



HIROHITO

The Shōwa Emperor
in
War and Peace

IKUHIKO HATA



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HIROHITO: THE SHŌWA EMPEROR IN WAR AND PEACE



General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito photographed in the US Embassy, Tokyo, shortly after the start of the Occupation in September 1945. (See page 187)

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Ikuhiko Hata

NIHON UNIVERSITY

Edited by

Marius B. Jansen



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First published in 2007 by
GLOBAL ORIENTAL LTD
P.O. Box 219
Folkestone
Kent CT20 2WP
UK

www.globaloriental.co.uk

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ISBN 978-1-905246-35-9

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library

Set in Garamond 11 on 12.5 pt by Mark Heslington, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
Printed and bound in England by Athenaeum Press, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear

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The Author and the Book



Professor Ikuhiko Hata, born in 1932, is Professor of History at Chiba University* and a leading historian of contemporary Japan. After graduation from the University of Tokyo, he continued his studies at Harvard and Columbia, after which he served successfully as researcher at the Defence Agency, instructor at the Defence Institute, Chief Historian of the Financial History Research Division of the Ministry of Finance, and Professor of Takushoku University before accepting his present position.

He has been Visiting Fellow at Columbia and Princeton universities. His books published in Japan include 'Studies of Shōwa Military Fascism', 'The Sino-Japanese War', 'The Nanking Incident', 'The Rearmament of Japan' and 'The Enigmas of Shōwa History'. He has also compiled reference dictionaries and directories of the Imperial Army and Navy, the pre-war Japanese bureaucracy and a compendium of the political institutions, politics and leaders of major countries during the twentieth century.

Individual chapters of this book appeared in various historical periodicals in Japan between 1979 and 1983. They were published as a book by Kodansha in 1987, entitled *Hirohito Tennō itsutsu no ketsudan* ('Five Decisions by Emperor Hirohito'). It was subsequently republished (1994) by Bungei Shunju as *Shōwa Tennō itsutsu no Ketsudan* ('Five Decisions by Emperor Shōwa') in order to conform with the emperor's posthumous name, and with a new introduction, but the text continued to use the name Hirohito.

Professor Hata commented on an early draft of the translation, but he has not seen this final version or the substantive notes. Citations and specific references are from the original book by the

author, but substantive notes that help to place the material in historical and historiographic contexts have been added by the editor. The basic translation was done by David S. Noble, then at Princeton University, with financial support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Tokyo. I have edited freely, re-grouping some of the material in Chapter 3, and providing the English original for quotations the author supplied in Japanese.

MARIUS B. JANSEN
Princeton, 1995

* Today, Ikuhiko Hata is Emeritus Professor of History at Nihon University

JAPANESE NAMES

This book follows the Japanese convention of putting family name first, followed by the given name, except in the case of the author, which follows Western convention to facilitate general reference, including bibliographic databases.

Editor's Preface



As Emperor Hirohito's end approached, his life and times exercised increasing fascination for Japanese readers. Few countries have experienced more dramatic changes than Japan underwent during his reign of sixty-two years, and it is safe to say that no individuals have undergone the dizzying succession of roles that were his: symbol of early twentieth-century liberalism as a young monarch in the 1920s; divine ruler and focus of intense and emotional reverence, carefully nurtured in school and barracks, in the 1930s; supreme generalissimo reviewing one of the twentieth-century's great armies on his white charger during the Second World War; then, supplicant loser whose ancient black limousine threaded its way to the victorious enemy general's headquarters through the pot-holed streets of his once-proud capital; gradually emerging again as exhorter to democracy and exponent of family values for a newly-urbanized middle class, and ending finally as representative of one of the world's great capitalist powers in royal visits to the Western countries – so recently his sworn enemies. Earnest young man to demi-god, victorious chief to fallen symbol, hesitant visitor to serene patriarch: Hirohito mirrored in his life the vulnerability and strengths of his people.

In the emperor's closing days, the struggle to appraise his place in history began to take shape.¹ It was an inquiry long delayed, and one confronted by formidable difficulties. Pre-war and wartime nationalist mythology required that he be kept 'above the clouds'. Everything was done in his name, and yet nothing was done by him, lest he become capable of error. This squared in ironic ways

with the needs of General Douglas MacArthur's Occupation headquarters (SCAP). Once the decision had been made to maintain and use the imperial institution and Hirohito, enlisting his prestige and aura to reinforce and validate the radical social and economic reforms that the Occupation made, it was best to avoid close scrutiny of the emperor's role in what had gone before. The convenient fiction that he had been powerless and manipulated by ministers who misinformed him about the disasters they were bringing on their country served to insulate him from the scrutiny of the International Tribunal that met from 1946 to 1948 to allocate responsibility for the aggression and behaviour of Japan's military masters. Even after the verdicts were announced in 1948, when he was no longer as essential to American purposes, General MacArthur's fierce resistance to the idea of abdication served to keep him on the throne. Thus, a course that may have been a personal preference for the emperor was closed off by others. By the time of the resumption of Japan's sovereignty with the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, even Kido Kōichi, former Lord Privy Seal and once the emperor's closest adviser, wrote from prison to urge court officials to counsel abdication. Nakasone Yasuhiro, then a young member of the House of Representatives, advocated the emperor's abdication in a Diet interpolation.² But by then Hirohito was presiding with success over a reconstructed state. It seems clear that the position he was more or less forced to take in early post-surrender days restricted his room for manoeuvre thereafter.

The emperor's personal thoughts and inclinations remain shrouded in considerable ambiguity. In the immediate post-surrender days when he broke precedent by responding to four questions posed by a *New York Times* reporter, he seemed to place responsibility for Japan's failure to declare war before striking at Pearl Harbor on General Tōjō by saying that that had not been his intention. The suggestion that he was avoiding responsibility by placing it on his official advisers caused so much consternation that the Home Ministry tried to prevent publication of that response in Japan. Two days later, on 17 September 1945, when the emperor first visited General MacArthur, he took a different position by accepting full responsibility for everything that had been done in

his name. That account, however, has as its only source MacArthur, whose memoirs which were not published until 1964, and the general's account, which is not calculated to harm his own image in history, is marred by several questionable and some mistaken government decisions. This accords with the testimony of the many diaries of court officials that have appeared in recent years. True, the Meiji Constitution of 1889 had given the emperor exclusive control as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but those forces, too, were structured and bureaucratized. All matters of national defence were planned by the chiefs of staff who, after reporting to the emperor, transmitted them to the cabinet through the ministers of the army and navy. Additional advisory bodies, the Supreme War Council (made up of field marshals, fleet admirals, army and navy ministers, chiefs of staff, previous holders of those posts, and military councillors selected by the emperor from generals and admirals) and the Conference of Marshals and Fleet Admirals came into play. On the whole, these bodies reported to the emperor, but did not request decisions from him. Actual military decisions had been reached at Liaison Conferences between the Imperial Army and Navy. Those in turn had to be validated by Imperial Conferences, but those were largely ritual; the emperor remained silent, and responses to occasional questions posed by the head of the Privy Council did not constitute real discussion.

Hirohito had accepted those limitations, as was expected of him. On three occasions he had emerged with clear-cut personal opinions. At the very inception of his reign he had been appalled by the indiscipline involved in the Kwantung Army's arrangement of the assassination of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin, and his sharp questioning of Prime Minister General Tanaka Giichi had led to the cabinet's resignation. But soon afterwards, he recalled, complaints were making the rounds to the effect that unnamed senior statesmen and a palace cabal had brought the government down. Alarmed senior statesmen remonstrated with the young (he was twenty-six) emperor and stressed the restraint expected from a constitutional monarch. He, in turn, had resolved to keep a lower profile in the future.

On two later occasions, Hirohito had departed from this position. The first was in 1936, when young army rebels tried to force a

change in government by murdering senior statesmen and surrounding the palace. The emperor's role in suppressing this, the subject of Professor Hata's first chapter, could be explained by the fact that because of the absence of a prime minister, who had been thought to be murdered, it fell to him to govern. The other came in August 1945, when the cabinet was split on the manner of surrender and the prime minister turned to the emperor to ask him to decide.

We are left with puzzles that will probably never be resolved. Clearly, as Professor Hata and others have shown, Emperor Hirohito had immense power, but the condition of retaining it was judicious restraint in exercising it. His role in the normal procedures put in place by the Meiji Constitution made it unlikely that those powers would be tested. With the military, where his will was less explicitly restrained, lines of authority were also institutionalized in General Staff and command functions. It is clear that the military, and particularly the army, authorities frequently flouted his will. It is also true that his disapproval could blight a career, as seems to have been the case with Ishiwara Kanji, the key planner in the Manchurian Incident whose brash behaviour at a Palace function is recorded in the opening chapter. The summary of planning sessions before the occupation of French Indo-China, recorded in the papers of General Sugiyama Hajime, shows the emperor as an intelligent and worried participant, asking questions about the adequacy of the preparations and about the possible reaction of the democratic powers to that momentous step. But at other times, as with the reinforcement of Guadalcanal, Professor Hata shows that the emperor's opinion carried little weight with even field-grade officers at headquarters. Yet, as was seen in 1936 and again in 1945, the possibility of his intervention was always there.

