the advent of a new administration.

Q. Were civilian defense measures actually abandoned as useless at any period of the war?

A. I believe that after the May 23-25, 1945 raids on Tokyo civilian defense measures in that city, as well as other parts of Japan, were considered to be a futile effort.

Q. What was the attitude of the general public as to air raid protection?

A. After the invasion by American forces of the Marianas Islands, people in Japan started to take a real interest in air raid protection measures. Prior to that time they had been unduly optimistic and felt that it was not within the capacity of American forces to deliver devastating raids on their cities, and consequently they had no inducement for organization and training.

Q. On what basis were the key personnel in the Civilian Defense Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs selected. Did they have a military or civil background, or both?

A. They were neither military or civil as such, but in every case we endeavored to select good men of ability and excellent character. Politics was given no consideration in their appointment.

Q. Can you give us the reasons why Japan did not have a definite policy of air raid shelter protection for its citizens?

- A. We did not want to unduly alarm our citizens concerning the necessity for underground shelter as we feared it would interfere with normal routine life, and have some effect on war production. We did encourage citizens who could afford it to build their own family air raid shelters.
- Q. Did the national government render any assistance to the large urban areas in the matter of fire apparatus procurement or financial aid in the purchase of the same?
- AI. The witness did not know definitely, but thought that the government did lend some aid in this direction.
- Q. What was the gas defense policy in Japan, if any?
- AI. They had no policy as such, and were confident that the Americans would not use poison gas against them; taking notice of the non-use of poison gas by our forces in the European Theatre of Operations.
- Q. Are you familiar with the policy of camouflaging factories, utilities and other important works?
- AI. The witness has no knowledge of this problem, and states that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Munitions. (At this point the witness was shown a table of organization of civilian defense at the Ministry of Home Affairs Level indicating a section within this division charged with camouflage technique). He appeared to be entirely unfamiliar with this situation.
- Q. Why was it decided to place so much control of civilian defense matters in the hands of the police?
- A. Because the police in Japan are organized nationally from the state down to the local level. They would be the best organized body of people to administer the operation of civilian defense measures because they had authority over the people. The police also possess one of the best communication systems in the Empire.
- Q. Can you indicate to us the total number of people engaged in the various categories of civilian defense at the termination of hostilities, and also at what period was recruitment at its peak?
- A. I do not have the figures in mind but will take steps to procure them for you.
- Q. Were statistics on casualties and property destruction kept by the Air Defense Headquarters; were the records kept at the time of your resignation, and are the files available at the present time?
- AI. It is Mr ABE's impression that the records were as complete as it was possible to keep them. He also believes that the files are available at the present time.

The interview was concluded at 1220 hours, 8 Oct 45.

At this point, vice-Chairman Paul H. Nitze continued the interrogation of Mr ABE, report covering which will be supplied by Lt (jg) Gorham.