At that time, all prisoners there were alreasy permitted by the Government to go out freely under the pretext of occupational training. They had won their freedom by clamoring against continued detention, saying: "Although there are the wartime crime provisions and the POW problem according to old practices, it is a principle of internaional law set forth in the textbooks on international law to let bygones be bygones and release the prisoners once a peace treaty is signed. Japan has signed a peace treaty. Why are we continuedly detained in spite of it?"

The prison was nothing but a place of lodging. Although Mr. Shigeru Yoshida representing the Japanese Government signed a peace treaty which prescribed the continued detention of the war criminals on the responsibility of the Japanese Government, the Sugamo Prison inmates became recalcitrant when the peace treaty took effect in 1952.

We returned to Japan in 1953 and went to the Sugamo Prison. We found no one there in daytime. That was how things stood. I mentioned this as an example of what results from international relations in which power rules.

International relations where might is right, international law seriously affected by them...what a regrettable learning I majored in! (Laught) I have felt like this from my wide experience.

After the above speech, questions and answers were exchanged between Mr. Nara and the audience. Here is a summary of Mr. Nara's answers regarding Japan and Australia (ed.):

Before the war, Australia abided by the principle of White Australia. Because of this racial discrimination, the Japanese have had no favorable impression of that country since prewar days. In war time, Australia with a small population had to sacrifice her valuable young men in battles in Singapore, Malay and Papua-New Guinea. Therefore, the Australians have a very strong anti-Japanese feeling, probably the strongest among the Allied forces. I understand how they felt.

We were put in the war criminals camp in Rabaul and later moved to Manus Island. In the concentration camp, we were beaten and kicked every day. We were forced to "work like beasts of burden." There were many deaths and injuries owing to the explosion of bombs being inactivated or the accidental fall of a big tree. There also occurred cases of tuberculosis.

Things were very bad in 1946 to 1949. In 1949 or 1950, it came to pass that about three out of every ten Australian guards of the concentration camp were just back from their duty in Japan. They were very friendly to the Japanese. While the other seven were as strict as before, the three newcomers were indulgent.

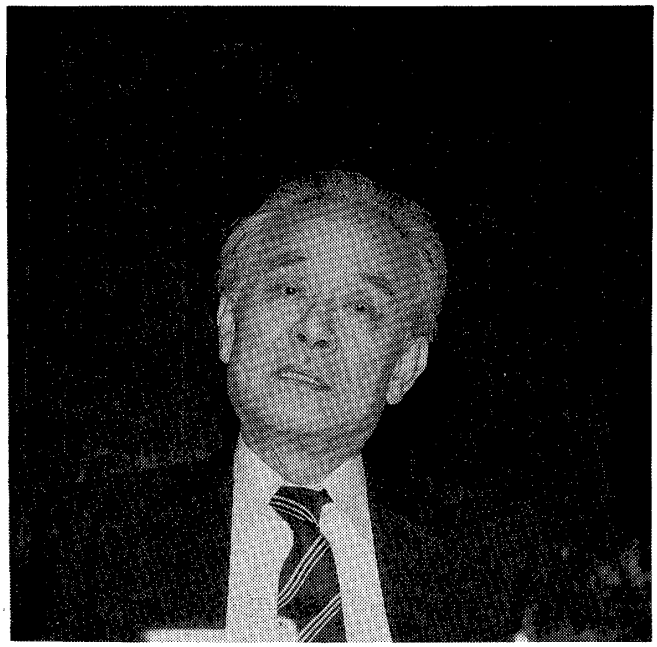
Some day, I was amazed by a guard just back from Japan. He called me aside during labor time and, as I wondered what he wanted with me, he gave me a treat of beer. (Laugh) Acording to the strict rules of Australian concentration camps, his act constituted an awful crime like a treason.

I modestly declined his offer. He was a habitual drinker who always carried four or five small bottles of beer in his pockets and drank while walking. After all, I availed myself of his kind offer. It tasted very good! (Laugh) It was the best in the world. Since my return to Japan, I have not drunk such good bear.

The relations between Japan and Australia at present are ideal. My school is attended by Australian students.

The bitter storeis of the wartime and postwar days should be mutually reviewed so that they can be used for the long friendly relations between Japan and Australia.

Man's genuine life should be a peaceful one and not the one of strifes, I believe.



Mr. Yoshio Nara

of the enemy by any means. The best example is the A-bomb dropping. The atomic bomb had been prohibited by the conventional international law and the Articles of War. For indiscriminate mass slaughters and weapons inflicting a special pain had been treated as against the laws. There are particular provisions against poison gases and the dumdum. Nuclear arms are weapons for indiscriminate mass slaughter. It is claimed that a full-scale nuclear war would make the earth itself depart from its normal state. Therefore, it can be interpreted that nuclear arms are against the laws of war and humanity after all.

In the United States, it was politically justified by the need to end the war quickly. It was even said that if Japan had developed it first, she would have used it. In short, they said as if they had been right and humanitarian to use the atomic bombs. However, the use of A-bombs was fundamentally an act violating the laws of war.

Likewise, peace and humanity were loudly advocated at the Tokyo trial and B- and C-class war criminals trials. Oddly enough, however, all the former Allied countries now possess atomic bombs and nuclear weapons which violate the laws of war. This is the case particulary with Soviet Russia and the United States.

It is politically argued that the competition in its development brings about a balance which serves as a deterrent of war. However, it is also said that nuclear arms would be used if the enemy used it first. Although that country which uses a nuclear weapon first is considered censurable, it should be noted that even the retaliatory use of such a weapon is the use of an illegal weapon. In short, what is called an "attempted" or "preparatory" crime in Japanese civil law is committed by all countries which have developed and possess nuclear arms. Such an attempted crime could also be denounced under international law.

Unfortunately, no Japanese student of international law goes as far as taking such a view. In brief, nobody states in the newspapers or magazines or in public like this: "The United States, Soviet Russia, Britain, China, France, India...all these countries are already violating international law, aren't they? Abolish all nuclear weapons, to say nothing of nuclear explosion tests. Only then will the problem of international law violation solved for good."