In his monologue Hirohito pleaded constitutional restraints as explanation for his failure to intervene in 1941. 'In truth the (American) embargo on oil placed Japan in a dilemma', he said, and made the military call for war while it was still possible. 'Believing at the time that even if I opposed it, it would be pointless, I remained silent.' And yet, 'In hindsight, I probably would have tried to veto the decision for war if at the time I had foreseen the

future', but it would have been at the possible cost of *coups* and violence that would have made it impossible for him to act in the final crisis in 1945; Japan might have been even worse off than it was.

On the other hand, there is every reason to think that Hirohito shared in the national exultation for the initial victories as Japanese armies stormed through Asia. A flurry of rescripts and congratulatory statements greeted the news of Pearl Harbor, Singapore, the East Indies, Manila, Burma and the Coral Sea. In each case, the warriors were assured, *Chin wa fukaku kasbō su*, 'We are deeply gratified'.³ There is also evidence that he remained optimistic of a military victory that would provide leverage for negotiation on surrender long after it was realistic to do so, and that the slowness of his move towards the position of the peace faction, made without advance signals of any sort, lengthened the conflict and the casualty lists. It is also regrettable that Hirohito's failure, to the end of his days, to make a full and frank statement of regret and personal responsibility for what was clearly a share in Japan's military gamble can probably be related to the hardening resistance of his generation, and particularly of conservative political leaders, to do so.

As the war came to an end loyalist fanatics struggled with projects to preserve and reconstitute the imperial line in case the Allied Powers tried to abolish the imperial institution altogether. There is good evidence for the argument that the Occupation's decision not to do so was wise. One of Professor Hata's most interesting chapters, the third, details two parallel but unrelated plots, one led by army and the other by navy officers, for action to preserve and if necessary resuscitate the imperial line in the event the victors had decided to depose Hirohito. These have been little known before this work. The author has followed the mountain paths the conspirators took in the August heat of 1945 and interviewed some of the participants. Those involved ranged from self-important little men who returned to the obscurity they deserved, to Navy Captain, then Air Force General, Genda Minoru, who planned the raid that devastated Pearl Harbor and who, after Japan's surrender, on finding his project unnecessary, entered the new Self Defence Forces before making for himself a successful career in Japanese politics. Before his death in 1989, the year of

Hirohito's end, he had received the Legion of Merit for his contribution in rebuilding Japan's Defence Forces from a grateful United States government.

Another of the author's contributions is his focus on the contribution that Hirohito made to Japan in its post-war relations with the United States. Here Professor Hata, and others, are still in uncharted waters, for the records of the emperor's meetings with MacArthur, who was unaccompanied by an American interpreter, survive only in Japanese archives in accordance with MacArthur's request – and, needless to say, Japanese government inclinations. Professor Hata makes a strong case for the proposition that at a time when official Japan was limited in what it could say, ask and propose, and MacArthur was virtually inaccessible even to prime ministers, the emperor had a unique opportunity to involve himself. This was particularly important in the area of security. Through letters and visits from palace officials, and from the scraps of the conversations with MacArthur that filtered out to the world (in one case at cost to the interpreter of dismissal at the insistence of an outraged Occupation headquarters), we find the emperor expressing his doubts about the wisdom of Japan's renunciation of war in the new constitution, asking how Japan was to defend itself, and proposing American retention of Okinawa as a military base. It is quite understandable that these leaks were unwelcome to MacArthur, who had responded grandly that America would defend Japan the same way it would California and that they infuriated residents of Okinawa, the only prefecture Hirohito never visited on any of his many tours.

The notion of the emperor as an experienced and sagacious statesman, one able to tap into and relay the thinking of conservative Japanese leaders who had been sidelined by the Occupation's purges of the old elite, is of course at variance with both his public image and his proper constitutional role in the new order. Indeed, since these political initiatives were undertaken without consultation with cabinet ministers, they 'far exceeded the jurisdiction of a "constitutional monarch" prescribed in the Meiji Constitution which the emperor had been so emphatic in observing'.⁴ Against this it can be argued that the new 'order' could not really come into being so long as Japan lay prone at the victor's

feet, and that in the interim any effort to defend Japan's interests had to be carried on by quiet and indirect means.

It is furthermore important to show, as Professor Hata does, that this quiet intervention was taking place on both sides of the Pacific. In the United States, a 'Japan lobby' made up of former diplomats, lawyers and businessmen with Japanese experience was able to set up connections with court officials in an effort to counteract Occupation 'radicals' and Japanese progressives who might have taken some of the reforms too seriously. Indeed, more recently, some writers have suggested that the imperial court may have felt it necessary to by-pass even the government of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru as well as the SCAP headquarters of General MacArthur in order to guarantee Japan's security under the terms of the Security Pact which still stands as the cornerstone of the US-Japan alliance.

Quite without regard to this covert political activity, the public perception of emperor and throne underwent slow but profound changes in the post-surrender years. Initially, the combination of destruction, defeat and hunger made for something of a vacuum of confidence and interest – one the surrender government did little to fill by its suggestions that the long-suffering Japanese should show remorse for having failed their ruler. But gradually the imperial figure changed and improved. The process began with the tours in which Hirohito acquainted himself with his people and them with him. These began as awkward attempts at contact and gradually became highly successful instruments of public relations. While his grandfather, the boy Emperor Meiji, had been carried through the land as a special icon in the early years of Japan's nineteenth-century reformation, Hirohito's tours acquainted ordinary Japanese with a friendly, shy gentleman in conservative suits who struggled for questions about their welfare and encouraged them to do their best once more. Increasingly, the emperor referred to links of continuity between the reforms of his day and those of the Emperor Meiji's early years in a programme designed to link the new Japan with the best of its past. He stressed particularly the Charter Oath of 1868, which had promised the feudalism of that day that in the future things would be decided by 'public councils' as authorization for the new democracy.

The emperor also began to give occasional press conferences. At these his rather Delphic utterances, which avoided politics and controversy, revealed a friendly, patient patriarch who enjoyed watching *Columbo* mysteries with his family and who was an avid sumō fan. Gradually, the persona which had served as the focus for loyalty of Japan's vaunted 'family state' changed to become the symbol of the 'family man' for a newly-urbanized Japan finally able to enjoy the comforts of middle-class affluence. The persona once established, the emperor withdrew once more, not so much 'above the clouds' but into his marine biology laboratory and living quarters. Together with his handsome family he became a figure of consuming press and media interest and the subject of breathless books with titles like 'The sayings of the Emperor' and 'Your Majesty, If I Might Ask ...'

This was accompanied by a cautious reappearance on the international stage, where the respect accorded him also helped to raise his position in Japan. In 1973, future Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, then a cabinet member, had to fight off demands for his resignation when he suggested, on a visit to Iran, that the two countries were linked as monarchies. Taken to task for this breach of the popular sovereignty proclaimed in the new constitution, Nakasone apologized for what he admitted had been a 'careless and inaccurate statement'. But a few years later, when Hirohito travelled to Europe, President Nixon startled many Japanese by flying to Alaska to greet him on a stopover in Alaska and hailed him 'the first reigning emperor of Japan to set foot on American soil'. When writing of the emperor's formal visit to the United States in 1975, Edwin O. Reischauer used similar language. Some of the aura was returning, if not in Europe, where the popular reception was decidedly frosty, but certainly in America. Similarly, during the emperor's final illness, former President Carter journeyed to Tokyo to add his name to the lengthy list of well-wishers at the palace.

Hirohito's final illness began with his collapse in September 1988. His death would end the Shōwa Era, and he was posthumously renamed Emperor Shōwa. As he lay dying a curious mixture of new and old came into play. The Imperial Household Agency kept the public informed with daily bulletins of blood

transfusion and blood count with a precision that only modern technology could manage, but at the same time terminology long disused came into play with archaic expressions of awe and respect. Japanese were asked to observe self-restraint, or *jishuku*, a term last heard during the darkest days of the Second World War.

Neighbourhood festivals were cancelled one after another, along with weddings in November, the preferred month for matrimony. On field days at school, races began limply without the pistol shot ... In addition to the national promotion of 'self restraint', numerous preparations were made for the day of the unthinkable itself: movie theatres consulted department stores about whether to close and for how many days, or how to stay open and still convey mourning. Athletic facilities consulted movie theatres. Decisions were made about supervising audience conduct at the instant of the announcement, about the status of the game, depending on the innings.⁵

Television stations searched for appropriate programming and video rentals soared.

The emperor lingered on beyond the baseball season, however, and his death was announced on 7 January 1989, a Saturday morning with schools in winter recess, the holiday rush over for the stores, and markets closed. Now came forty days of preparation for the state funeral, which received the designation of *bōgyō*, a term reserved for emperor and empress, dowager-empress, and grand dowager-empress, and adopted by all newspapers except the two on Okinawa and the Communist *Red Flag*.

