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SUBJECT Interrogations of Japanese Prisoners of War, for purposes
of Psychological Warfare.

COUNTRY REPORTED ON Japan and Empire SUBJECT NO. _____

SOURCE AND DEGREE OF RELIABILITY This summary is based on interviews
conducted by Mr. John K. Emmerson, Second Secretary of Embassy,
Detailed to Commanding General, U.S.A.F. in C.B.I. who, during the
past two months, has been attached to General Boatner's Hqs., and
has worked in close collaboration with the Assam OWI Psychological
Warfare Team.

CLASSIFICATION: "SECRET"

Note: This memorandum also includes a comment on Japanese Psychology, entitled "The Spirit of '76 and the Spirit of Yamato", also by Mr. Emmerson.

William A. Carter

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INTERROGATIONS OF JAPANESE PRISONERS
FOR PURPOSES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE.

Most prisoners had deteriorated. This summary is based on 16 interviews conducted by the writer with 12 Japanese prisoners between the dates of February 8th and March 25th, 1944. The purpose of the interrogations was to discover the backgrounds of the prisoners, their estimate of conditions on the Burma front, and their general attitudes and opinions with respect to the war, and to their enemies. While this group represents a very small segment of Japanese fighting men in one small area of Burma, nevertheless the similarity of certain of their reactions may permit the drawing of a few conclusions valid for propaganda purposes in this theater.

Conditions under which the interrogations were carried out were not always favorable. Several interviews were held at the Forward Command Post where no facilities for receiving prisoners had been provided. Many of the prisoners were seriously wounded and in constant pain. In other instances, prisoners were being moved to other bases and time for interrogation of a non-military character was strictly limited. Those hospitalized were in the same ward and many times there was no way to prevent conversation being overheard by other prisoners. These limitations must be borne in mind in evaluating the information presented herewith.

Background of Prisoners

With one exception all prisoners belonged to the 18th Division (Kiku Butai, or "Chrysanthemum Unit"). With one exception, they were from Kyushu, principally the provinces of Nagasaki, Fukuoka, and Saga. Their ages ranged from 24 to 34. Six were 28 and over. Three were married. Most had received only primary school education. All were privates, except four; three sergeants and one lance-corporal. Pre-war occupations of the 12 were as follows: - 4 factory workers, 2 engineers (mining), farmer, fisherman, policeman, bank clerk, store-keeper, and soldier in the Army since 1937. An employee of a naval aircraft factory in the important base of Sasebo had been drafted in August 1943. The policeman had for the year preceding his entry into military service been employed in a coal mine. Six of the group had been wounded either before or at the time of capture.

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Morale of Troops at the Front.

Most prisoners admitted that morale among the troops had deteriorated. Those captured after the action during the first part of March were far more pessimistic than those taken prisoner before that time. Conditions varied greatly from unit to unit. However, the following factors were mentioned consistently as affecting morale.

Lack of air support. Without exception, POW's expressed disgust and disappointment at the absence of Japanese planes over North Burma. One said he understood it was the policy of the Commanding General to do without air support. Another said he understood the planes had been sent to the Arakan. Several said that the soldiers continually asked why there were no planes in the air; they had been told there was a strong air force in Burma and they were baffled by its absence. One or two laughed when queried about Japanese planes over Burma, commented wryly that they had never seen one.

Shortages. Food supplies were not uniform. Some units were left with practically nothing while others had plenty. One POW stated that the men in his unit were limited to one "go" of rice daily; another said rations were three "go". Still another belonged to a unit which abandoned large stocks of food at Walawbum. One POW, member of the 56th regiment and captured on March 13, painted a very gloomy picture of conditions in his sector. Food supplies were extremely limited and officers would not permit men to build fires for cooking because of the constant danger from air raids. Clothing and ammunition were short and there were no medical supplies for treatment of the wounded. Field hospital facilities were lacking. Several POW's mentioned that their units had insufficient ammunition. One remarked that each man was limited to 150 rounds for his rifle.

Equipment. A number of the PW's spoke disparagingly of the weapons used by the 18th Division. They complained that they were old and outdated. One expressed disgust that his company had not a single heavy machine gun. At least two remarked that the best and latest weapons went to the troops in Manchuria. Those in Burma had to be content with what they had.

Allied Air Raids. POW's recounted that bombing of their lines in Burma had been severe with heavy casualties. When asked whether he preferred service in Burma or China, one replied that he preferred China, since in Burma enemy air raids were heavy and supplies were short.