After all, the situation results from the great waves of international relations governed by power. Such being the case, only those countries which do not have nuclear weapons are kept down. Hence the so-called nuclear anti-proliferation treaty which forever prohibits non-nuclear countries from possessing the inhuman weapons.

I think it holds good as an argument that this international order is quite questionable in view of the postwar Allied advocacy of peace and humanity. But my argument is simply turned down on these grounds: my argument is that of a layman, not of a scholar; the United Nations Charter still contains a provision for the former enemy countries; Japan is protected by American nuclear arms; world peace has been maintained for over forty years since the war's end, etc.

Another Three Years in Sugamo Prison

I returned to Japan in August 1953, exactly eleven years after going to the front for the first time in August 1942. After my return to Japan, Australia still withheld pardon from me, causing me to stay in Sugamo Prison as a nominal inmate for three years.

completion of the floors, there occurred rapidly increasing cases of malaria.

Malaria would have been nothing to worry about, had we had the right drug. But we were not supplied with the drug. As a result, if the symptoms appeared, the patient died after about a week at best. Malnutrition and a high fever. The patients lying in the crowded hut uttered screams of death here and there.

The troops from Ocean Island had experienced earlier what was called the Torokina death march. The 600 troops had formally surrendered as shown in the photograph in the Journal of the Pacific Society and been taken to Torokina. It had been four or five days' trip. Then they had been forced to walk for about 15 km from Torokina to the concentration camp under a blazing sun without a rest. Walking for 15 km carrying a little load would have been easy under normal conditions.

However, there still had been Australian field camps.The moment the Japanese left the seashore for the concentration camp, the surrounding Australian troops equipped with bayonets began to shout foul language such as "fuck and bloody bastard" and "bull shit." While so yelling, the Australians pricked the Japanese with their bayonets.

Probably wanting mementos, they tore off our shoulder ensigns and cap badges. Fountain pens and watches were no exception. I have never seen such a pitiable ugly nation.

Excitedly, they first robbed our possessions, then beat us, kicked us and pricked us with their bayonets. Suntanned soldiers in trunks, evil-looking men and others surrounded the Japanese troops and yelled. In short, they committed pillage and violence.

About 600 Japanese troops had been divided into groups of about 50. While marching, each group was kept under watch by several guards. I walked foremost. There happened to be a Nisei U.S. soldier who could speak Japanese. Why was such a man present among the Australians? He may have been an intelligence man because he could speak Japanese and hear stories from the Japanese.

His name was Otsuka. He said he was a Nisei from San Francisco. I walked foremost with this Sergeant Otsuka. Therefore, although I was robbed of my watch and shoulder ensigns, I was not kicked or pricked with a bayonet. However, the Japanese immediately after me and the following troops did not escape such torments.

The dead could be limited to a minimum. Nonetheless, four or five spirited good soldiers fell ill in the midway and died. Although innumerable Japanese troops were affected by heatstroke and fell down on roads, their lives were saved and they were later brought to the camp all together.

The instrument of surrender says something good. Although it does not go so far as to promise humane treatment, it reads as follows:

> All Japanese officers and soldiers (not including natives friendly to the Japanese) will be treated strictly in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention 1929 relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.

Nuclear Arms Possession Violates International Law

The military court in Rabaul claimed to judge in the names of justice and humanity. But in view of our experiences at Torokina and in the Solomons, I think the court was not in the position to say such things.

It is best to dispense with war, as is evidenced by antiwar treaties and the United Nations Charter which prohibits recourse to war as a means for settling international disputes. However, it is said that self-denense war is permitted or not illegal under inernational law. War between countries is after all nothing but the mutual killing of both nations. Each of the belligerant countries wants to destroy the war potential of the other party by any means and demolishes manufacturing plants, even peaceful facilities and the fighting morals of the other nation. Since the destruction of the enemy war potential and fighting morale is the objective, war leads to the use of any means, fair or foul, I think.

In other words, the belligerent countries endeavor to demolish the war potential and morale

that I had objected and said so and so. I had to accept Mr. Suzuki's judgment as right and adapt my statement accordingly.

Consequently, I was sentenced unequivocally to death at the first trial. (Laugh) I had braced myself for that. When actually sentenced to such penalty, I mentally suffered a great deal, thinking: "I did not kill anybody, but I did have a hand in killing. Does that warrant the death sentence to me?" Anyway, that was essence of he case.

Remote Cause of the Incident

It was more than eight months before the occupation of Ocean after the beginning of the war. Why were the lepers and helpless islanders not resettled on Fiji or others? Why did BPC people escape, leaving islanders in the so-called battle-field? The land defied agriculture and had no water. Water supply was the first thing to be considered. It was outrageously against humanity that only the white men fled, leaving more than a thousand people on a small island equivalent to a mere one-tenth of Japanese Miyakejima Island. That was the remote cause.

The Japanese troops were often criticized, but they fought humanely when supplied well with food. They never did what might cause criticism. However, when all supply ships were sunk, leaving little food for the Japanese troops, they did not feel like sharing the little food with the POWs. Generally, the Japanese soldiers were traditionaly permeated with the idea that POWs were traitors and cowards.

Japanese soldiers died of malnutrition. It was naturally possible that POWs died of the same cause. However, the postwar trials seemed almost to suggest that POWs were heroes who should have been given a better treatment than soldiers. I think such treatment would be very odd.

On Nauru and Ocean, we used the few available boats to save the lives of the islanders. As is written in Sir Ellis' book, some islanders who had been moved to Kosrae, Ponape or other islands and who settled in Fiji after the war were accompanied by many children born on those islands. Some of them, Ocean islanders, brought up a lawsuit because they could not return to Ocean Island. That had nothing to do with us.

In any case, the postwar settlement in Fiji of islanders who had been resettled during the war and had children later was what every one of us wished. The last islanders were wanted to do so and Mr. Suzuki endeavored along this line. But his endeavors were futile.

The allied forces were clamorous on the problem of war criminals. It may have been motivated by the political objective of soothing their own nations, but their clamors were more than necessary. Some people say that Mr. Suzuki was wrong in gathering such information because he would not have been affected if he had known nothing. However, it was very important for the chief of an island to collect information.