The services combined the present with the past. With the disestablishment of State Shinto, Hirohito's disclaimer of divinity in 1946, and the 1909 Imperial Household Mourning Ordinance superceded by the 1947 constitution, the Shinto ceremonies were private and paid for by the Imperial Household. A total of 160 world leaders, led by President George H.W. Bush, sat under temporary tents arranged for them on a cold and rainy day to watch on closed television what Japanese watched in the comfort of their homes: fifty-one members of the Imperial Guard, dressed in the style of a millennium before, carried in the one-and-a-half-ton palanquin as Shinto priests made ritual offerings of 'two-and-a-half cups of rice, twenty quail, seven carrots, three lotus roots, sweet

bean paste, saké, nine apples, assorted freshwater fish and bales of silk' before the 'great mourning ceremony', a purely secular event in which speeches by the new Emperor Akihito, the prime minister, and three other prominent Japanese addressed the departed emperor (who, 'even after his death ... both in the public and in the numerous private rituals, was treated as someone who could be communicated with, a property he would retain, as an imperial ancestor, into the indefinite future') after which the foreign representatives were called up one by one to bow to the coffin. Thereafter, the procession proceeded to the imperial mound at Hachioji, a suburb of Tokyo, where ceremonies lasting another five hours were attended only by members of the Imperial Household and not televised. All the structures utilized had been put together especially for the occasion. 'A month after the funeral, the Shinjuku Gyoen, once more open to the public, showed no traces ... of the ceremonies witnessed there by millions of people over the whole world.'⁶

MARIUS JANSEN

Notes

¹ The most balanced account in English is that of Stephen S. Large, *Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

² For Kido, Herbert Bix, 'The Showa Emperor's, "Monologue"', cited next, p. 315; for Nakasone, Watanabe Osamu, 'The Emperor as a "Symbol" in Postwar Japan', *Acta Asiatica* (Tokyo, 1990), #59, p. 119.

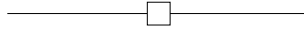
³ M. B. Jansen, 'Monarchy and Modernization', *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, 4 (August 1977), p. 75.

⁴ Watanabe Osamu, 'The Emperor as a "Symbol" in Postwar Japan', p. 114, who concludes that this 'indicates that he had no consciousness of a discontinuity between his pre-war and post-war status'.

⁵ Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1991), pp. 21–22.

⁶ Thomas Crump, *The Death of an Emperor: Japan at the Crossroads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 210–212.

Author's Preface to the English Edition



It is now twenty years since this book first appeared in Japanese. Emperor Hirohito himself died at the age of eighty-seven on 7 January 1989. Thenceforth he was to be known posthumously as 'Emperor Shōwa'. The title of a re-issue of the Japanese text in 1994 referred to him as Emperor Shōwa, but the text retained the Hirohito of the original and the translators have continued that usage. The emperor's reign extended more than sixty-two years, but since he had served as regent for his ailing father Emperor Taishō before that the actual length of his rule was more than sixty-seven years. As a result, if we ignore the dates tradition has assigned to a few legendary figures in the mists of antiquity, his tenure on the throne was the longest in Japanese history.

Probably the only comparable records are the seventy-two-year-reign of France's 'Sun King', Louis XIV, and the forty-five years of Elizabeth I of England, but neither of these two sovereigns experienced anything like the dramatic turns and shocks that Emperor Shōwa knew during his lifetime.

Hirohito was born in the first year of the twentieth century, and for the first half of his life, beginning with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 and extending through the First World War, the Manchurian Incident, the China War and culminating in the Second World War, Japanese lived their lives amid war and the powder and smoke of battle. The emperor, fond of history and torn by his love of marine biology, found himself becoming a Grand Marshal, the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army and Navy who led Japan to the first defeat in its history. The Pacific War resulted in the death of three million of his people and left their country a scorched earth.

There is a Japanese proverb that speaks of a family's process of decline from riches to ruin in three generations. In the summer of 1945 every Japanese who surveyed the scorched earth that had once been his country had to remind himself of that proverb, and Hirohito, as the forty-four-year-old grandson of the great Emperor Meiji who had presided over the building of the modern state in the nineteenth century, must surely have thought that that bitter analogy applied to his rule as well. And yet, in the months and days of the forty-four years that remained to the Emperor Shōwa, Japan made an almost miraculous recovery.

In the 'Afterword', which I appended to the first edition of this book, I wrote as follows:

One by one the leaders of the Second World War – Roosevelt, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, de Gaulle, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Tse-tung – have passed from the scene. Now that Yugoslavia's Marshall Tito, too, has died, Emperor Hirohito is the last to survive. If one recalls the era of turmoil which reached its climax in the Second World War, it might almost be said that the emperor's longevity represents a kind of final victory for him.

As he began to give press conferences and interviews towards the end of his life, Emperor Shōwa increasingly invoked the name of his grandfather, the Emperor Meiji. He seems always to have been conscious of himself as the third generation, but one sometimes wonders whether he did not at the same time think of his as the first generation in the rebirth of Japan. Can he have thought of himself as someone who would be ranked with the Emperor Meiji in the future?

Whatever the case, the emperor's last years were peaceful. His final illness extended for a year and a half, but his consciousness was serene. Attendants reported that his last comments were things like 'Will this year's rice crop be a good one?', and 'What a shame that I can't carry out the plans to visit Okinawa'. No doubt, there were others too. But in any case we know that as he breathed his last he could look back on 1945 as the mid-point of a reign that encompassed both the fall and rise of Japan.

Emperor Hirohito was surely one of the most important and deeply informed witnesses to the history of modern times and in particular the Shōwa era (1926–89). Not only historians, but

ordinary citizens as well, often expressed the wish that he would prepare some record of the events in which he had participated. Unfortunately, this never came to pass. There are stories to the effect that the emperor often read histories and documents of those years, and sometimes he made terse comments about them to his palace attendants. Thus, when Prince Konoe Fumimaro's recollections were published shortly after the end of the war, he is said to have remarked: 'Konoe certainly puts himself in a good light, doesn't he?' Comments that Hirohito made as a public figure appear in other accounts, as well as in the diaries and memoirs of court chamberlains and Prince Konoe. Among them the Harada (Kumao) – Saionji diaries, the Kido (Kōichi) diary, and the accounts of Generals Honjō Shigeru and Sugiyama Hajime, all published after the war, have become primary materials for research into the Shōwa era. More recently, the diaries of Ashida Hitoshi, Makino Nobuaki, Kinoshita Michio and Irie Sukemasa have become available, but primary sources for the pre-war years when he was at the centre of things remain rare. With the post-war shift to a non-political, symbolic emperor, we are in some respects even worse off, as we find ourselves limited to occasional comments and fragmentary information passed on by the reporters who cover the Imperial Household Agency press conferences. These, sometimes put together with a title such as 'The Sayings of the Emperor', provide a paltry basis upon which to attempt to construct an accurate and rounded portrait of the emperor and his times.

And yet the narrative of Shōwa history cannot be presented with one of its principals – Emperor Hirohito – left standing in the wings. As a result, scores of historians and journalists have accepted the challenge of fleshing out the rule of this central character, fully aware that in doing so, they are rather like the blind men probing uncertainly around the elephant.

This book probably has to be classed as another such attempt, with the author numbered in the company of the blind. But I have not set out to add to the already extensive literature of court gossip and ideological assaults on the emperor system. I had no desire to attempt a biography of the emperor or a general history of his era. Instead, I took as my central theme the perennial, and as yet not fully resolved, question, of whether the emperor was really Japan's

ruler and power-holder, or merely a puppet and robot. This is not a question that lends itself to a simple or short answer. The truth lies somewhere in between. The criteria of assessment are not stable, for they change with time and context. The conventional answer is that prior to the war the emperor was very nearly an absolute ruler, and that he was reduced to a purely symbolic icon after the defeat, but this does not by any means do justice to the complexities of the problem.

The exercise of power requires decision. For that reason I chose to focus on several instances in the past when Emperor Hirohito was confronted with the necessity of making a decision, and in depicting the processes that were involved I tried to use them as case studies that speak to my central theme. That is also why I chose to title the original Japanese edition of this book 'Five Decisions of the Emperor Hirohito'. Five case studies; five decisive choices which affected the fate of the Japanese nation and altered the course of the history of the Shōwa era.

Critics may argue, of course, that these decisions were really those of the Japanese state and not those of the emperor as an individual. Yet the boundary between the two, institution and individual, overlaps subtly, and it cannot be drawn easily or definitely. In any case, the events I have selected provide, in my view, the best material available for illuminating the role of the emperor in the Shōwa era.