Disease. Almost without exception, POW's commented on the high incidence of malaria among Japanese troops in Burma. Most of them had been hospitalized at one time or another for this disease and asserted that a high percentage of patients in military hospitals were suffering from malaria and that they often remained two or three months for treatment. Beri-beri was also mentioned as prevalent among the troops. Several had contracted dysentery and testified that precautions in drinking water were not taken by the troops in the jungle.

Personnel. In discussing the general morale of the troops, one POW expressed the opinion that the 18th Division contained too many married men with children. These older men thought too often of their homes and families and lacked the single-minded fighting spirit of their juniors. A high percentage of the men of the 18th Division were said to have served continuously overseas for three, four and five years. They had no prospects of being returned to Japan until replacements arrived or the campaign ended. Rumors apparently were circulating that the 18th Division was to be relieved before the monsoon set in, by either one or both of two divisions; the 15th (Matsuri Butai) and 31st (Retsu Butai). POW's agreed that many of the troops were anxious to get out of Burma and back to Japan but said that complaints were rarely expressed.

Recreation. Japanese troops expect little and get little recreation. Few of the prisoners had ever heard a radio program in Burma. They had seen only occasionally copies of the "Biruma Shimbun", Japanese newspaper published in Rangoon. Some had had access to periodicals from Japan in hospitals and regimental headquarters. The system of "comfort girls" was described. A contingent of these girls, mostly of Korean origin, is assigned to each regiment and made available to officers and men of each company one day in the week. One POW said that comfort kits had been distributed two or three times annually during his service in Burma, the last ones were received in Mandalay in July, 1943. He qualified them as "nothing more than one day's pleasure".

Each one showed a healthy respect for Soviet strength. Several named the Attitudes and Opinions. reason for Japan in the necessity of preparation against possible attack by Russia. This was the The attitudes and opinions of prisoners of war changed considerably with the passage of time after capture. This is especially true with regard to their estimate of the outcome of the war. Most of them think that the majority of Japanese troops at the front believe implicitly that Japan will win the war. Some who have experienced constant setbacks since the beginning of the

year say that a few of the soldiers are beginning to doubt Japan's invincibility. All of them point out that the Japanese common soldier is without news. He is acquainted only with happenings within the range of his day-to-day experience. One POW had never heard of the Arakan; others were entirely ignorant of such places as Truk, Marshall Islands, and Paramushiro. Lacking information to the contrary, the POW appears to accept almost without question the news he hears following this capture. For this reason, some of them readily became convinced that they had lost the war in Burma and their confidence in ultimate victory for Japan was considerably shaken.

Very few of the prisoners made any attempt to explain why Japan was fighting the United States. Most said that they did not understand, that they fought for their country and because they were ordered to fight. They were unanimous in saying that the average soldier never thinks about why he is fighting or how the war broke out. It is enough that he obey orders. One POW thought the war had arisen because Japan needed oil and the only way to get it was to go to the South Seas. This brought on conflict with the United States. Another said that Japan had desired to cooperate closely with the United States to guarantee world peace but that the American Government had repulsed Japan's overtures and the result was war.

Only two ventured to explain the widely popularized Japanese slogan "hakko ichiu" (eight corners of the universe under one roof); the others admitted that they had no comprehension of its meaning. One of them insisted that it meant cooperation between nations; another described it as the union of all nations under the "grace" of the Emperor of Japan.

An attempt was made to sound out the attitudes of the POW's toward their Axis partners and the United Nations. There was little reaction to questions concerning Italy and Germany. Some had only recently heard of Italy's surrender; none were informed about developments on the Russo-German front. One said that in Japan Germany had been thought of as a strong nation; he could not speak for the present.

Each one showed a healthy respect for Soviet strength. Several named the Nomonham incident as a lesson for Japan in the necessity of preparedness against possible attack by Russia. This was the reason for the large forces stationed in Manchuria.

Attitudes toward China and the Chinese varied. Several said they felt no animosity toward the Chinese as individuals. A number attributed the outbreak of the China Incident to the anti-Japanese campaign carried on in China, and to the assassination of the Japanese.