I do not blame Mr. Suzuki for having allowed himself to be confused by the Allied broadcasts from Melbourne. The contents of such broadcasts were to blame. At war crimes trials, punishment could have been inflicted within the framework of the terms of unconditional surrender. Elated by victory, the victors clamored too much for thorough punishment of past military actions by ex post facto legislation. That clamor was largely responsible for the victimization of so many people, I suppose.

Outrageous Australian Troops

As I mentioned a little previously, our Nauru-Ocean troops were thrown into a malaria-infested area in the Solomons in November 1945 and demobilized in February 1946. In the intervening three months, about 50 percent of the troops died. It was a miserable state of affairs.

We had been taken from the Torokina concentration camp to Masamasa Island in the Solomons and thrown into a jungle. We were told to cut trees and build cottages or huts to provide against rain. The work progressed only slowly because we had almost no tools. In the first week when we had to sleep in the open, we caught cold in no time. We did not notice it at first, but there were lots of malaria mosquitoes. When nipa roofs were completed at last and we felt relief at the

would probably have been saved. However, Mr. Suzuki insisted as our policy for the trial that we should contend that we had caught and annihilated the islanders who had been about to revolt against us. Mr. Suzuki was stubborn in his insistence although it was known that there was one survivor.

When a meeting for preparations for the trial was held in the Rabaul concentration camp, I said to Mr. Suzuki: "Commander, your policy is no good because there is one survivor. Would you brace yourself for the worst and explain the reason for your judgment? Would you tell the court that your absolute order was responsible for the incident and that the company leaders and lower soldiers are not responsible for it?"

However, Mr. Suzuki said: "That would not do. Moreover, the execution of islanders was decided in connection with wartime naval operations. If there is no justifiable reason, the honor of our Navy will be affected." No one could object to such an argument.

The Potsdam War

I thought so. As I will tell you later, war crimes trials followed an unreasonable line of thinking. They were pervaded by hatred and a vindictive grudge. Therefore, such trials were a kind of war, the Potsdam War. Actual hostilities ended with the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration. After that Japan was deprived of her independence and sovereignty and placed under strict military occupation. Japanese citizens and soldiers overseas were forced to lead a precarious life. Numerous people became victims. At such war trials, the other side unilaterally imposed its values on the accused and successively pronounced sentences of capital punishment. It was a sort of battle, I think.

In my opinion, the Japanese were plunged into the Potsdam War willy-nilly in a completely passive manner. Their only wish was the recovery of the sovereignty of their country. They had to bear the unbearable until that wish was fulfilled. Might is right. In the postwar years the so-called Japanese intellectuals spread an argument which seemed as if to liken the allied forces to God and our own forces to a Devil incarnate and urged a general confession on our part. Such a line of thinking is certainly possible as an abstract, pure idea, but the actual situation was far from it.

For example, the experience of my military unit shows that the Australians did to us more than we did to them. As Mr. Nakajima writes in his short essay, 30 or 40 percent of the Japanese troops who had been on Nauru or Ocean and detained on the Solomons under Australian jurisdiction died. Why?

Because of their malaria policy. They took away the malaria drug from the Japanese POWs and prohibited the possession of food within their jurisdiction. They took away all drugs, saying that such drugs would be given without fail. Then they put the POWs in one of the worst malaria-infested areas in the world and did not give them the specific drug. Under this policy, even the strongest man would have died.

Some people interpret the policy as something accidental for which the commandant of the 67th Garrison and liaison officer Hashiba were to blame. It was not so, I think. The commandant and others were POWs infected with malaria. I think the blame falls on the managing side. Nonetheless, the commandant should have reported it upon his return to Japan, for hundreds of his men died after the war.

However, he might have lacked the courage to report on the Allied atrocities because the stern military occupation of Japan had just begun. On the other hand, the Japanese Government might have had no ear for such a report. The victor nations held war crimes trials in the name of justice and humanity, but I think they formed one phase of the Potsdam War until the conclusion of the peace treaty.

Mr. Suzuki's mention of the Navy's honor is now felt to be anachronistic, but it sounded good and realistic at that time.

As I said before, we made an agreement on what we should say at the trial. Although my standpoint was different from that of the firing squad, I could not tell a different story. Therefore, it was out of the question for me to tell the court

Regarding war crimes, Mr. Suzuki wondered what would happen if the victor nations sat in judgment after the war on what had been done during the war. There had been few events of great consequence in the days of Mr. Suzuki – to say "few events of great consequence" may be an exaggeration, I concede. There was one great event that lingered in his memory. It was the mercy killing of the previously mentioned lepers.

After the fall of Makin and Tarawa, Ocean Island was completely isolated. Neither medical supplies nor food was expected to arrive any more. When this became fully known, it was concluded that even the healthy islanders, much less the lepers, could not be taken out of the island. The islanders themselves hated the lepers and would not approach them. The patients were kept in their bedrooms in a pitiable manner. The mercy killing of the lepers with potassium cyanide took the native doctor's counsel into consideration. The Japanese medical unit had something to do with the killing and Mr. Suzuki had it in mind.

It is nothing but my speculation. For he said nothing about the reason for his final decision to execute the islanders.

As mentioned in Sir Ellis' book, a few islanders had been executed with electric barbed-wire entanglements. Sir Ellis writes that those who had merely pilfered food were driven to bay and killed. But this is not true. There were two or three condemned criminals among the islanders. They were incorrigible and often committed robberies and murders. It was they who were executed with wire entanglements.

The story of this incident spread among the islanders after all. They knew of it. For his part, Mr. Suzuki probably thought that matters were not limited to him and that it was unbearable to undergo a war crimes trial owing to inhabitant complaints of wartime military activities.

On the other hand, Mr. Suzuki heard short-wave broadcasts that war criminals would be subjected to a thorough investigation and that those who had treated inhabitants or POWs badly would be punished severely. This announcement was a great annoyance to the persons concerned. The man at the top presumably thought, "I myself don't mind, but what will come about if other people of my unit get involved?" In retrospect, I think that the conventional principles of international law should have been duly observed instead of such propaganda. At that time, however, he was scared.

