

Special Exhibition "1945: The things we read and wrote before and after the war ended."

Subcommittee on Exhibition  
Committee for Exhibit

*This is a partial translation of an article in Japanese  
from the NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 654 (October 2015).*

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## ● 1. Introduction

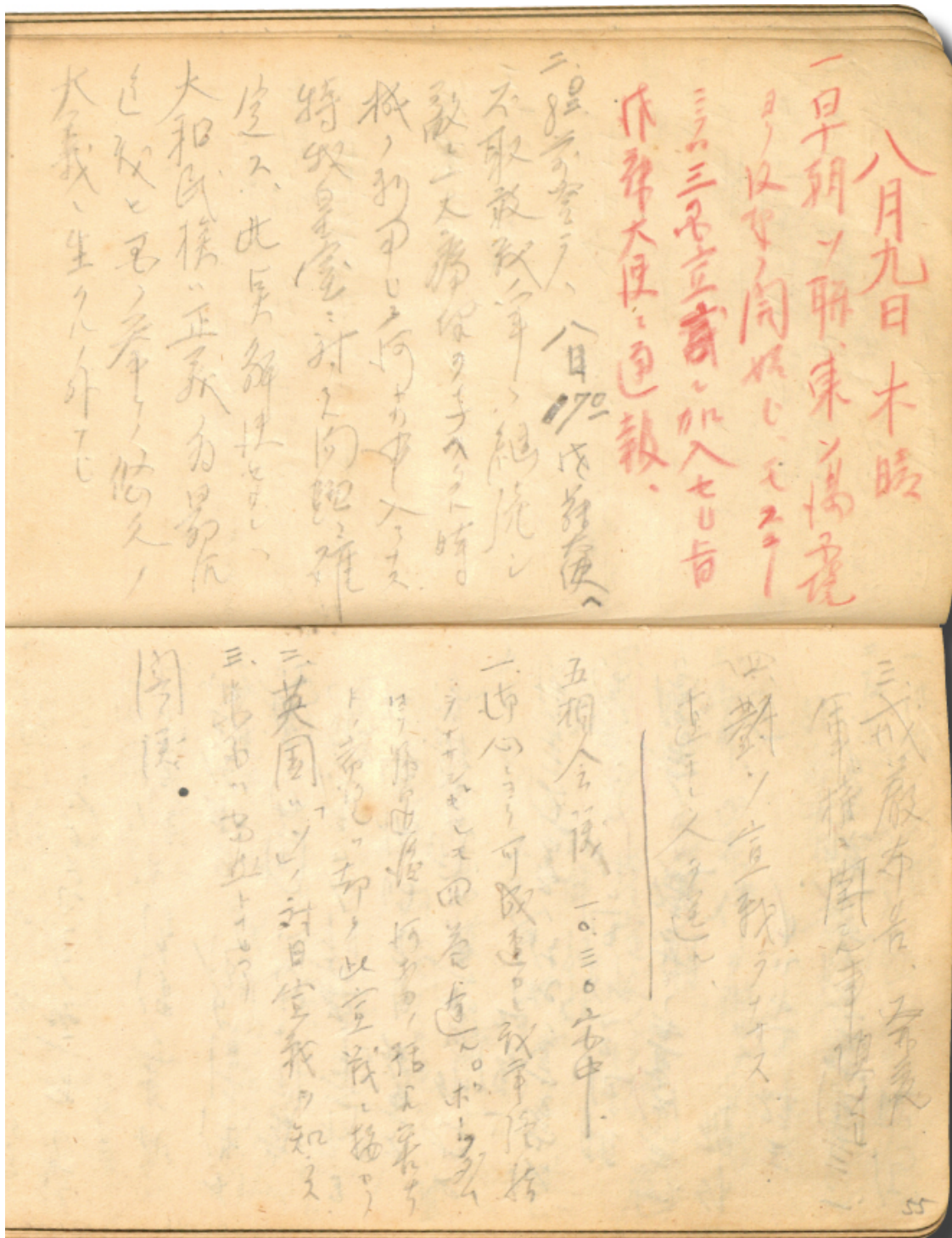
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Three score and ten years have passed since the Second World War ended in 1945. By the start of 1945, the situation in Japan had already taken a turn for the worse, and there were those who clamored for a final, decisive battle on the Japan homeland. That spring, air raids turned almost every major city into burnt-out ruins, and the daily lives of ordinary Japanese had become quite desperate. As the war approached its conclusion that summer, the blackout was lifted and in the relit streets, the sound of people conversing in English, the once-prohibited language of the enemy, could be heard.

And yet, even in these turbulent times, the publishing of books and magazines continued. What kinds of articles were published as the war was ending? Moreover, what were politicians, military officers, and other leading Japanese writing in their diaries and other personal records at that time? And how did the August 15 broadcast of the Emperor announcing the end of the war change what people were writing?