I have done my best to set my own prejudices and value judgements aside and let the facts speak for themselves, but by definition, I cannot evade the obvious question of whether or not the decisions I have chronicled were the right ones to use. I have no doubt that the reader will have to make his own judgement from the way I have selected and organized my material. The problem I faced as I wrote concerned the extent to which it was possible to re-enact, in the theatre of my imagination, the complex of forces influencing the thought and behaviour of my subjects as they stood at the critical point of decision.

Stefan Zweig once wrote, in his *Sternstunden der Menschheit* of 'sublime instants' in history as those in which 'a single affirmation, a single negation, an act premature or postponed, are transformed into events which cannot be erased for a hundred future

generations'. I realize I may have overreached in this use of the five case studies, and I have no doubt that some will echo what the late emperor said of Prince Konoë, that I have selected matters for my own convenience.

The 'five decisions' I have taken as my subject matter concern the 26 February 1936 insurrection of young army officers, the termination of the Pacific War, the post-war constitution, the issue of abdication and the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951. Chapters 3 and 4, which deal with military efforts to preserve the monarchy in the event the Occupation threatened its end, and the popular response to the monarch after surrender, might be seen as diverging somewhat from my central theme, but I have included them because they contribute to an understanding of Emperor Hirohito's place in the history of the Shōwa era and the psychology of his people in a time of stress.

The greater part of the book deals with the seven years from Japan's surrender to the end of the Occupation in 1952. There are good reasons for this. There is already an enormous literature on pre-war and wartime Japan, and the main lines of interpretation are fairly well established. Moreover, with the exception of the February 26 Incident there are few dramatic events in the period between the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the Pearl Harbor attack of December 1941 that could properly be described as having been affected by 'imperial decisions'. During that decade, the emperor is usually seen as having bowed to the dictatorial power of the military, confining his role for the most part to acknowledging a series of *fait accomplis*. It was for that reason, at any rate, that the International Military Tribunal for the Far East exempted the emperor from trial, for it was judged that while he might have borne formal responsibility for what happened, real responsibility lay elsewhere.

With defeat and occupation, however, things changed radically. The military collapsed, and a change of guard at the palace replaced the senior statesmen and old guard that had surrounded the emperor, leaving him on stage, finally able to make his own decisions and act on them. Response to occupation by an alien power called for broad vision and flexible political skills. Emperor Hirohito proved to be blessed with both, and in time he came to

exercise these freely and show himself a political leader of the first rank, representing the interests of his now-occupied country.

For their part, the Occupation forces also found it desirable that the emperor play such a role in order to ensure that the Occupation itself succeeded. According to Roger Buckley's study, 'Britain and the Emperor: The Foreign Office and Constitutional Reform in Japan, 1945–1946' (*Modern Asian Studies*, 1978), which draws on British Commonwealth documents relating to Occupation history, General MacArthur had a low opinion of the political competence of the successive prime ministers Yoshida Shigeru, Katayama Tetsu and Ashida Hitoshi. Given that assessment, it was all the more necessary for the Supreme Commander to rely on the authority and political abilities of the emperor in trying to realize the goals of the Occupation.

The problem, though, is that there are so few reliable sources available for delineating and assessing the emperor's political role during the Occupation period (1945–52). In fact, on the Japanese side they are almost non-existent. As a result, the job of preparing a rough map of this so-far uncharted territory is possible only through the use of documents kept on the American side, notably in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. For the past decade and more it has become customary for historians working on post-war Japanese history to travel to the United States in search of documentary materials. And over the past few years more and more American scholars have expressed their surprise and dissatisfaction with the fact that the Japanese government has not released more of the historical documents in its possession. This state of affairs is becoming an embarrassment to the Japanese researchers who make their pilgrimages to American libraries and archives.

Among the materials preserved but not released by the Japanese government, none is more keenly awaited by historians than the set of notes on the eleven meetings that the emperor had with General MacArthur during the Occupation years. We now know that, with the exception of the sixth and seventh meetings, records of the other nine meetings, made by the Foreign Ministry officials who served as interpreters, have been preserved. There is no evidence that these summaries were passed on to the Americans, but the

bulk of them are held, still tightly classified, in the archives of the Foreign Ministry and the Imperial Household Agency.

However, from the fact that the contents of the summaries of the first, third and fourth meetings were leaked to the press and published, it is possible to make an educated guess as to the nature and format of the other sessions as well. In the third meeting, which lasted about two hours, General MacArthur addressed the following points:

- (1) In tough negotiations with President Truman concerning the food crisis in Japan, the Supreme Commander had threatened to resign if a solution was not worked out with regard to food supplies for Japan, and as a result he had received guarantees of supplies adequate to prevent another critical shortage.
- (2) The Supreme Commander expressed the view that the emperor's democratic attitudes would have a positive effect on public opinion towards Japan in the United States.
- (3) The Supreme Commander was grateful to the emperor for his decisiveness in contributing to the success of the revision of the Japanese constitution.
- (4) The Supreme Commander welcomed the idea of the emperor undertaking goodwill tours around Japan.

These topics focused on the most crucial policy issues facing Japan at that time, and the manner in which they were discussed suggests that they had also been discussed (or requested?) in the previous meeting. It also seems clear that MacArthur's statements in the meeting were the result of careful advance preparation.

In this third meeting, the emperor in turn addressed the idealism of Japan's renunciation of war in Article 9 of the new constitution with delicate but visible scepticism. As he put it:

I believe that Japan will be thoroughly faithful to the new constitution and its grand ideal of the renunciation of war. Still, when one considers the current international situation, it seems that the world is still far from this ideal. I pray for the speedy advance of a world in which Japan will not be exposed to danger in the international context for having resolved to implement this renunciation of armed conflict.

This must have surprised MacArthur, for in the recent Diet debates on the new constitution Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru had asserted on more than one occasion, in response to interpolations by the opposition, that Article 9 'also implied the renunciation of the right of self-defence'. MacArthur tried to evade the emperor's point by asserting:

The only way to eliminate war is to renounce it ... A hundred years from now Japan will realize that it has become the moral leader of the world.

But he could not entirely overlook the fact that the emperor's remark had not been concerned with the situation a century later, but with Japan's immediate security interests and how they were to be guaranteed.

In the fourth meeting, six months later, MacArthur promised the emperor that American forces would defend Japan 'just as they would defend California'. After this single statement was leaked to the press by Okumura Katsuzō, head of the Information Section of the Foreign Ministry who acted as interpreter at the meeting, and promptly put on the wire by foreign correspondents, an enraged GHQ ordered his immediate dismissal. With the exception of this statement the contents of the fourth meeting remain unclear, but from this one comment we can safely assume that, like the third meeting, it was concerned with political matters of the greatest importance.

According to Matsui Akira, who replaced Okumura as interpreter, the meetings during the latter half of the Occupation, especially from the eighth meeting onwards, were shorter and more formal in nature, usually lasting about an hour. Even so, if we consider the entire context, including the events I relate in Chapter 6, it seems fair to say that the emperor's personal and palace diplomacy was of decisive importance during the period of the Occupation.

After Hirohito's death the Imperial Household Agency began work on the preparation of an authorized biography that was to appear as 'The Chronicle of Emperor Shōwa', but in view of the fact that a comparable biography for his father, to be entitled 'The Chronicle of Emperor Taishō', has yet to appear, no one can be optimistic about its appearance.

Given the fact that there will be few reliable sources available for historians and journalists, then, one must attach even more importance to 'Emperor Shōwa's Monologue', a document that surfaced recently.

This document, which was found with the diary of the court interpreter Terasaki Hidenari, was published with the Terasaki diary in March 1991 by the Bungei Shunju publishing house. It is the transcript of recollections the emperor dictated to Terasaki and four other court figures in five sessions that extended to a total of eight hours in March and April 1946. The original is assumed to be secreted in the vaults of the Imperial Household Agency. It is assumed that the document we have was used by Terasaki as the basis for preparing English-language responses for possible interrogation by the International Tribunal, the Tokyo 'War Crimes' trials. (The English edition was publicized a few years ago by General Fellers's family.)

Since there is nothing comparable to this first-hand statement by the emperor, its appearance caused an immediate sensation. The emperor's comments range over the period between 1928 and 1945 – all the years with which the Tribunal was concerned, and contain a number of points that significantly alter the understanding of the history of those turbulent years.

In terms that affect this book, the revelation of the emperor's confrontation with his brother Prince Chichibu and a number of episodes that swirl around the matter of Japanese-American relations at the time of the opening and the ending of the war, and the emperor's all too outspoken evaluations of a number of high government and army figures, are of particularly deep interest.

When the monologue appeared it stirred a variety of reactions. There were those who argued that, although the emperor spoke harshly about a number of high officials who were to be indicted in the highest ('A') category as war criminals, he seemed to give little thought to his own share of responsibility for the events he discussed. Even during his final illness questions were raised about his share of responsibility, and when the mayor of Nagasaki raised that point a right-wing terrorist tried to assassinate him.