Islander Excution Ordered

At an officers conference immediately after the war, Mr. Suzuki said he would like to execute the islanders. Because I was concerned with the islanders and also because I guessed that Mr. Suzuki's remark had something to do with the kiling of the lepers, I spoke out first. "It will be all right to keep the islanders alive. It is more advisable not to kill them," I said "What shall we do in case of failure?"

The other officers and subcommissioned officers there made no comment on my opinion and expressed neither view on Mr. Suzuki's intention. The meeting wound up after settling other matters. Two days later, I was suddenly summoned at night. Mr. Suzuki handed me a piece of paper and said, "Hand over the islanders to the units, as shown on this paper. This is your last duty on the matter."

Because of the problems of food and clothing for the islanders, I took care of them while working as a paymaster. I was a sort of welfare officer for them. Although some islanders had already been assigned to particular units, others had to be assigned daily according to daily needs. Japanese rank-and-file soldiers daily carried out jobs for the islanders: the Japanese boiled rice, made rice balls and added boiled, dried and salted shark meat so that they could hand them as breakfast and lunch to the islanders leaving for work.The food was the compensation for work.

Mr. Suzuki had consulted senior deck officer Sakuma before making a final decision, I suppose.

After all, my duty ended there. The rest was execution by a firing squad acting on an order. Who were to carry out the execution when, where and how were not made known to me.

If I had explained my position at the trial, I

outwardly, but no one could know what they thought inwardly. That was the general situation.

At that time an islander, Nabetari by name, escaped together with his six pals. It was after the middle of 1944. I was terribly shocked. Trusted islanders escaped with arms and valuable canoes. Canoes wore out, but we had no means for building new ones. They were valuable property for fishing. They took away three such canoes. Mr. Suzuki's distrust of the islanders was decisively increased by this incident, I think.

I knew for the first time from Sir Ellis' book that Nabetari and his party were carried away by the east-to-west Equatorial Ocean Current. They apparently wanted to go to Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands, but they drifted. Nabetari is said to have reached the Admiralty Islands while the remaining five islanders seem to have lost both their lives and canoes somewhere. Nabetari narrowly escaped death and was taken to Tarawa. He told the enemy with amazing accuracy how the Japanese troops were deployed, where military supplies and others were hidden, where electrical hedgehogs were located, and so on.

At a certain point in time enemy bombing became awfully accurate. Districts which had never been bombed, places where covered machine-gun placements existed, and others which we badly wanted to defend against enemy bombing were now selectively bombed. Piecing together information, I think that the enemy chose its targets in a different manner, namely on the basis of information from Nabetari.

In any case, the escape of Nabetari and others was unfavorable to the islanders as a whole, I think, in view of what happened afterward.

Mr. Suzuki did not rebuke me directly, but his attitude suggested that he mentally said: "Didn't I tell you so? Outrageous!" The islanders were allocated as workers to the companies and were not under my direct control. Therefore, his attitude toward me did not go beyond "Didn't I tell you so? They can't be trusted." But the company and platoon leaders who directly supervised the islanders must have been sternly reprimanded for lack of attention.

Effect of War Criminal Punishment Propaganda

In the state of utter isolation the troops grew pumpkins. Enemy raids were limited to periodical air raids, a situation which was different from that on Nauru. Ocean had two radar units and served as a kind of feeler. Although the island was an unsinkable radar base, the lack of electric power and spare parts made the radar systems useless. There was no airfield and the island had little strategic value. Therefore, the enemy did nothing but two or three bombardments by a submarine and small-scale air raids. The Japanese troops and the islanders were bent on pumpkin culture to keep themselves alive.

In 1945 the war situation got worse and worse. Food ran shorter, as did oil and sulfuric acid. We were in the worst circumstances. The lack of sulfuric acid made the batteries useless. We rotated the power generator for a certain period of time, about 15 minutes, at night to communicate with the Fourth Special Base Unit, if I am not mistaken. We reported on the current state of affairs and received information on the general situation. Mr. Suzuki, who I said had an intelligence officer-type talent because of his former work in the communication field, listened to short-wave broadcasts. In 1945 he monitored enemy propaganda and others.

Immediately before and after the end of the war Mr. Suzuki seemed to listen to news reports on the progress of negotiations between Japan and the allied countries via Switzerland for the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration and others. He occasionally imparted the news to us.

Most shocking to Mr. Suzuki were, among others, the A-bomb dropping and the war criminal punishment propaganda, it appeared to me.

About the dropping of atomic bombs, he declared: "It is against the laws of war. If the enemy does such a thing, we are free to do anything. We shall slay all POWs. The Japanese Government should base its negotiations against a third atomic bombing on such conditions." It was a very positive utterance which probably should have been expected of a soldier.

nuisances?" But it could not be helped.

Last Supply Boat Sunk

In September the enemy bombed Makin and Tarawa twice in a big way and produced agreat misery.

As I said a while ago, a drum foxhole could save you if you did not receive a direct hit. A seemingly fine air-raid shelter was uselss. It simply collapsed. An air-raid shelter in the sandy ground could not withstand a direct hit.

For this reason, the dead and the injured were innumerable. Probably because of the Third Special Base Unit's request to the Fleet Headquarter, a hospital ship, the *Muro Maru*, arrived in September and took in those injured by the bombings. The hospital ship called at Ocean Island for a short time to take in the invalids. It would have been best if she had taken in the remaining islanders as well. Although it was requested, the request was rejected on grounds that she was a hospital ship.

While Makin and Tarawa were subjected to large-scale bombings, Ocean was not bombed so heavily. However, Nauru had an airfield and was bombed on a considerable scale. I think it was at such a time that the *Shinshu Maru* was sunk as a specified target.

