

PLGK  
Naval War College

23 February 1933.

Japanese Mandated Islands - Information obtained from  
an American tourist by American Consul, Yokohama.

Dr. Louis J. Lipset, a retired American physician 62 years old (naturalized, Russian birth) living at Yokohama, has just returned from a trip to Davao, on a steamer of the N.Y.K., having visited both ways various islands of the Japanese mandated group.

During the course of the conversation Dr. Lipset remarked that he had learned from three foreign residents of the islands that fortification thereof is steadily progressing and has been carried on for over a year with the greatest possible secrecy. He mentioned the following individuals from whom he had obtained this information:

Mr. Tretanoff, a Russian who has lived in Yap for about seven years, and who has with him at present his wife, two daughters aged 18 and 24, and a small baby son. Mr. Tretanoff is very poor, and, speaking the native dialect well, makes his living recruiting native labor for the Japanese. He is never allowed to accompany the laborers to their work, but has learned from them that they are engaged in building great stone walls and in mounting cannon behind low elevations of land near the sea coast on the island of Yap.

Mr. Osmolosky, a Russian who owns a small store in Saipan, and who has a wife in Tokyo, gave similar information concerning Saipan and Palau.

Father John (or Juan) Ponce, a Spanish Catholic priest who makes frequent trips from island to island inspecting Catholic missions, further, though very briefly, corroborated the foregoing information.

The two Russians have been frequently urged by the police to leave the islands, but have begged to remain on the basis of their being very poor and having nothing to turn elsewhere for their livelihoods. However, they stated that they were being closely watched, and that their mail was always opened by the Japanese before they received it.

Dr. Lipset stated that the Yokohama office of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha had urged him not to make the trip, stating that the hotel accommodations and food were very poor, and that he would suffer from the heat. He described the pronounced suspicion with which the Japanese authorities in the islands viewed his visit, his baggage having been thoroughly searched on several occasions, his pictures examined, and a policeman having accompanied him almost continuously during his stay. However, he was courteously treated. Part of the time he traveled with an Englishman, an artist, who made a number of sketches and paintings of the islands, and who was also regarded by the authorities with much suspicion.

The information given herein, the result of the interview with Dr. Lipset, should be regarded primarily as the casual observations of a tourist who at no time had in mind any definite ideas of investigation. It is believed, however, that it is worth while to report his remarks, as of possible interest in the corroboration of other accounts.