Chapter 5 takes up in some detail the question of abdication after the war. For a time the emperor seems to have felt that this was

morally incumbent upon him, but he was dissuaded from taking that step. The National Diet Library contains the manuscript of the still unpublished diary that wartime Lord Privy Seal Kido Kōichi compiled in his Sugamo Prison cell to which he had been sentenced by the International Tribunal. In the section dealing with the period from late 1951 to 1952, he discusses how he argued with the court chamberlain Matsudaira Yasumasa that the emperor should accept the responsibility of resigning once the Occupation came to an end. The emperor himself seems to have leaned towards this course for a time, but he encountered strong opposition from Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. Instead, when he took part in the ceremonies marking the recovery of Japan's sovereignty with the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace on 3 May 1952, he indicated his intention of remaining on the throne.

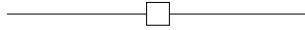
In August 1945, when President Truman convened the American equivalent of an 'Imperial Conference' with Secretaries Byrnes, Stimson and Forrestal to work out a response to the Japanese government's attempt to secure a guarantee of the monarchy before accepting the Potsdam terms of surrender, their discussion assumed that Hirohito would abdicate and be replaced by the eleven-year-old Crown Prince Akihito, with Prince Chichibu, or perhaps Prince Takamatsu, acting as regent. But when Japanese public opinion seemed unsure of that and indicated a preference for the regnant emperor these plans were shelved, and Hirohito continued on the throne. It is meaningless to argue the right and wrong of this today, and in any case Crown Prince Akihito succeeded to the throne forty-four years later. It has also come to light that in 1987 there was once again, now for the third time, discussion of a possible abdication, but that, too, did not take place.

Late Professor Marius B. Jansen of Princeton University first suggested an English edition of this book. I am deeply grateful to him for his editorial supervision and to David Noble, who undertook the basic translation. I am also grateful to Professor Hirakawa Sukehiro who recently introduced me to the publisher Paul Norbury at Global Oriental which has resulted at last in the publication of this English edition.

IKUHIKO HATA
Tokyo, October 2006

CHAPTER 1

Emperor Hirohito and the February 26 Army Uprising



'I shall personally assume command of the Imperial Guards Division ...'

Tempered pride

On 8 September 1932, accompanied by members of his staff, Lieutenant General Honjō Shigeru, former commander-in-chief of the Kwantung Army, appeared before the emperor to report on military affairs in Manchuria. Arriving at Tokyo Station at 11 o'clock in the morning, Honjō and his entourage were met by a horse-drawn carriage provided by the Imperial Household Ministry, and rode in style across the Nijūbashi Bridge into the palace grounds. After a formal greeting, there was to be a luncheon in the Hall of Ceremonies (Homeiden) hosted by the emperor himself, followed by tea and an opportunity for more informal conversation. All in all, it was top-drawer treatment, the kind that would be accorded to a triumphant commander.

Considering General Honjō's recent achievements, such a reception was to be expected: his ten-thousand-man Kwantung Army had routed a Chinese force some ten times its strength, brought almost all of Manchuria under Japanese control in just six months, and had founded the new state of Manchukuo. But there were factors which tempered Honjō's pride; he was no Scipio returning from Carthage flushed with victory.

For one thing, the spark that ignited the Manchurian Incident, the demolition of a section of South Manchurian Railway track, was the result of a plot masterminded by Lt. Colonel Ishiwara Kanji and Colonel Itagaki Seishirō of Honjō's own staff. Honjō had reacted by going ahead with ever-expanding military operations, ignoring the

Japanese government's international assurances that it would not expand hostilities, and brushing aside the attempts of the high command in Tokyo to limit the conflict. Moreover, the Kwantung Army had soon been joined by elements of the Japanese army in Korea, also acting independently, which had crossed the border into Manchuria on the pretext of coming to the aid of Honjō's forces.

All of this radically overstepped the bounds of independent initiative (*dokudan senkō*) permitted by the Imperial Army Field Code, and could easily have been punished by court martial as criminal acts violating the emperor's right of supreme command over the armed forces.

Yet the emperor was widely seen as a remote figure – 'above the clouds', in the traditional phrase – unlikely to be aware of such events. At least that is what Major Katakura Tadashi, one of the staff officers who accompanied Honjō to the imperial audience, thought. What he heard there startled him out of his complacency.

During the informal discussion after the luncheon, the emperor turned to Honjō and said quite bluntly: 'There are rumours that the Manchurian Incident was a plot on the part of certain individuals – Is there anything to that?' A hush fell over the room. General Honjō rose to his feet, bowed deeply, and responded: 'After the Incident, I too heard it said that a plot had been engineered by some army men and civilians, but I assure you that neither the Kwantung Army nor I were involved in any plot at the time.'¹

The emperor did not pursue the matter any further, much to Katakura's relief, and no doubt to that of Lt. Colonel Ishiwara Kanji, ringleader of the plot, who was also present to hear Honjō's smooth reply. Ishiwara, with remarkable arrogance, muttered: 'Somebody's certainly been whispering a lot of stuff in His Majesty's ear.'

About six months after the audience, in April 1933, Honjō was promoted to the rank of full general, and assigned to serve at the emperor's side as his chief aide-de-camp.²

At the time, the newspapers said that 'the incomparable integrity and loyalty of his character' had inspired those selecting Honjō for this post; how mistaken this judgement was would become glaringly obvious during the February 26 Incident two-and-a-half years later. Katakura and Itagaki would also be caught up

in that incident, but the positions the three men took were to be strikingly different. Honjō, as we shall see, stuck close to the emperor and served as the principal spokesman of the Imperial Way (rebel) Faction; Major Katakura, regarded as a chief strategist for the Control Faction, was to be shot and seriously wounded by Isobe Asaichi of the rebel forces; Ishiwara Kanji, who had become a full colonel by then, would maintain an ambiguous stance until midway through the crisis, after which he distinguished himself in the suppression of the Incident as chief of the operations section of martial law headquarters.³

Although the February 26 Incident ended in failure, it was the most ambitious attempt at a military *coup d'état* in modern Japanese history, and for this reason alone it has called forth such a flood of documentation and interpretation that one can almost speak of a 'February 26 industry'. This chapter will focus upon one aspect of the Incident which remains comparatively unclear: the role and actions of Emperor Hirohito during the crisis.

There are very few sources which speak to this issue with any great degree of reliability: one of them is the surprisingly candid account set down by Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō himself, the Honjō diary,⁴ which will serve as the documentary backbone for the analysis which follows.

A constitutional monarch

Before departing on his tour of Europe in the autumn of 1971, Emperor Hirohito held a press conference with the foreign correspondents in Tokyo. Among his remarks was the following:

I have always desired to serve as a constitutional monarch, and there have been only two occasions in which I took direct action, both of them extremely pressing crisis situations. One of them was the February 26 Incident, and the other was at the end of the war.⁵

Grand Chamberlain Fujita Hisanori and Chamberlain Irie Sukemasa both report hearing the emperor express similar thoughts soon after the war,⁶ so it appears that the emperor's fundamental stance was to act with self-restraint, rigorously adhering to boundaries defined by his role as constitutional monarch. The

question then becomes: what were the functions appropriate to such a role?

Article 4 of the Meiji Constitution begins with the phrase 'The Emperor being the Head of the Empire, the rights of sovereignty are invested in him', but continues with a procedural limitation on those rights, stating that he 'exercises them in accordance with the provisions of the present Constitution'.⁷ In concrete terms, this meant that all laws, imperial ordinances, and imperial rescripts required the countersignature of one of the ministers of state serving in his capacity as adviser to the throne.⁸

If the first clause of this article were stressed, one would have an absolute monarchy along the lines of Louis XIV or the Russian tsars; if the second were given greater weight, a constitutional monarchy closer to that of Britain would result. From as early as the middle of the Meiji era a fierce debate arose as to which interpretation was to be considered orthodox constitutional theory. Proponents of the 'organ theory' held that the emperor was an 'organ' of the state, while loyalists insisted that he was in effect the state.

By the beginning of the Taishō era, it appeared that the concept of constitutional monarchy advocated by such scholars as Ichiki Kitokurō and Minobe Tatsukichi had won out over the absolutist interpretation favoured by Hozumi Yatsuka and Uesugi Shinkichi, and that the debate had been resolved. This was appropriate to a period in which oligarchic cliques and transcendental cabinets were giving way to a system centring on the political parties and the Diet. In the 1930s, however, military extremists focused on the 'organ theory' to gain leverage in factional strife within the army. Minobe was driven from the seat to which he had been appointed in the House of Peers, and his books publicly burned in a drive to 'clarify the national polity' (*kokutai meichō undō*).⁹

There are various reasons which might be given for Emperor Hirohito's own devotion to the idea of a constitutional monarchy: the scholarly and rationalist aspect of his personality represented by his studies in biology; his experiences during his visit to Europe as Crown Prince; and the education given him by such elder statesmen as Saionji Kinmochi and Makino Nobuaki. In a broad sense, the emperor was a product of 'Taishō Democracy'.