After the departure of the hospital ship, the war situation in the Gilbert area became critical. Expecting that food supply would be absolutely impossible, the Fourth Fleet arranged to have the *Minato Maru* fully laden with food unload part of it at Nauru and the rest at Ocean. Unfortunately, however, the ship was spotted by several enemy plane and sunk by bombing where it was dimly visible to us. It was a small freighter of a little over 1000 tons. The skipper was seriously injured, but the seven or eight remaining crew members were uninjured. First Lieutenant Jiro Sakata, a Student Origin Deck Officer went to their rescue on a Daihatsu, returning to Ocean Island carrying the skipper with his right leg amputated and the other seamen. After all, the valuable food was swallowed by the sea. It was the last time we saw a Japanese ship.

In due course November came and the battle of Makin-Tarawa began. After that, the Japanese lost their islands one after another – Kwajalein in February 1944, followed by: Peleliu, Saipan, Guam, Iwojima and eventually the Philippines and Okinawa. Nauru and Ocean were completely set at naught.

My Contemporaries Died in Succession

Here, allow me to wander away a little from the subject. When the *Mutsu* blew up and sank, the *Fuso* and my warship rescued the survivors. Three officers in the same class as mine had been on board the sunken battleship, but their names were not found in the lists of survivors prepared by the rescuing warships. The three of them had apparently died. On Tarawa Island, too, there were three officers in the same class as mine. This is why I read Rear Admiral Shibazaki's pathetic telegrams preceding his glorious death with such worried and grieved feelings.

On Kwajalein there were eight officers in the same class as mine. They died in the last ditch, too.

We were naval paymasters who had been educated only for a short time. And we shared the same fate. I lost my contemporaries with the *Mutsu*, on Tarawa and Kwajalein. Once I had felt like working aboard a big ship like the *Mutsu* to fight gallantly instead of serving as chief paymaster for a mere detachment, or like working gloriously as a pay-officer of a special base unit. After all, I escaped death because I was in some other post.

But it did not mean a happy end. An awful thing followed.

Escape of Nabetari and Others

Some islanders died of a disease or from enemy bombing. Those islanders who survived till the war ended were relatively obedient. Although some of them were wicked or eccentric, even they were not too bad as assistants to Japanese troops. For about two years from September 1943, the island remained in complete isolation. Meanwhile, food almost gave out. Water ran short. Medical supplies were exhausted. The islanders remained unchanged

over from the outside. The Australians had even built a leprosarium. But they themselves took fligt.

Why didn't they move the islanders to Fiji or thereabouts? They had ample time for that. Maybe they thought that it was not necessary to take the islanders away from the island because they would be a great encumbrance to the Japanese occupation force. It might be a logical conclusion, but from our view it was very inhuman to desert so many people in a barren battlefield.

I referred to Ocean Island as a "fateful" island. The cause of the fate arose there.

Japanese Began Transferring Islanders

In any case, Ocean Island was inhabited by many underfed islanders after the Japanese occupation in August 1942. When the war situation deteriorated, Mr. Toyama, who succeeded Mr.. Taniura as commander, consulted with the Fourth Fleet and the Third Special Base Unit to secure boats for transporting the islanders to Ponape, Kusaie (Kosrae), Truk or some other larger island with cultivated fields. If they remained on Ocean, they would hamper the Japanese troops in case of a battle. Besides, they had to be fed with what little food we possessed. It meant a great burden on us. Moreover, there was little water.

Water could be made abundantly from the sea, you might say. But we were short of oil and could not afford to ration water to the islanders. Therefore, it was concluded that the only way to keep the islanders alive was to transport them to some other island. This conclusion began to be acted upon in spite of great difficulties in the days of Mr. Toyama. There was a general atmosphere of opposition: "Do you understand what you are saying? It is preposterious to demand boats for islander transportation now at a time when the enemy is seriously thinking of a frontal breakthrough." But we managed to remove the islanders in small numbers to the outside, beginning in early 1943.

Some of them went to the neighboring island, Nauru, where the same situation prevailed, I heard. They might have been to be sent elsewhere after a short stop at Nauru, or they might have been landed on Nauru for shipping operation reasons. Anyway, it was out of the question and offered no solution to send Ocean islanders to Nauru with a view to saving their lives.

In view of the fact that Nauru itself was turning out its inhabitants, the landing of Ocean islanders there should have been due to some mistake. It might be that the islanders kept waiting for the next hoat were finally deprived of the opportunity for further transportation. Or maybe the islanders were transported to Nauru in small groups by the 67th Garrison's *Shinshu Maru* or the like so that a larger vessel could carry away all the massed groups together to some other island without calling at Ocean frequently.

In any case, my own unit and the 67th Garrison took great pains for the islanders from a humanitarian viewpoint although we were busy daily preparing for combat.

As I said earlier, when I arrived at Ocean aboard the *Shinshu Maru* in August 1943, there still were 300 or so islanders. Mr. Suzuki arrived at his post in mid-August, a little later than I. The remaining islanders included a small number of women and children.

We thought that they should not be kept on the island. It was before the enemy came to Gilbert. The enemy came to Gilbert in November. Large-scale bombing had begun in September. Just before the pressure of the war situation became heavy, we managed to obtain a small boat and got the women, children and the aged on board. The boat went north to Kusaie Island or thereabouts, I think. Left behind were some 140 young islanders, the cause of the later trouble.

Mr. Suzuki persistently negotiated for another voyage of the boat. The war situation became awfully severe. Makin and Tarawa were subjected to two or three large-scale bombings which were preceded and followed by small-scale daily bombings. The enemy was expected to attempt landing at any time. Finally, the higher command told us that the transport for the last 140 or so could not be made available to us.

I remember that Mr. Suzuki was hopping mad, saying, "What do they want to do with these

with palm leaves, lovable and beautiful. Lodges with red or green roofs stood here and there. They were probably the homes of the managers of phosphate rock quarrymen because the island produced phosphate. I landed with the impression that it was a truly dreamy island looking like the Treasure Island, really a quiet good island. As a matter of fact, both Nauru and Ocean were very hard to live on.

Island Short of Water and Food

Probably, the sea bottom of the old days rose and formed Nauru and Ocean, on which seabirds dropped guanos for tens of thousands of years. Meanwhile, coral reefs stuck to the guanos, giving the present shapes to the islands. The guanos of seabirds were changed into rocks by light and heat in a long time. When treated with sulfuric acid, the rock becomes a very valuable fertilizer. However, phosphate itself clings to the rock and does not help any plant grow.

