

Diary Shows Tojo Resisted Surrender Till End

By MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press Writer

August 12, 2008

TOKYO - Japanese World War II leader Hideki Tojo wanted to keep fighting even after U.S. atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, accusing surrender proponents of being "frightened," a newly released diary reveals.

Excerpts from the approximately 20 pages written by Tojo in the final days of the war and held by the National Archives of Japan were published for the first time in several newspapers Tuesday.

"The notes show Tojo kept his dyed-in-the-wool militarist mentality until the very end," said Kazufumi Takayama, the archives curator, who confirmed the accuracy of the published excerpts. "They are extremely valuable."

Tojo, executed in 1948 after being convicted of war crimes by the Allies, was prime minister during much of the war. The notes buttress other evidence that Tojo was fiercely opposed to surrender despite the hopelessness of Japan's war effort.

"We now have to see our country surrender to the enemy without demonstrating our power up to 120 percent," Tojo wrote on Aug. 13, 1945, just two days before Japan gave up. "We are now on a course for a humiliating peace, or rather a humiliating surrender."

Tojo also criticized his colleagues, accusing government leaders of "being scared of enemy threats and easily throwing their hands up." Surrender proponents were "frightened by 'the new type of bomb' and terrified by the Soviet Union's entry into the war," he wrote.

The stridency of the writings is remarkable considering they were penned just days after the U.S. atomic bombs incinerated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing some 200,000 people and posing the threat of the complete destruction of Japan. At the time, Japan had begun arming children, women and the elderly with bamboo spears, in addition to the aircraft and other forces it had marshaled, to defend the homeland against a ground invasion.

The notes first came to the notice of the government when Tojo's defense lawyer, Ichiro Kiyose, gave them to the Justice Ministry. The ministry transferred the papers in 1999 to the National Archives, which made them available to researchers last year.

The papers add to Tojo's well-known writings penned while he was jailed in Sugamo Prison after Japan's surrender until his execution.

The diary shows Tojo remained convinced of the justice and necessity of Japan's brutal march through Asia and its disastrous decision to draw the United States into the war by bombing Pearl Harbor.

On Aug. 10 — the day after the Nagasaki bombing — Tojo wrote that the purpose of the war was to "maintain stability in East Asia and defend our country."

"Many soldiers and the people cannot bring themselves to die until the goal is achieved," he wrote.

Still, Tojo — who apparently wrote the diary for himself rather than as an argument to his contemporaries — said he would accept in silence the decision to surrender, which was made by government leaders in the presence of then-Emperor Hirohito.

"Now that the diplomatic steps have been taken after the emperor's judgment, I have decided to refrain from making any comments about it, though I have a separate view," Tojo wrote.

On Aug. 14, 1945, the day before Japan surrendered, Tojo wrote in a note addressed to a former aide that he took "moral responsibility for causing useless deaths, even though they were meant to be sacrifice for a great cause."

"I am determined to offer an apology with my death," he wrote, presaging his unsuccessful suicide attempt in September 1945 before he was arrested.