Japanese officers. One, when pressed for his opinion of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching Wei, said that ever since his schooldays he had admired the Generalissimo for his ability and leadership and even now thought him a greater man than Wang. The latter was an opportunist who changed his convictions according to the political situation at the time. As for the Chinese soldiers, several of the POW's expressed respect for the fighting ability of those in Burma. One said there was absolutely no comparison between the Chinese his unit had met in China and those fighting in Burma. The latter were far superior both in weapons and ability. "The latter were far superior both in weapons and ability," he added, "the people would do it for them." Others felt that the Emperor Practically all POW's interrogated showed a definitely antipathetic attitude toward the British. They expressed great apprehension over being turned over to the British authorities. A number insisted emphatically that their feelings toward the Chinese and British were in sharp contrast to their opinion of Americans. It is thought to occur in the Japanese Government after the war, the prisoners remained adamant in their determination never to return home. While it can be argued that Japanese prisoners of war might naturally attempt to ingratiate themselves with their captors, nevertheless, their consistent protestations of friendliness for Americans cannot be wholly dismissed as insincere. Several insisted that the Japanese had not wanted to go to war with the United States and that the attack of December 7, 1941, was a shock to the people. One described a "chill of apprehension" which shot through the nation when it found itself at war with the United States. Another, who had been connected with the raw silk business, told how commercial circles had dreaded war with the nation whose silk market supplied a livelihood to many farmers, dealers, and exporters. One described how a friend had gone to the United States and had long been in awe of Americans because of their big stature and physique; he had found them friendly, however, and his reports on returning to Japan were all favorable. Another POW insisted that Japan was fundamentally favorably disposed toward Americans. "All expressed surprise and gratitude at the good treatment received since they had fallen into American hands. They had expected to be killed or worked as slaves, once taken prisoner. Most of them expressed the desire to be sent to the United States at the end of the war to begin life ever again. One said earnestly, "If you send us to China or to England, we prefer to die. Our one wish is to go to America." That is, news of developments in their own sector, where names mean something to them. Presentation of war events in Europe. One POW was asked to explain how he thought Japan could defeat a nation with the population and resources of the United States. He said that the Japanese recognized American superiority in materials. However, they had been taught that Americans were rich and accustomed to a multitude of luxuries which it would hurt them to do without. On the other hand, the Japanese had always suffered shortages and inconveniences and it was easy for them to make additional sacrifices in time of war. This "spiritual" advantage belonged to Japan.

With one single exception, POW's asserted they could never return to Japan, and had no desire to return. Once a prisoner, they were disgraced for life and it was better that their family believe them dead. Otherwise, the propaganda might boomerang. One POW described an incident: Prisoners had previously never contemplated the consequences of defeat for Japan. One was sure that the Emperor would commit hara-kiri in such a case, since by sanctioning the war through Imperial Rescript, he had assumed responsibility for it. Likewise, Tojo and other leaders would commit suicide; "if they did not," he added, "the people would do it for them!" Others felt that the Emperor would continue in spite of the outcome of the war. One believed that in the event of defeat new leaders would rise to assume the responsibility of government. Few of them seemed to have any conception of "the military" as a political force and as bearing responsibility for the present war. Regardless of what changes might occur in the Japanese Government after the war, the prisoners remained adamant in their determination never to return home.

3. Respect for Americans. Additional efforts might be made to capitalize on the respect for Americans and the United States which interrogations indicate is held by Japanese troops. Graphic portrayal of the size, strength, health and equipment of the American troops, and the natural Japanese inferiority complex, as well as the "Spirit of '76" in the way the Japanese preach "Nippon Seishin" and "Yamato-damashii".

Conclusions for Psychological Warfare

Bearing in mind the limitations cited at the beginning of this report, we may draw a few conclusions from this series of interviews as guides to the preparation of propaganda for Japanese troops. It is suggested that we talk a great deal more about American spirit. We can dissertate on the "Spirit of '76" in the way the Japanese preach "Nippon Seishin" and "Yamato-damashii".

1. The impact of straight news. Living in a news vacuum Japanese troops in Burma are susceptible to news reports, even though emanating from Allied sources. One wounded POW asked the interrogator, "Please tell me some news, even though it is bad". Others expressed interest in OWI news leaflets shown to them. Several thought that a considerable percentage of soldiers finding such leaflets would give them credence.

It is obvious that first emphasis should be placed on actual news, based on intelligence, of immediate interest to the troops; that is, news of developments in their own sector, where names mean something to them. Presentation of war events in Europe and the South Pacific must be made graphically, in view of the general ignorance of places and happenings in the world at large. Every leaflet of this type should strive to achieve a cumulative effect of inevitable defeat by showing Japan's losses wherever she is fighting. Single battle reports will not register with the average Japanese private.

had been 2. Anti-morale propaganda. It is obvious that appeals to troops on the basis of their lack of food and supplies must be made to units only who are actually in desperate circumstances. Otherwise, the propaganda might boomerang. One POW described an incident which he said occurred in the hospital at Maymyo about a year ago. Word was brought in that a Japanese unit had suffered a minor reverse in the Arakan. He said that the morale of the troops in the hospital was immediately raised; they redoubled their efforts to recover so that they could get back into the fighting. He felt, however, that the present Burma defeat was so much more serious that in this case news would depress rather than elevate the spirit. Troops must be made to feel that the whole picture is black and there is no hope for improvement. Not one, but all the factors mentioned by the POW's as affecting morale should be heaped up and made to appear unbeatable.