Palm trees, which are strong enough to grow on a sandy beach, take root on such rocks and grow little by little. Although palm trees grew thick on the beach and at the center of the island, no other useful plant managed to grow.

Mangoes or breadfruit trees which the natives living there from old days had specially grown by gathering surface soil remained. The soil did not permit the usual spread of roots. The surface soil was 10 cm thick at best. Usually, there was little surface soil. When the ground was dug, a rock emerged but no water.

However, the occurrence of valuable phosphate rocks induced Britain to establish a phosphate company a half century ago. The British Phosphate Commission (BPC), for which Sir Ellis worked, was engaged in resources development. On other South Sea islands such as Fiji and Gilbert and other South Pacific islands excluding New Caledonia, there hardly were industrial resources except tourism or fishery resources. Only Nauru and Ocean had industrial resources, in which I think considerable investment had been made.

There stood dozens of bungalow type houses and each of them was equipped with a 30- or 40-ton water tank. No water was available except rainwater.

Although there was a period called the rainy season covering two or three months of the year, a rainless rainy season was not rare. A drop of water was as valuable as a drop of blood. Drought was not occasional but perennial on that island. It is no exaggeration. There were two or three squall months in each year. The squalls were stored.

In peace time there had been oil used to operate some equipment which turns sea water into fresh water. In addition, fresh-water tankers had come frequently to supply water. All this became impossible in war time. The islanders had no alternative but to depend on natural water collected in the drums or tanks in their homes.

BPC Left Its Employees and Their Families Behind

Crops do not grow without water. If Ocean Island is isolated, the food problem arises first of all.

Nauru and Ocean were occupied about eight months after the war had begun. It was far from speedy. The occupation of Nauru and Ocean took place in August 1942, according to records. The Taniura unit is said to have occupied Ocean after bloodless landing by about 40 troops. When Mr. Taniura landed, many islanders still remained and were in a panic. They were apparently eating bit by bit the food left by the British Phosphate Commission (BPC), but they were so numerous that the food could not be distributed to all of them. I heard that when Mr. Taniura landed, the situation was such that a riot might occur at any time.

To make matters worse, there was a leprosarium for about 40 patients. The islanders did not know what to do about it. It appeared that one or two native doctors took care of the inmates with scanty medical supplies. It was awful. How inhuman Australia was eight months after the beginning of the war! I thought.

To that small rocky island where farming or crop cultivation was impossible, Australia brought many outside islanders for work on phosphate. People other than the native were brought

When one blow was confirmed, the military trial in Rabaul sentenced the accused to three years. The Japanese soldiers standing trial had been beaten while being educated and thought nothing of beating. Therefore, they admitted that they had beaten Indians in such-and-such ways for such-and-such reasons. When the accused admitted three blows with good grace, he was sentenced to ten years on grounds that his admission agreed with the accuser's testimony.

Even when a beaten auxiliary had died of malaria or some other cause involving no violence, his comrade-in-arms might charge that a Japanese soldier had killed him by beating him several times. If the accused pleaded that he had not killed the auxiliary, who had died of a disease but had been beaten three times before for some reason, the accused was sentenced to death, yes, certainly death.

That was how things came to pass. It was a very unreasonable trial. All cases were like that, as is borne out by the book entitled *"The Rabaul Military Tribunal"* wirtten by a still living former Japanese staff officer in Rabaul. Exactly what Lieutenant Commander Suzuki had predicted took place there.

The Indian auxiliaries acted in such a manner to defend themselves. Britain and the United States punish treachery severely. If the Indian auxiliaries had not said that they had been forced to work as auxiliaries against their will and that they had been treated badly, they were regarded as having co-operated with the Japanese of their own will. Then they would have been given a hard time in their native country. Little wounder that they turned against us.

Lieutenant Commander Suzuki believed that even seemingly peaceful natives or islanders were absolutedly hostile. It was his starting point. Reviewing my subsequent experiences, I think his view was right.

Aarrival at My Post on Ocean Island

I seem to have entered the main subject after the *Mutsu*'s sinking by explosion. To return, although I was ordered in early July 1943 to transfer to the 67th Garrison, a considerable difficulty in transportation delayed my arrival at my post on Nauru via Truk until toward the end of July.

Then the Chief Paymaster told me: "There is a detachment on Ocean and a post office has been set up. They say they badly need a payofficer. I want you to go to Ocean at the end of July or in early August after seeing how things stand on Nauru." I complied and stayed on Nauru for about a month.

Nauru had had an airfield since the days of the bitter battle in the Solomons, particularly Guadalcanal, so that the operation there could be supported by support troops and aircraft. Therefore, there was a large force on Nauru. In addition to the garrison, there were Yokosuka Special Landing Party No. 2 and a construction unit from Yokosuka – or shall I say a facilities unit? Civilian workers of this unit totaling hundreds were working for airport construction. All in all, the Garrison, Yokosuka Special Landing Party No. 2 and the Facilities Unit formed a large force of over 3,000. In addition, there were many islanders and others, I reckon.

While staying on Nauru for about a month, I was plagued by the dengue fever and an amebic diarrhea and remained almost idle every day. The Chief Paymaster was a Keio University graduate and two classes above me in the Navy. He was a good-natured gentle employee of the Bank of Japan. After the war he was President of the Chugai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. for a long time and has become Chairman recently. The Chief of General Affairs Section was a lieutenant paymaster, one class above me. In the Yokosuka Special Landing Party No. 2 was the Chief of General Affairs Section of the same class as I, I was an element for Ocean Force.

On day before sunset in August I boarded a bonito fishing boat, *Shinshu Maru*, belonging to the Garrison. It was a small boat of about 100 tons and carried a sham cannon of wood at her bow. On board the boat I reached Ocean at about noon the next day. Drawing near the island, I found it much smaller than Nauru, cozy, luxuriant

We had been under the strict regulations of the Naval Penal Code, the Imperial Instructions to the Soldiers and others. When the problem of islander execution came up, I disagreed even with the commander. I want to dwell on this later. Although I disagreed, there was a sharp difference between the commander and a mere payofficer in the method of collecting information and in the views of the past and the future.