In this respect, the emperor was closer to the 'old liberals' of

Meiji than to the sensibility of members of his own generation, such as his younger brother, Prince Chichibu, or Konoe Fumimaro. Small wonder, then, that he was completely unable to understand the psychology of the young officers who led the February 26 uprising.

Yet if the concept of constitutional monarch was carried to its logical conclusion, the emperor, like the monarchs of Britain, would 'reign and not rule' and risk becoming little more than a rubber stamp. And in fact there is little evidence, in word or deed, that the emperor played much of a role in politics – either at centre stage or behind the scenes – for a number of years after his accession to the throne, with the exception of his exchange with Prime Minister General Tanaka Giichi.¹⁰ Perhaps there was little reason to do so, for at the time Japan was navigating, albeit somewhat precariously, the currents of constitutional politics and international cooperation that the emperor himself favoured.

In 1931, the Manchurian Incident changed all of this. As Army penetration of the political sphere grew increasingly intrusive, and party politics headed into a swift decline, a number of policies were pushed through in both domestic and foreign affairs that the emperor found quite distasteful. Irritated, he let his displeasure be known; and occasionally he even made mild attempts at resistance, trying to reverse the gears which had already been set in motion.

The Honjō diary, the Harada memoirs,¹¹ and other documents recording the actual statements of the emperor make it clear that he (1) favoured arms reduction, (2) opposed the Manchurian Incident, (3) opposed strengthening the authority of the Naval General Staff, (4) disagreed with Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations, (5) agreed with the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, and (6) supported the 'organ theory' of the monarch's constitutional role.

This may seem little more than a list of some of the more significant issues of the period, but through them all the emperor held to a fundamentally consistent position. Domestically, he was a conservative supporter of the status quo, as indicated by his famous directive that 'anything approaching fascism is absolutely out of the question'.¹² With regard to foreign affairs, he might be described as an advocate of international conciliation and a supporter of the Versailles and Washington treaty systems.

The military, however, seemed determined to contravene the will of the emperor, pushing ahead with the invasion of Manchuria, forcing withdrawal from the League of Nations, and organizing a concerted assault on the 'organ theory'. The military also succeeded in revising regulations to strengthen the Naval General Staff, and had its way in the abrogation of the Washington and London naval arms limitation treaties. Directly contrary to the name it chose for itself, the self-styled Imperial Way Faction of the Army stood in particularly direct opposition to the wishes of the emperor.

In most cases, the emperor's opinions were respectfully but studiously ignored, or else more honoured in the breach than the observance. It would have been difficult for a monarch, even a puppet, to endure this in silence, looking on helplessly as the course of events ran so contrarily to his wishes.

Even more vexatious was the fact that, at least according to the constitution, the emperor was supposed to exercise the right of supreme command directly in all matters pertaining to strategic operations on the part of the military; this right, after all, was not circumscribed by the 'advisory' function of the ministers of state which limited imperial power in civil affairs.

Emperor Hirohito must have passed many of his days on the verge of exploding from repressed rage. Without such foreshadowing, the severity of attitude he displayed at the time of the February 26 Incident is impossible to understand.

A single example will suffice. In the spring of 1933, the Kwantung Army, carried along by the momentum of its recent seizure of Jehol Province in North China, began to spill over the Great Wall and approach the Peking-Tientsin area. The emperor summoned Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō and reproached him, reminding him that permission for operations in Jehol had been granted on condition that the Great Wall would not be crossed, and saying that for the army 'to take actions which wilfully disregarded this was inappropriate from the standpoint of discipline and of the supreme command'.¹³ Since the Chief of the Army General Staff at the time was himself an imperial prince (Prince Kan'in), Honjō relayed this criticism to Vice Chief of Staff General Mazaki Jinzaburō. In a posthumous manuscript Mazaki wrote resentfully of this period, saying:

At one point the chief aide-de-camp was dispatched to General Staff Headquarters ... and gave me a vigorous scolding ... On another occasion I was summoned to the palace on a Sunday and reprimanded ... I don't know what else I was supposed to do except go to the Great Wall myself and stand there ordering them to stop.¹⁴

On the face of it, Mazaki seems merely to be expressing his annoyance at the fact that when he finally moved to rein in the Kwantung Army he was rewarded with repeated criticism rather than praise; but in reality the situation was rather more complex.

For one thing, according to Major Endō Saburō, then operations officer for the Kwantung Army General Staff, the Kwantung Army had planned to cross the Great Wall from the outset, and did not communicate this fact to the central authorities for fear they would put a stop to such plans.¹⁵ This was clearly a deliberate case of insubordination.

On the other hand, Army General Staff Headquarters adopted the pose of restraining the Kwantung Army so as to avoid the emperor's displeasure, but the evidence indicates that the General Staff was secretly in accord with its actions. Mazaki, for example, paid a call on Major General Prince Higashikuni to ask if he would 'please lend his support in convincing His Majesty [the emperor] to be a little more accommodating in the matters brought before him by the General Staff', though Prince Higashikuni refused, saying it was not his affair.¹⁶ Mazaki's activities confirmed his reputation as a crafty manipulator, but the emperor appears to have been quick to sense his slipperiness.

The emperor had made clear his displeasure with the uproar over 'clarification of the national polity', saying at one point that 'these attacks on the "organ theory" ... are very disturbing',¹⁷ and later remarking: 'Doesn't it seem contradictory for the military to talk so much about the sovereignty of the emperor when they won't obey my will?'¹⁸ Yet it was Mazaki, as Inspector General of Military Education, who had issued a directive to all Army units denouncing the organ theory.¹⁹ Thus, it is hardly surprising that the emperor should have developed an antipathy towards Mazaki, his associates and his subordinates in the Imperial Way Faction.

'I am prepared for a fight to the finish'

At this time, the military was riven by fierce factional infighting: the Army was divided between the Imperial Way and Control Factions, the Navy between the so-called Fleet and Treaty Factions.²⁰ Whether these four groups were primarily in conflict over policy, or were principally personal cliques, is a question still open to debate.²¹ In either case, it is clear that this factionalism represented a struggle for hegemony as the military moved towards wresting political power from the hands of the political parties.

These four factions were not of equal importance: the Navy groups were relatively weak. It was the Army, with its large standing forces, that held the upper hand in the hegemonic struggle, though the Fleet Faction tried to gain what advantage it could by joining forces with the Army's Imperial Way Faction.

In March, and again in October of 1931, there were abortive *coup* plots with the goal of mobilizing Army troops to assassinate elder statesmen (*jūshin*) and cabinet ministers and install a military government headed by either General Ugaki Kazushige or Lt. General Araki Sadao. The following year, Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi fell victim to a terrorist attack by Navy junior officers in the May 15 Incident. With his assassination, the system of party rule collapsed, to be followed by two interim cabinets under Saitō Makoto and Okada Keisuke, both former Navy admirals.

Swelled with confidence, the Army mainstream faction began to see that it might be possible to attain power legally, without resort to the extremist methods of terror and *coup d'état*.

But conflict between the Imperial Way and Control Factions intensified. The influence of the Imperial Way Faction peaked for a time during 1934 and 1935, but as it began to recede in the face of a Control Faction counter-attack, *coup d'état* plans began to flare up again within the ranks of the radical young officers, influenced by the right-wing civilian extremists Kita Ikki and Nishida Mitsugi, who advocated a military seizure of power under the aegis of martial law. It was this group of young officers who were regarded as the shock troops providing a basis of support for the ambitions of the Imperial Way generals. Though this relationship was certainly not monolithic, both the young officers and the generals agreed upon one objective: the elimination of the Control Faction and the creation of an Imperial Way regime.

At the time, however, the Control Faction seemed to be gaining the upper hand in the struggle for supremacy, triggering a violent response by supporters of the Imperial Way. In January 1934, when General Hayashi Senjurō replaced Araki Sadao as war minister, he crossed over into the Control Faction camp, appointing Major General Nagata Tetsuzan as chief of the Military Affairs Bureau. Subsequent reshufflings of personnel began to squeeze Imperial Way stalwarts out of the important official posts. When, in July 1935, Mazaki Jinzaburō was transferred against his will from his position as Inspector General of Military Education, the Imperial Way Faction backlash began in earnest. On 12 August, Nagata was cut down in broad daylight at his desk in the Military Affairs Bureau by Lieutenant Colonel Aizawa Saburō.

General Hayashi then resigned as war minister in favour of Kawashima Yoshiyuki, a more neutral figure, but the struggle between the two factions now smelled of blood. While Aizawa's case was being tried in a public court-martial, a decision was made to transfer the First Division, a hotbed of the young officers' movement, to Manchuria.

Fearing this would remove any chance for an uprising, the division's young officers set out to reverse their fortunes by embarking immediately on a military *coup*. Their goal was the overthrow of the Okada cabinet, the eradication of the Control Faction, and the establishment of a provisional Imperial Way government headed by General Mazaki.