3. Respect for Americans. Additional efforts might be made to capitalize on the respect for Americans and the United States which interrogations indicate is held by Japanese troops. Graphic portrayal of the size, strength, health and equipment of the American infantryman would make use of the natural Japanese inferiority complex as to stature. We should not stop, however, at harping on American material superiority. As revealed in the interrogations, the Japanese line is that Americans may have superior resources but the Japanese will win through their strength of spirit. It is suggested that we talk a great deal more about American spirit. We can dissertate on the "Spirit of '76" in the way the Japanese preach "Nippon Seishin" and "Yamato-damashii". This type of propaganda lends itself more to radio broadcasts or newsheets such as "Jisei" than to leaflets. Nevertheless, if plugged long enough and illustrated with stories of individual heroism both from American history and the present war, the line might have effect. A sample introductory presentation of the theme is attached herewith.

4. Surrender. In the final analysis, propaganda aimed at Japanese troops is designed to discourage and demoralize them to the extent that they will either a) fight less efficiently and effectively, b) commit suicide, or c) surrender. The last alternative is, of course, the one most to be desired and likewise is the most difficult to achieve. All of those interrogated became prisoners in one of the following ways: 1) overpowered by natives; 2) captured by Chinese after being wounded or having wandered into Chinese lines; 3) voluntary surrender to Chinese. The one prisoner who admitted having given himself up voluntarily

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had been without food for many days, and had contracted dysentery and become separated from his unit. He believed that other troops who had suffered similar hardships would be in a mood to surrender. Several recounted having been foiled in attempts to commit suicide, either because of lack of weapons or failure of grenades to explode.

The inevitable conclusion is that any plan designed to induce surrender must be put into operation only in a situation where enemy troops are already isolated and in desperate circumstances. Furthermore, its success will depend on the complete understanding and cooperation of the commander and the Allied troops themselves. At the present moment, American and Chinese forces operating in North Burma are not generally in the mood for taking prisoners. However, it would benefit the entire psychological warfare program if an opportunity were found to put into practice a surrender appeal plan under appropriate conditions, and it were successful. The Japanese say that because of this strong spiritual impulse, their warriors are braver and fight more fanatically and

It must be remembered that the first leaflet prepared in the Japanese in Assam was dropped on Japanese troops on March 8th. This was a news leaflet announcing the fall of Maingwan. Japanese troops who have been insulated not only from propaganda but from news of all sorts cannot be expected to react quickly to leaflet appeals. As one POW stated, they have never known defeat before. To them, the present withdrawal in North Burma, is the first defeating the Japanese Army forces have suffered to their knowledge. They will not easily accept our statements that all is lost. However, when the messages of general news leaflets begin to circulate even to some limited degree, mental resistance will have weakened when the last ditch moment comes and surrender appeals made at that time may be expected to have more chance of success. In this war, call it

the "spirit of '76". In 1776, while Japan was quietly sleeping under Finally, the importance of prisoner interrogation to psychological warfare cannot be too greatly emphasized. One must constantly bear in mind, however, that the Japanese soldier undergoes what might be called a re-incarnation when he becomes a prisoner. There is a complete breakdown between his past and his future. He never expects to return to Japan and he mentally severs all connection with Japan. Therefore, it must be recognized that his mind has changed to some extent from the mind of the soldier still fighting at the front. Still he remains the only means by which we can test reactions of the audience we are trying to reach. A prosperous nation has not diminished one whit the bright spiritual flame which has burned constantly through the years.

Americans did not want to fight Japan. Deep in their hearts they thought of the Pacific JOHN K. EMMERSON "pacific". They were stunned when Japanese planes Second Secretary of Embassy bed Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941 Detailed to Commanding Generals U.S.A.F. in C.B.I.