Hostility of the Natives

I took the view that even if the islanders were left alive, they would not turn against us and complain to the victor of our wartime actions. But the commander thought differently and showed a different judgment. The commander was Nohoomi Suzuki, Lieutenant Commander. He was a "nice boy" and about three years older than I. He is shown in the photograph of the surrender ceremony published in the Journal of the Pacific Society, No. 31. Mr. Suzuki sits in the middle of the photograph. He was a typical naval officer and had a clear head. He was a communication specialist, not an artillerist etc. Specializing in communication, he had led the life of what is now called the intelligence officer. Before service with the 67th Garrison, he had been with the garrison in Penang.

He had told me many accounts of his troublesome service in Penang. He seemed to have been Commander of Guards, that is, a naval police commander. Penang was such a big city that I suppose that the Commander of Guards must have had a considerable hand in the regulation of civilian affairs. The explosion of a Japanese freighter, arts of terrorism and the like seemed to have happened there. In any case, Lieutenant Commander Suzuki took the view that the natives were hostile and should never be trusted.

I grew up in town and studied internaional law in college. Accordingly, I tended to think that there should be a humanitarian viewpoint, from which all natives are not regarded as hostile. I was reproached by my superior for it. However, I realized later that what Lieutenant Commander Suzuki had said was right.

As Sir Ellis' book introdced by Mr. Nishio says, some fifty islanders were given training in rifle-shot. If the enemy landed ashore, our small 600-man garrison would need additional manpower whether for shell transportation or for liaison between positions. At one time volunteers from among the islanders were given a firing practice as auxiliaries.

Lieutenant Commander Suzuki showed some reluctance to it, but I carried it off, asserting that it was uneconomical to feed them for nothing instead of using them as auxiliaries after a little training. According to Sir Ellis, the survivors said they thought of firing at the Japanese at a crucial moment. Lieutenant Commander Suzuki was right in thinking that it was certain that the natives were hostile enough to turn against us at a crucial moment.

When I was taken to Rabaul to undergo a war crimes trial, I found that most of the war crime cases in the Rabaul area had to do with Indian auxiliaries. These Indian auxiliaries were those Indian troops who had been taken prisoner in Shingapore and elsewhere and sworn to fight as auxiliaries for the Japanese under Sarato Chandra Bose. There were numerous Indian auxiliaries in Rabaul where they performed their auxiliary duties. After the war all of them turned against the Japanese.

All cases in Rabaul were based on complaints like this: when an Indian had died of malaria, his pal charged that the victim had been beaten to death by a Japanese so-and-so of such-and-such a place. The cases were different from mine and the accused were very pitiable. One blow usually resulted in three years' imprisonment.

In wartime, food ran short and work became hard. This caused quarrels between Japanese soldiers and Indian auxiliaries. The former sometimes beat the latter. Since we ourselves had been beaten very frequently when being educated, it was quite possible that the Indians, whom we could not afford to treat as our guests, had been hit and kicked by Japanese troops. When food became scarce, some Indian auxiliaries may have died because of the poor ration or malnutrition, but Japanese troops, too, died for the same reason.

expected that the enemy, which had taken Guadalcanal, would strike somewhere before the Japanese recovered from the serious attrition. The prevalent view guesses at the Central Pacific breakthrough and regarded the attack on Attu as a feint operation.

In short, a frontal breakthrough beginning at the South Sea islands and extending to the Philippines and then Okinawa was considered more likely than the offensive from the south or the north. I remember hearing such a prediction in the gun room or elsewhere.

In May Attu was invaded by the enemy and our Combined Fleet got fluttered. The First Fleet including the *Nagato, Mutsu* and others should rush to the sea area north of Attu, it was planned. Toward the end of May the Fleet's vessels were ordered to assemble at Hashirajima anchorage area. When my ship was at the island, the *Mutsu* exploded and sank on June 8.

The *Tatsuta, Fuso* and one or two destroyers happened to be present near the *Mutsu* at the time of the incident. Only the *Tatsuta* and the *Fuso* were within one kilometer from where the *Mutsu* blew up and sank. It was just at noon and we were about to eat lunch when a powerful blast hit our ears. I heard no sound of explosion. A haze hung over the sea and visibility was zero. Only a tremendous black smoke was seen to be rising in the far-off sky. Something had happened, we felt, and rushed to the area, where we found the *Mutsu* already submerged except her stern which was visible slightly above the sea.

The *Tatsuta* and the *Fuso* quickly picked up the survivors, who totaled about dozens in excess of 300. The crew had numbered hundreds over one thousand including 300 junior students in a naval pilot training school who were to graduate soon. The number of rescued crew members was small indeed and quite a few of them were seriously injured.

The incident was a naval top-secret and we were not allowed to land anywhere. For a month we went to and fro on the sea. The attack at Attu was called off. Between ourselves we said: "Now that we have come across the *Mutsu* incident, we cannot live on. All of us will be driven to the front line." (Laugh)

Assigned to the 67th Garrison

Before long I received a telegram notifying me that I was assigned to the 67th Garrison. I investigated and found that the garrison would bear the brunt of the enemy's frontal breakthrough. Because it was a transfer, my ship called at Tokuyama for a moment, discharged me and went away to I did not know where. Several months later, the *Tatsuta* had its duty changed from troop training in the Eleventh Torpedo-Boat Flotilla to troop transport. Ordinary merchant vessels from Yokosuka to Truk had been attacked so often by the enemy that warships had to take over troop transport and shuttle between Yokosuka and Truk.

The *Tatsuta* was sunk instantly off Hachijojima Island at midnight. All the crew including the captain were reported as missing. No one was rescued.

If I had stayed on board without being transferred from the *Tatsuta*, I would have suffered the same fate, I think.

Did I have a very bright fate after moving to the 67th Carrison? It was not necessarily so. (Laugh) Ocean Island was a truly fateful island. By "fateful" is meant this: some cause in the flow of this human life brings about a certain unexpected result as a fate.

