

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION

(Continued from previous page)

troyed. If it should ever happen that Japan invaded New Zealand, should a similar precaution be taken?

Col.: Yes, if the necessity arose. I was in Hongkong myself at the beginning of October, and I can believe that the number of bottles of spirit you mention was actually in the colony at that time. The precaution taken was therefore a wise one.

This War Was Foreseen

Ed.: Now, Colonel, take the civilian population of Japan. Were they prepared for this war—I mean officially prepared by propaganda?

Col.: Yes. This war was long foreseen, and to some extent fostered by the anti-foreign element among the civilian population. More than a year and a half ago there were public meetings in the big cities (some say German-organised) at which cries of "Down with England—Away with America" were pre-arranged. These public meetings were in fact advertised in huge letters on the sides of municipal tramcars, so that the cost of the advertisements came out of the pockets of foreign ratepayers as well as from Japanese ratepayers. The newspapers of course had long been preparing the population for the possibility of war with Western Powers, but always from the angle that the Western Powers would declare war on Japan, never with the idea that Japan would declare war against the Western Powers.

Ed.: Are the newspapers officially controlled?

Col.: Most certainly they are. Not only controlled, but frequently suppressed for long or short periods. The English newspapers published in Japan often appeared with blank columns which had been deleted by the police reader, or they failed to appear at all.

Ed.: Who reads the newspapers? Are the majority of the people literate?

Col.: I think Japan is one of the most literate countries in the world, which is extraordinary when one considers the complication and difficulty of the written language. It is quite common to see a rickshaw coolie sitting on his rickshaw waiting for passengers and reading the newspaper. I have even seen beggars who appear to be mentally deficient reading newspapers.

Ed.: Can a newspaper criticise the Government?

Col.: No. Not without the Government's permission. And that is given only when it serves the Government's purpose.

Effect of Defeat

Ed.: We may, then, I suppose assume that the discipline of the people is as good as the discipline of the fighting forces?

Col.: Yes, it certainly is. But one doesn't have much respect for people who behave more or less like sheep. Because it is only partly patriotism.

In part it is fear of the secret police.

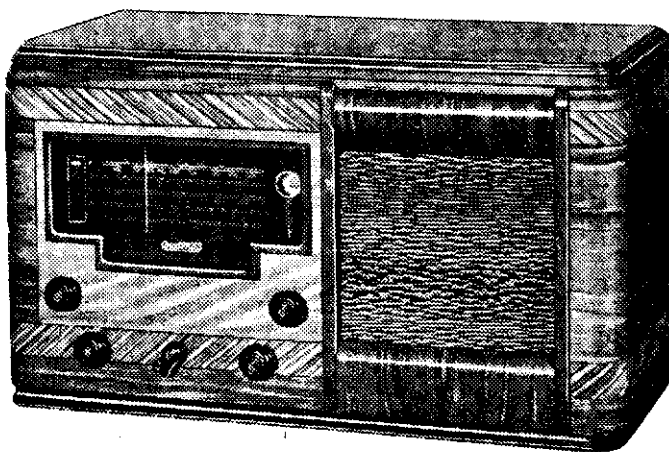
Ed.: Is it likely, if Japan is overwhelmingly defeated in the present war, that there will be political changes?

Col.: Yes, I think that is quite certain.

But the Emperor is deified to such an extent that it is unlikely that the imperial line will ever be broken or that Japan would adopt any form of republicanism. It will certainly not go communist.



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