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not easily aroused to action. Japan could have chosen no better means of testing its strength. The American people were electrified. THE SPIRIT OF '76 AND THE SPIRIT OF YAMATO. "130,000,000 people of one heart". The Japanese say that Americans resent the restrictions placed upon their comforts, that they chafe at petty sacrifices made necessary by the war, and that Japanese soldiers fighting on the front are said to be filled with a powerful, mystic spirit. This is the "spirit of Japan" (Nippon Seishin), or the "Spirit of Yamato" (Yamato-damashii). Japan is fighting against the United Nations to establish "hakko ichiu" (eight corners of the Universe under one roof) in the world. A Japanese will say that he knows the meaning of these phrases but he cannot explain them. Try as he may, he cannot put into words the definition of these ideas which are said to be so powerful. Inconsequential. It is the way of "blowing off steam" and indicates. The Japanese say that because of this strong spiritual impulse, their warriors are braver and fight more fanatically and fiercely than Americans. Now the Japanese are admitting that the United States, with its great population and vast resources, is able to produce more airplanes, more tanks, guns, bullets, than the Japanese, and that she can put more men in the field than can Japan. BUT, they say, Japan's victory will be gained through her fighting spirit. Americans are pleasure-loving and soft; soldiers think only of girls and ice-cream; used to luxuries and never having faced privation and soul-testing adversity, the American doughboy will not stand up to the test of battle. He will falter and lose.

The Japanese forget that the Americans too have a "spirit" which is very real, very powerful and which has certain meanings crystal clear to every U.S. soldier fighting in this war. Call it the "spirit of '76". In 1776, while Japan was quietly sleeping under Tokugawa rule, the Liberty Bell was rung and American men fought and died to earn the right to live under their own government with the freedom of speech and religion guaranteed to them. Small numbers of poorly-equipped ill-trained countrymen fought valiantly and conquered a foe superior in numbers and resources. The "spirit of '76" won the American Revolution. admirals, privates, business men, housewives, school children. We would Americans don't talk so much about their "spirit". They have been busy building a great country and they have had no visions of conquest. However, their success in forging a prosperous nation has not diminished one whit the bright spiritual flame which has burned constantly through the years. In America; they would see that every American is doing a job and that each man, woman, and child Americans did not want to fight Japan. Deep in their hearts they thought of the Pacific Ocean as truly "pacific". They were stunned when Japanese planes with sudden treachery bombed Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941. Perhaps the Spirit of '76 is

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not easily aroused to action but Japan could have chosen a better means of testing its strength. The American people were electrified and became in the literal sense of the phrase "130,000,000 people of one heart". The Japanese may think Americans resent the restrictions placed upon their comforts, that they chafe at petty sacrifices made necessary by the war, and that they lack the stamina which victory demands. If so, they are tragically mistaken. Japanese must further remember certain differences between American and Japanese temperament. The Japanese hides his real feelings; he says always "kawari ga arimasen" (there is no change), or "go shimpai wa irimasen" (you needn't worry), even when he is unhappy and things are not going well. On the contrary, the American complains loudly in words at slight inconveniences, but in his heart knows that these are inconsequential. It is the way of "blowing off steam" and indicates in no way his real thoughts and feelings.

The Japanese propagandists forgets that Americans enjoy free speech when he avidly searches the American press and radio for indications that American morale is bad. He forgets that the individual man has the right to say what he thinks and that Americans talk a lot about little things and just naturally "know" the big things. And Americans know what the "Spirit of '76" means to them and to their sons and Brothers at the front. G.I.'s complain about not having girls and ice-cream; but they act in a spirit that is far stronger than they themselves.

It is unfortunate that we cannot take General Tojo and some of his friends on a personally conducted tour of the United States. We would show them through our factories; we would take them into the most confidential of our laboratories; we would take them on manœuvres, with the army, the Marine Corps, and the Navy. We would let them talk with men in the armed services, as many men as they wished and for as long as they wished; we would invite them to inspect our aircraft, our latest bombers; we would take them on rides that would curdle their blood. We would have them ask questions of pilots, engineers, inventors, generals, admirals, privates, business men, housewives, school children. We would have them eat meals in hotels, army camps, farmhouses, workers' restaurants. If they wished, we would permit them to march with our men. Out of this experience, they would get some slight glimpse of the meaning of America's "Spirit of '76". They would see that there are no idle hands in America; they would see that every American is doing a job and that each man, woman, and child has one thought in his heart - win the war against the aggressor nations.

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The "Spirit of '76" is a live force which impels men to fight for freedom, for the constructive things that make for peace and a safe world. The American soldier does not want to die; he wants to live for a better world. If he has to kill to live, he will kill and he will kill well. Ask the souls of dead Japanese who fought against him in Guadalcanal, Attu, Tarawa, Hukawng; Nippon Seishin glorifies death. It teaches Japanese soldiers how to die. The Spirit of '76 inspires American soldiers to fight to live and to fight so that others may live.

The Japanese can never say that they will win through their spirit. They are feeling now and will continue to feel, not only the blistering fire of America's machines of death, but also the withering power of America's Spirit of '76.

conclusions valid for propaganda purposes in this theater.

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