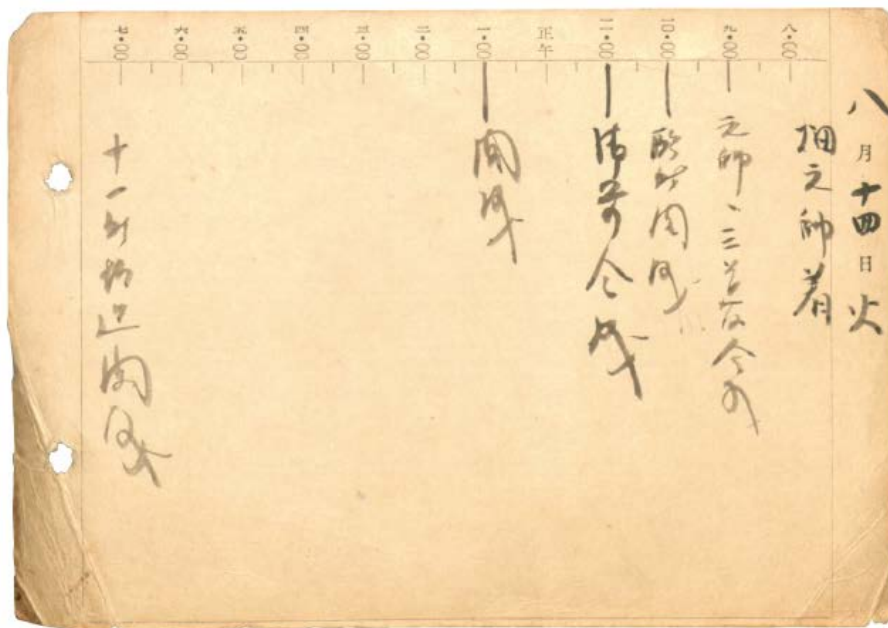
This article presents content from books and magazines published in 1945 as well as diaries and letters written that year by politicians and military officers. These materials were part of a display at the National Diet Library (NDL) of a Special Exhibition entitled "1945: The things we read and wrote before and after the war ended."

2. A notebook and the diary of Anami Korechika



<<A notebook of Anami Korechika, NDL Call No. Anami Korechika Papers 18>>

As the situation worsened, reports of the Soviet Union's declaration of war against Japan were first brought to War Minister Anami Korechika (1887-1945) on August 9. On the page for that date in his notebook (photo above), he described this tense situation in red pencil, indicating that the Soviet Union had crossed the Russo-Manchuria border in the early morning, and had given notice of that country's affiliation with the Potsdam Declaration to Japan's Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Sato Naotake (1882-1971).



<<Nisshi (The diary of Anami Korechika), NDL Call No. Anami Korechika Papers 17>>

In contrast, Anami's personal record of his activities, entitled "Nisshi" (photo above), ended with the notes of the end-of-war conference on August 14 in the presence of the Emperor Hirohito, and the subsequent Cabinet meeting. Although Anami had been one of those who advocated fighting to the very end, he finally agreed to the end-of-war Imperial rescript as a member of the Cabinet, and committed suicide in the War Minister's Official Residence before daybreak on August 15, 1945.

This is the first time for the material in this collection to be displayed since it was donated to the NDL.

### 3. Handbills scattered by the U.S. Army Air Forces

Handbills were often distributed at the fronts as part of psychological warfare meant to demoralize enemy soldiers. After the Imperial Japanese military forces lost control of the air, U.S. Army Air Forces dropped handbills on the mainland Japan on many occasions.



<<Handbills scattered by the U.S. Army Air Forces, July and August 1945  
NDL Call No. Kenseishiryoshitsu shushumonjo 1235>>

The handbill at the top illustrates the U.S. military forces marching from island to island toward Japan, including the Philippines, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. The implication is that an invasion of Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshu was at hand. The map is not intended to be geographically accurate, although it does show something like Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima, which is the highest point on the island. It describes the Japanese homeland as "just another island," a parody of the expression used in announcements from the Japanese military headquarters each time the U.S. captured another island from Japan.

The handbill on the bottom is a warning of imminent air raids and shows the names of the targeted cities. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey conducted surveys in Japan after the war to analyze the effectiveness of air raids, including the psychological effects of the handbills on the Japanese public. Its final report says that three versions of more than two million warning handbills were dropped in separate air raids on July 27, August 1, and August 4.

#### 4. *Shukan shokokumin*



<<*Shukan shokokumin*. Asahi Shimbun, NDL Call No. Z32-188  
(left) vol.4 no.30 (serial no.166), July 29, 1945

(right) vol.4 no.35/36 (serial no.171/172), September 2/9, 1945

The difference in the expressions on these boys' faces shows how significantly social conditions changed within a little more than a month.>>

The cover on the left is captioned "A brave young lookout in an anti-aircraft watchtower watches for enemy planes." In an interview, the boy tells how at least one U.S. Army Air

Force B-29 bomber was shot down thanks to a report he made, leaving him "too excited to sleep at all the following night, thinking that one of those 'damn B-29s' had been shot down into the waves of the Pacific before it could return to base."

The cover on the right is the first issue published after the war had ended, and shows a smiling boy holding vegetables with the caption "A boy, hard at work to increase the crop yield." The issue also contains a photo of the Imperial Palace, an article on upholding the Japan's national polity, and the end-of-war Imperial rescript.

## 5. *Shinsei / Vita nova*



<<Shinsei / Vita nova. No.1, November 1945, Shinseisha  
NDL Call No. Z051.3-Si16 / VG1-470>>

*Shinsei* is a general interest magazine first issued on October 18, by Aoyama Toranosuke, a lover of literature and new-comer to the publishing business from Okayama Prefecture. The first issue of 360,000 copies sold out on the first day, within an hour of being put on display in bookstores. The stories describe the social conditions at a time when people were starved for reading material. The first issue includes pieces by writers such as Murobuse Koshin (1892-1970, critic and columnist), Ozaki Yukio (1858-1954, Member of the House of Representatives, Education Minister, Law Minister, and Mayor of Tokyo), Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960, clergyman and social activist), Kobayashi Ichizo (1873-1957, founder of Hankyu railway company, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and president of the Toho Films), and Masamune Hakucho (1879-1962, critic and novelist).