There was no enemy raid, land combat or mutual killing over there, but many islanders were sacrified or executed. On account of that all the officers from the commander down were later designated as war criminals. The company commanders and some platoon leaders were sentenced to death and most platoon leaders and myself to imprisonment for definite periods.

I felt it preposterous that I, as a member of the Japanese armed forces was called criminal. But the Australians took the position that if I had not wanted to be called criminals, I should have revolted among the Japanese troops. It was a trial by a victor nation upholding different values. There was nothing we could do about it.

document centering around Sir Albert Ellis' book, both of which brought back my memories of the past though in a hazy form.

In those days the Japanese naval troops on Nauru and Ocean formed a single unit called the 67th Garrison. Nauru and Ocean were about 160 miles apart from each other. The troops on Ocean were a detachment of those on Nauru. The appointed commander on Ocean was entrusted with almost full power in the defense of the island.

About 240 miles to the east of Ocean are the Gilbert Islands centering around Tarawa and Makin (Butaritari) islands. These now form an independent country calling itself the Republic of Kiribati. In those days there was the Third Special Base Unit on Tarawa. The 67th Garrison was said to be under its command.

After all Japanese troops on Makin and Tarawa died in action as you know, the garrison was placed under the Command of the Sixth Special Base Unit on Kwajalein further north. This Kwajalein, too, fell in February 1944, if I remember aright. Then the garrison was placed under the command of the Fourth Special Base Unit on Truk. In this way the so-called higher headquarters changed in succession.

In any case, the troops on Nauru and Ocean were just left behind. The enemy ignored them while the friends forsook them. In September 1943 Ocean Island was completely isolated from the outside world. In November of the same year the enemy raided Makin and Tarawa. Immediately before it, an enemy task force had caused through destruction there. They had been hit by blanket bombing.

Coral reef atolls like Makin and Tarawa are very simple in terrain – mainly a flat sandy plain where when you land on this-side beach, you can see the sea on the other side, however wide the intervening plain. In the battle in the Makin-Tarawa area we could monitor on Commander Shibazaki's telegrams from the outset of the enemy raid. The telegrams clearly depicted a very miserable situation.

Now everyone dug his own foxhole using a drum. It was personal protection against enemy bombing. In September 1943 the enemy carried out two big air raids. Blanket bombing was combined with naval bombardment. The air raids were preparatory to the enemy landing in November. The Japanese troops sustained serious damage to their fighting strength, but they fought doggedly to the end, hoping for the arrival of reinforcements. Finally, they chose to suffer an honorable death instead of surrender.

Mutsu Seen to Blow Up and Sink

I want to talk about Makin, Tarawa and others later. It was in early July 1943 that I was assigned to the 67th Garrison. I was to graduate from the Tokyo University of Commerce in March 1943, but the graduation was moved up by a half year, causing me to graduate in September 1942. I found employment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it was only nominal. I had to choose between the Army and Navy. I had passed an examination for short active service with the Navy and so I became a probationary naval paymaster on September 30. For four months from October 1942 to January 31, 1943, I received training at the Paymasters' School at the foot of the Kachidoki Bridge.

Upon graduation from the Paymasters' School in January 1943, I was assigned to the warship *Tatsuta*, the oldest cruiser in the Japanese Navy counted among naval curios. Nonetheless, she was still operating at the front line Solomon Seas. Together with another warship, *Tenryu*, the *Tatsuta* had been very active. However, the *Tenryu* had been sunk and the *Tatsuta* damaged seriously. Just when I received an order of assignment, the latter was at Maizuru for repairs. I boarded her at Maizuru.

Then the ship was released from the duties of the Eighth Fleet. Upon completion of her repairs at Maizuru, she assumed the post of the flagship of the Eleventh Torpedo-Boat Flotilla engaged in training the newly built destroyers and air-defense destroyers of *Tsuki*, *Nami* and other classes. While I was stayed in the Inland Sea of Seto till about summer, American troops landed on Attu. It was in May 1943. In those days it had been

WE FOUGHT THE POTSDAM WAR

Why Were the Gilbertese on Ocean Island Massacred?

by Yoshio Nara
Professor
Aikoku Junior College

The Pacific Islands Yearbook (15th ed.) writes as below on Banaba (Ocean) Island of Kiribati:

> The Japanese occupation began in August 1942. Most Europeans had then been evacuated, but there were about 700 Banabans on the island, plus 800 Gilbertese labourers and their wives and children. The Banabans and some of the Gilbertese were deported to Kusaie (Kosrae), in the Carolines. Other Gilbertese were sent to Nauru and Tarawa, but 200 were retained on Ocean Island to work as fishermen. All were treated badly and some died.
>
> After news of the Japanese capitulation reached Ocean Island in August 1945, the Japanese massacred all the remaining Gilbertese except one who escaped miraculously. This sole survivor later gave evidence at a war crimes trial at which the garrison commander and the quartermaster were sentenced to death.

What was the reason for that extremely odd incident in which the Japanese troops massacred the Gilbertese on Banaba Island after the war?

On May 21, 1987, the Pacific War History Study Group of the Pacific Society listened to the account of the incident told by Mr. Yoshio Nara, formerly Chief Paymaster of the Japanese Garrison on Banaba Island.

Because of the incident, Mr. Nara was treated as a war criminal and served time. In 1956 he served out his sentence and returned to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After long service with the Ministry during which he served successively as Ambassador to Cuba and then to Costa Rica, etc., Mr. Nara retired from the Ministry a few years ago.

Here is a translation of his speech before the Pacific War History Study Group. (Ed.)

I returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 1956 and devoted myself heart and soul to official duties there for about twenty-six years till my retirement four years ago. My memory of the past declined considerably because I wanted to lead a new life, forgetting bitter bygones as much as possible.

I am supposed to give the Society's members some informative talk mainly on my military service on Ocean (Banaba) Island. Executive Director Nakajima was kind enough to send me No. 30 and No. 31 of the Journal of the Society. They contained Mr. Nakajima's "*The Japanese Navy on Nauru and Ocean*" and Mr. Nishino's