The details of the uprising were hammered out in the first days of 1936, and since planning for the conspiracy was confined almost completely to army quarters the Military Police were slow to ferret it out. There was a palpable tension in the air for those in a position to sense it, and on 8 January Mazaki wrote in his diary: 'This time I am prepared for a fight to the finish.'²²

According to Kishida Hideo, even the palace officials made preparations for an assault by the young officers: Grand Chamberlain Suzuki Kantarō²³ ordered a supply of pistols laid in and had the palace staff engage in target practice; he also contemplated supplying them with bullet-proof vests.²⁴

The revolt

Before dawn on the morning of 26 February 1936, young officers led some 1,400 troops from the First and Imperial Guards Divisions in revolt. Making their way through an unseasonably heavy snowfall, they assassinated Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Saitō Makoto, Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo and Inspector General of Military Education Watanabe Jōtarō, and gravely wounded Grand Chamberlain Suzuki Kantarō. Prime Minister Okada Keisuke narrowly escaped his assailants, hiding in his residence until rescued two days later.

The insurgents then occupied strategic points throughout the centre of Tokyo, including the prime minister's official residence, and entered into negotiations with the Army high command, demanding the implementation of a Shōwa Restoration.²⁵ In the end their appeals came to naught, and four days later the Incident was resolved without any further bloodshed, the troops choosing to surrender before being forcibly suppressed as a 'rebel army'.

It has now become a commonplace that the rebellion ended in total collapse because of sloppy planning and the inability to play out what was initially a rather strong hand. The following points serve as evidence for this case: (1) slackness in completely sealing off key points, particularly the palace; (2) failure to seize control of communications; (3) obliviousness to the need for popular propaganda; (4) failure to draw in the Navy; (5) lack of explicit advance approval from Imperial Way leaders, especially Mazaki; and (6) weakness of the insurgent leadership, which took a vague collective form rather than crystallizing around a single figure. Maruyama Masao, among other critics, offers a scathing verdict on the Incident: 'In the end, all they did was separate a few old men from their heads.'²⁶

More recently, however, a different view has been gaining strength: that the February 26 *coup d'état* was actually quite carefully crafted, and might well have succeeded except for one or two significant errors.

For example, the original plan of Isobe Asaichi, the driving force within the young officers' clique, called for total occupation of the palace and the seizure of the emperor, followed by the establishment of a provisional military government headed by

Mazaki and staffed in part by the young officers themselves. Isobe, in fact, saw this as a Kerensky-type regime, to be replaced at the first opportunity by a government completely dominated by the young rebel leaders.²⁷ These plans were to be accompanied by fairly extensive manoeuvring at the elite level.²⁸

Muranaka Kōji, who ranked with Isobe among the rebel leaders, proposed that they 'invade the palace, still gripping our bloody swords, prostrate ourselves before the emperor, and entreat him to initiate the Shōwa Restoration'.²⁹ However, this brash proposal was rejected by their lower-ranking comrades as tantamount to threatening the emperor.

In any event, the *coup* strategy ended up following the slogan 'Revere the emperor, destroy the traitors!' (*sonnō tōkan*),³⁰ with only indirect efforts to manipulate the emperor: under this banner, the insurgents would settle for eradicating the 'evil ministers' (their opposition and the elder statesmen close to the throne), thereby isolating the emperor and boxing him into a position from which he could be controlled by the new regime.

The problem was how the emperor himself would respond to all this, and these low-ranking young officers, who of course had never met Hirohito, had little clue as to his true nature. It is hardly surprising that Captain Andō Teruzō confessed on the eve of the uprising that 'No matter how much I ponder it, I cannot grasp the Imperial Will (*ōmikokoro*)', but for some reason optimism reigned among the ranks of the rebel forces.³¹

For one thing, they had gathered from one of the conspirators, Captain Yamaguchi Ichitarō (who was also Aide-de-Camp Honjō's son-in-law), that the emperor would probably respond favourably to the 'sincerity' of the young officers. This assumption proved to be very far from the mark.

It seems likely that the conspirators' dominant perception of the emperor was that he was a weak-willed and malleable ruler. The emperor's bespectacled and nervous appearance, his scholarly interest in biology, and the fact that he was neither a smoker nor a drinker, all worked to create in their soldierly minds an image of bookishness and effeminacy.

In his prison notes, Isobe was highly critical of the emperor, writing that he 'had drawn close to traitors despised by the people,

and was willing to do whatever they told him'.³² This was the rationale behind liberating the emperor from 'the traitors surrounding the throne'; from a different perspective, however, it was also the classic image of the emperor as puppet, one that reached back at least as far as the Meiji Restoration, when activists privately referred to the boy sovereign Meiji as the 'jewel' whose possession was critical to success.

Yet the insurgents must also have been dimly aware of the emperor's distaste for the Imperial Way programme, his antipathy for Mazaki, and the fact that if he trusted anyone, it was precisely the elder statesmen serving as his closest advisers, and they must have had some premonition that he would not be the puppet of their dreams.

The figure that floated into their minds at this point was that of Prince Chichibu, who until the birth of the Crown Prince Akihito in December 1933, only two years previously, had stood first in line of succession to the throne.

Prince Chichibu's popularity

At the time of the February 26 Incident there were many people who thought it possible that the young officers planned, or at least considered, deposing Emperor Hirohito and replacing him with his younger brother, Prince Chichibu. As yet, no evidence has been uncovered to substantiate this, but such succession schemes were not unheard of, either in earlier Japan or in the history of European courts. Prince Chichibu projected a robust and generous image that was quick to appeal to the sensibility and aspirations of the young officers. Moreover, he had consistently shown a certain sympathy for the young officers' movement, and maintained close personal relations with several members of his old unit, the Third Infantry Regiment.

Ties between the emperor's younger brother and the young officers dated back to 1922, just before Prince Chichibu's graduation from the Military Academy, when Nishida Mitsugi and four other of his classmates met secretly with the prince and presented him with a handwritten copy of Kita Ikki's *Outline Plan for the Reorganization of Japan* (*Nihon kaizō hōan taikō*).³³

Later, in 1927, when Nishida, having left military service, founded the Heavenly Swords Party (Tenkentō; soon disbanded), his manifesto claimed that 'some of our chief comrades have a secret understanding with a certain member of the imperial family'. From this time on, references to the prince appeared frequently in the writings of the young officers. The Military and Special Higher Police followed this with close attention.

Nishida hoped to use Prince Chichibu as a channel to the emperor in implementing his goal of a reorganization of Japan.³⁴ Some also credited him with the intention of spurring authorities in taking some sort of repressive action – and if this is the case, he was at least partially successful.

From around the time of the Manchurian Incident, however, Prince Chichibu's contacts with Nishida ceased, but they were replaced by increasingly frequent associations with Captain Andō Teruzō and Lieutenant Sakai Naoshi of the prince's old Third Regiment. Prince Chichibu's state of mind during this period was elusive, and his speech and behaviour were susceptible to a variety of interpretations, depending on the observer. There are reports that he said to Sakai, 'Please think of me as one of your comrades',³⁵ and 'In the event of an uprising, come to greet me at the head of your men.'³⁶ Yet at the same time, there was also behaviour on the prince's part which can be taken as an attempt to restrain the impatient young radicals.

In any case, though it is difficult to gauge the proximity of Prince Chichibu to the young officers, it is clear that he did have some attachment to their ideas about reorganizing Japan. This brought him into conflict with the emperor, as Honjō indicates in his diary:

His Excellency Prince Chichibu visited the palace ... He spoke urgently of the need for His Majesty to take personal charge of the government, suspending the Constitution if necessary. It appears that a heated debate ensued between His Majesty and the Prince.³⁷

Prince Chichibu is also reported to have spoken directly to the emperor in opposition to the dismissal of General Mazaki as Army vice chief of staff.

Even Soviet journalists were aware of the prince, writing in 1934 that the Araki group (the Imperial Way Faction) was connected

with 'the court clique headed by Prince Chichibu'.³⁸ So it is hardly unusual that there were people in certain circles eager to elevate him as an alternative or rival to the emperor, regardless of what the prince himself may have thought about it.

Examples of disputes over the throne between brothers in the imperial line, even conflict leading to civil war, are not alien to the Japanese tradition. The elder statesman Prince Saionji, himself a member of the high court nobility, was familiar with such precedents, and remarked with concern to his private secretary, Harada Kumao:³⁹

There are a fair number of cases in Japanese history which enact the scenario of a younger brother murdering his elder brother and ascending the throne. A lot depends upon the kind of people the emperor chooses to surround himself with. Of course, I'm not suggesting that such an unfortunate thing could happen again, but ...

There were several other members of the imperial house, though not in the direct line of succession, who like Prince Chichibu drew attention to themselves by their proximity to the young officers and the Imperial Way Faction. Heading the list was Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, who was married to one of the daughters of the Meiji Emperor. As a youth, Prince Higashikuni had studied abroad for more than seven years without returning home, and his irresponsible behaviour frequently disconcerted palace officials.⁴⁰

By this time, Higashikuni had risen from a brigade to a divisional commander, and then to the post of Military Councillor, but he irritated the elder statesmen with lapses of judgement such as his visits to the Aikyōjuku, a private academy run by Tachibana Kōsaborō, one of the figures implicated in the May 15 Incident, and by his involvement, along with former Chief Court Lady Shimazu, in a rather dubious new religious sect. He was also on friendly terms with Ishiwara Kanji, and all in all seemed an even easier mark for service as a figurehead than Prince Chichibu.

