

On this anniversary of V-J Day,
a reporter gives the view from Japan

The Way It Looked To Them

BY RICHARD JOSEPH

Take a good look at the photo on this page. It shows the Japanese delegation to the surrender ceremonies aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri*, Sunday, September 2, 1945. Its publication resulted in the first break in the American hatred of Japan that had been stoked by almost four years of bitter war.

What brought the change about was the face of the army officer in the second row, right. This was not the dehumanized military automaton that had become our stereotype of the Japanese enemy. Instead we saw a human being, suffering human emotions we could understand.

A few weeks ago I met this man in Tokyo; he told me what V-J Day was like for the Japanese, and he looked at the picture and tried to recall what he was thinking about when it was taken.

His name is Yatsuji Nagai. He's 64 and a grandfather, and he owns a chain of filling stations in and around Tokyo. But on V-J Day he was 44, the youngest major general in the Japanese Imperial Army, aide to General Yoshijiro Umezu, Chief of the Army General Staff, who signed the surrender document for the Japanese armed forces.

Like many Japanese, General Nagai doesn't like to talk about the war or the surrender, but mutual friends convinced him an interview would help American understanding of his people.

Since entertainment is a vital part of transacting almost any sort of business in Japan, we arranged to meet for drinks in the lobby of the New Japan Hotel.

The general's day

The general is a slender but solidly built man, balding, and with a small gray mustache. He speaks little English, so we talked mostly through an interpreter.

The morning of the surrender, he said, he got up before dawn at the pension where he was living near the War Ministry in Tokyo, breakfasted — although he had little appetite — and rode in a staff car to Yokohama.

"My wife and three small sons were in the country, in a village at the foot of Mt. Fuji. I wanted them away from the city and the bombings. Dawn came up while I was on the way to Yokohama. It was a gray day, and it seemed to get grayer as the morning wore on. At the Yokohama office of the Foreign Ministry, I met the other members of our delegation. There was For-



Surrender on the *Missouri*: General Nagai is at far right in second row, by rail

eign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and a young aide; Generals Umezu, Sugita and Miyazaki, others I don't remember — 11 of us in all. The Foreign Minister and his aide were wearing formal morning clothes with top hats and gloves; the rest of us were in uniform.

"Now the Foreign Minister and General Umezu are dead; Admiral Oka might be also. General Sugita still lives in Tokyo and is an officer of the Japanese Self Defense Force, General Miyazaki is retired and lives out in the country."

Aside from the customary bows and formal greetings, there was little conversation among the delegation members at the Foreign Ministry, where the officers left their swords and sidearms. They then drove to the Yokohama dock, where they were met by a U.S. Navy destroyer.

"That was about 6:45 a.m. and it was still very gray and gloomy. It was a long ride down Tokyo Bay past many units of the American fleet. It was almost nine when we reached the battleship *Missouri*."

The long fight

"The Foreign Minister had trouble climbing up the ladder. He had an artificial right leg as a result of a bomb thrown at him many years before by a Korean in Shanghai; and I remember thinking about how long we had been fighting with many people."

"He sat down at the table, took off his silk hat and gloves, and placed them on the table beside the surrender papers. I recall thinking that Mr. Shigemitsu's hair was getting thin in back, there was a bald spot. And his formal clothes somehow looked a little shabby."

"General Umezu signed next, for the Japanese armed forces. He signed standing up, the only one of the signers who didn't sit down."

A face he knew

"After our two representatives signed both documents, all the allied delegates did. It took some time and I looked across at all the Allied officers facing us. Suddenly I saw the face of a man I knew, a Chinese officer I had been friends with in China before the war. He gave me a small smile of recognition, and I thought about how

They were piped aboard by a boat-swain's whistle, but there were no salutes or any form of greeting from the stony-faced American and Allied officers awaiting them on the deck of the world's biggest battleship: 20 U.S. generals and admirals lined up in two rows against the superstructure, facing the rail. At a right angle to them were British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, Chinese, Dutch, French, Russian and other U.S. officers.

In front of the Allied delegation stood a table covered in green baize, on which were two bound documents: the surrender papers, one copy in English and the other in Japanese. Crew members of the *Missouri*, dressed in their whites, and photographers and correspondents were perched on gun turrets and parts of the superstructure to look at what was happening.

The Japanese delegates lined up in two rows facing the surrender table and the Allied officers. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu and General Umezu stood just in front of their delegation.

"All I heard was the word 'Japs' coming from the officers and the crew," he said. "It wasn't loud, but it cracked off like pistol shots. I could feel the hatred, and I remembered a Japanese proverb that a defeated man looks like a lamb being led to slaughter. That's the way I felt."

His hand trembled

"We stood at attention for a few moments and then General MacArthur appeared and began reading from a piece of paper he had in his hand. I couldn't understand much of what he was saying, but I was almost hypnotized by the trembling of the hand that held the paper. It was the emotion of victory; of course, because his voice was loud and firm, and his face fierce and determined. Aside from his voice, there was absolute silence, and I'll never forget that silence and the trembling of MacArthur's hand."

Nagai looked carefully at the surrender picture I had handed him. He had never seen it before, and when I told him he could keep it, he autographed a picture of him he had brought along — taken with Stalin when Nagai had been a young military attaché in the Soviet Union.

"I didn't know that what I was feeling during the surrender showed so strongly in my face," he said. "The others are impressive."

"I was thinking of many things. Mostly about my wife and sons, and what could (TO PAGE 18)

men are sometimes friends and sometimes enemies.

"Just before the end, there seemed to be some difficulty at the surrender table. Later I learned that it had been caused by some Allied representatives signing the Japanese copy on the wrong line, and the delay was just to straighten out the details."

"As the last Allied signer added his name, the sun came out and I thought maybe this was a sign that things would be better. There then numbers of Allied planes roared overhead, and all we could hear and feel was the noise of their engines."

"General MacArthur gave a sign that we were dismissed, and we marched back to the ladder and down into the destroyer again. At the Foreign Ministry office we were picked up our swords and parted without saying a word. I drove back to Tokyo and reported for work at the War Ministry, but that day there was no work." (THE END)

THE WAY IT LOOKED

(FROM PAGE 6) happen to them during the American occupation. I thought, too, that as an army officer I shared responsibility for the defeat; my responsibility now was to try to save the Japanese Empire and the Japanese people.

"We were there under orders from the Emperor, I thought. We must surrender because it is the wish and order of the Emperor, and we must carry out the wishes of the Emperor whatever we ourselves might feel."

"When General MacArthur finished speaking, the Foreign Minister, leaning heavily on his cane, signed the surrender on behalf of the Emperor."