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M.I.S. Participation in Post-World War II Repatriation  
of Japanese POWs from Siberia

Gen. No. —  
Repatriation —

I. Historical Background.

A. How Japanese soldiers became POWs of the Russians.

1. Throughout World War II, a Japanese army was stationed along the Russo-Manchurian border to prevent the Russian invasion of Manchuria. This army was called the Kwantung Army and its strength was reported to be about one million men.
2. Five days before Japan surrendered to the Allied forces, Russia invaded Manchuria and soon thereafter the entire Japanese Kwantung Army was forcibly taken as prisoners of war and transported into Siberia.
3. The taking of prisoners of war after cessation of hostilities was illegal but the Russians took advantage of a great opportunity to exploit the Japanese soldiers as slave labor for the construction of new towns, railroads and facilities in Soviet Russia and Siberia.

II. M.I.S. Participation in the Repatriation Program.

- A. Although United States and U.S.S.R. were allies for several years after World War II, the relation between the two countries began to deteriorate especially in the Far East, and the U.S. Intelligence decided that the returning Japanese POWs, or the Repats, would be an excellent source of information on the Russians.
- B. The repatriation of Japanese POWs began in the fall of 1946 and a total of 5,000 Repats returned to Maizuru that year. No repatriation took place during the winter months due to the icing condition in Nakhodka harbor, the port of embarkation for the Repats. The full scale repatriation resumed in April, 1947 and a total of 200,213 Repats returned through Maizuru in 1947. The total number of Repats in 1948 was 176,906. It was estimated that a total of about 600,000 Repats were returned to Japan by the end of 1950. It is apparent from these figures that a large

number of Japanese POWs perished in Siberia due to the extreme weather and working conditions.

- C. The Japanese ports of Sasebo, Kyushu and Hakodate, Hokkaido were also used for the repatriation of Japanese soldiers and civilians from China and Manchuria. However, the bulk of the Japanese Repats from Soviet Russia landed in Maizuru.
- D. It was the responsibility of the Japanese Government to provide ships for the transport of the Repats, to conduct immigration processing at the ports, and to transport them to their homes.
- E. A shipload of approximately 2,000 Repats returned through Maizuru very three or four days. The M.I.S. personnel worked continuously about 3 weeks out of every month during the repatriation season.
- F. The primary M.I.S. function at the Maizuru Repatriation Center was to collect Russian information by interrogating the returning Repats. The interrogations were conducted in the following three phases:
  - 1. Phase I (at the port) was responsible for the initial contact with the returning POWs on board the repatriation ships and the gathering of the preliminary information (POW's interned locale, military and industrial targets). It also selected approx. 10% (200 Repats) to be interrogated by Phase II personnel by collating cards filled out by the Repats. The Phase I activities were facilitated by the employment of former high-ranking Japanese army intelligence officers who escaped from the Russians in Manchuria. Most of these special employees were fluent in the Russian language and familiar with Russian geography.
  - 2. Phase II (at the port) was responsible for the interrogation of Repats and this activity was performed by the majority of the M.I.S. personnel stationed in Maizuru. Three detachments, consisting of approx. five officers and 20

enlisted men in each detachment, were made up of Military Intelligence Service Language School graduates. A special project, called the Town Plan Section, was established to develop maps of new towns, geographical landmarks; railroads, etc. This project was highly successful because the Japanese POWs were distributed to numerous locales in the Soviet Union, and repeated small group repatriations from a given area permitted the upgrading of the maps.

3. Phase III was conducted at ATIS, Tokyo. Those Repats who had exceptional knowledge of a place or event were immediately sent to ATIS for Phase III interrogation. Examples of such Phase III activities were the first atom bomb test by the Russians in southeast Siberia and the beginning of military materiel shipments to the North Koreans in late 1949.
- G. During 1946 and all of 1947, the Repats were so happy to leave their hardships in Soviet Russia and return to their homeland. They were exceedingly friendly to the U.S. personnel and volunteered information willingly. However, during the winter of 1947 and early 1948, a simultaneous uprising took place in all of the Japanese POW camps in Soviet Russia and the traditional power of the Japanese officers were taken away by the indoctrinated young POWs. When the first ship arrived in Maizuru in the spring of 1948, the returning POWs were boldly belligerent and many refused to be interrogated. This group later disrupted their homeward travel by going en masse to Yoyogi, near Tokyo, to join the Japan Communist Party. This situation improved later when the officers and older Repats learned that they could not be intimidated by the young Communists.

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