Then there was Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, one of the elders of the naval establishment, who held the rank of Admiral of the Fleet and the post of Navy Chief of Staff. He was strongly influenced by Katō Kanji and other members of the Fleet Faction, who had resisted the

Washington and London Conference limitations on naval construction, and through Katō he had also grown close to General Mazaki. His advocacy of the opinions of such men in his reports to the throne had won him the emperor's disfavour.

In principal, assignment of members of the imperial house to military service was supposed to function as a means of detecting and forestalling insubordination or insurrection on the part of the armed forces. At the time of the February 26 Incident, however, none of the imperial princes who were in a position to carry out the emperor's will and perform this function chose, in fact, to do so.

Friend or foe?

A look at the distribution of forces in the Imperial Way/Control Faction struggle on the eve of the February 26 Incident (neutralists and bellwethers included) shows that while the Imperial Way contingent had declined in strength, it still had sympathizers ensconced in a number of key posts. If these could be used to full advantage, it was still entirely possible that the rebel agenda – presentation of the insurgents' manifesto to the throne, imperial proclamation of a Shōwa Restoration, and an imperial command to General Mazaki to form a new government – could be achieved by sundown on the first day of the uprising.

The rebels prepared seven separate routes designed to bring their case before the emperor and seek his approval:

- (1) Kamekawa Tetsuya (civilian rightist) via Uzawa Sōmei (chief defence attorney in the Aizawa case), to Prince Saionji
- (2) Mori Den (private secretary to Kiyoura Keigo) to Kiyoura Keigo (former prime minister)
- (3) Captain Yamaguchi Ichitarō (Honjō's son-in-law) to Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō
- (4) Kita Ikki and Nishida Mitsugi, via Admiral Katō Kanji, to Naval Chief of Staff Prince Fushimi
- (5) Kamekawa Tetsuya to Admiral Yamamoto Eisuke
- (6) Kamekawa, via Mazaki to Prince Fushimi
- (7) Direct request to the emperor by War Minister Kawashima Yoshiyuki.

Of these channels, only the last was more or less conventional; the rest involved behind-the-scene machinations.

War Minister Kawashima was neutral in the factional battles, but he was also a weak personality (something which may have figured in his appointment as minister). The young officers hoped that he might be counted on to relay their demands straight to the emperor, and in fact that was precisely what he did. Channels 4, 5 and 6 meant an alliance between the Imperial Way Faction and the Navy Fleet Faction. But Admiral Yamamoto Eisuke harboured ambitions of emerging as the hero in the defusing of the Incident; catching wind of it towards the end of the previous year, he had intentionally drawn close to Mazaki, using the information he picked up there to score points with Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Saitō Makoto.

The rebels expected little via the first two channels, but hedged their other bets with the slim hope that if events worked to their advantage, Saionji, the usual king-maker, might recommend Mazaki as prime minister, albeit grudgingly.

Other high cards in the Imperial Way deck were Commander of the Tokyo Garrison Lt. General Kashii Kōhei, with authority over both the Imperial Guards and 1st Divisions; 1st Division Commander Hori Takeo; 3rd Regiment Commander Colonel Kofuji Megumu; as well as Major General Yamashita Tomoyuki, chief of the Research Bureau, and Colonel Murakami Keisaku, chief of the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry. In addition, powerful Imperial Way sympathizers were scattered among the regional troop units in places such as Aomori, Hirosaki and Kagoshima.

Prince Chichibu had been sent off with the emperor's blessings to fill the post of battalion commander with the 8th Division in Hirosaki the previous year, and if his name were added to this list, there was plenty of reason to hope that the fence-sitters making up the majority of the Army would soon come tumbling into the camp of the Imperial Way Faction and the young officers.

The problem was that neither of the two contending Army factions was able to get a clear reading on who was friend and who was foe, as indicated by Lieutenant General Kashii's bemused response to the first report of the uprising: 'Well then, exactly which units of the 1st Division can be trusted?'⁴¹ Such doubt bred misperception; and misperception resulted in more confusion.

On the morning of the 26th, while the insurgent group was confronting War Minister Kawashima with its list of demands, a mixed bag of personalities began to assemble at the war minister's residence. Mazaki showed up, sporting his decoration for the First Order of Merit, and was of course welcomed; but Major Katakura Tadashi, whom the rebels had targeted as an enemy, also dared to show his face and was swiftly put out of action by a shot from Isobe Asaichi's pistol. Just before he was shot, Katakura had caught a glimpse of Colonel Ishiwara Kanji, and thought to himself that Ishiwara had joined the rebel forces, but shortly afterwards Ishiwara himself was threatened at gunpoint by Lieutenant Kurihara Yasuhide and forced to leave the residence.

In hindsight, one of the fatal mistakes of the insurgent troops was their failure to seal off the Sakashita Gate of the imperial palace. This, too, was the result of a misperception. Lieutenant Nakahashi of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, Imperial Guards Division was put in charge of occupying the Sakashita Gate and controlling the lines of communication between the palace and the outside world. He was then supposed to signal successful completion of this mission to a body of troops stationed at Metropolitan Police Headquarters under the command of Andō Teruzō, who would then enter the palace grounds. This part of the plan was regarded as so important that the date of the uprising was set for the day that Nakahashi's unit would be on regular duty. Yet, after reaching the gate at 7.30 a.m. and stationing seventy-five men to guard it, Nakahashi went off alone to see his battalion commander Major Kadoma, and was astonished to find himself taken into custody.⁴²

This slip-up was the result of a mistaken assumption that Kadoma was on the side of the rebels, an assumption that may have been encouraged by the attitude of Hashimoto Toranosuke, commander of the Imperial Guards Division, although for some reason the particulars of this situation were not cleared up even during the subsequent court-martial. Nakahashi's plan was never publicized in press accounts. As for Hashimoto, he seems to have been neutral, with no preference between the factions, no inclination to ascertain the emperor's attitude.

The emperor's rage

Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō was probably the first of the emperor's entourage to learn of the outbreak of the Incident. Troops of the First Infantry Regiment set out from their barracks at 4.30 a.m. Honjō's son-in-law, Captain Yamaguchi Ichitarō, was watch officer that night, and despatched Lieutenant Itō Tsuneo with a message for Honjō. Itō arrived at Honjō's residence around 5.00 a.m., and according to his testimony, delivered a scrap of paper which read simply: 'We have acted. Please help us.'⁴³ However, since Yamaguchi also directly telephoned Honjō, it is possible that Honjō was aware of the Incident even earlier; he might even have had time to warn the elder statesmen of the assassination squads, had he chosen to.

Honjō arrived at the palace around 6.00 a.m., at the same time as Chief Secretary to the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi, but Imperial Household Minister Yuasa Kurahei and vice Grand Chamberlain Hirohata Tadataka were already there, and they knew of the attacks on Lord Keeper Saitō and Grand Chamberlain Suzuki.

Chamberlain Count Kanroji Osanaga, official of the day at the palace, had awakened the emperor at 5.40 a.m. with the first news of the Incident. The emperor quietly murmured: 'So they've finally done it. And I am to blame.' He then stood silently for a moment, with tears glistening in his eyes.⁴⁴

What can have gone through the emperor's mind at this moment? No doubt chagrin that this disaster, though long anticipated, had not been forestalled; accompanied by the suspicion that the failure to detect a rebellion of such major proportions must mean that there were co-conspirators and informants among the upper levels of the Army and among his own entourage. 'I am to blame' – was this not an expression of the emperor's frustration and despair in the face of unseen and undefinable enemies?

Yet the emperor quickly regained his footing. Anger at the fact his trusted officials Saitō, Suzuki and Takahashi had been targets of terrorist attacks no doubt brought him to an immediate grasp of the true nature of the rebellion. Soon afterwards, Honjō was admitted to the imperial presence and expressed his mortification at the gravity of the situation, to which the emperor responded:

‘This incident must be stopped at once, and the best made out of a dire situation,’ adding, ‘You’re the one who predicted something like this might happen, aren’t you?’⁴⁵ This last statement must have been heavy with irony, especially considering Honjō’s ties to the rebel leader Captain Yamaguchi Ichitarō.

About this time, Imperial Household Minister Yuasa also called on the emperor, advising him:⁴⁶

The most important thing at this point is to concentrate all our energies on suppressing the rebellion ... Practically speaking, if we set about organizing a successor cabinet, that would amount to a victory for the rebel forces ... I implore you absolutely not to agree to the idea of a provisional cabinet.

The emperor nodded, and expressed his agreement. As events unfolded, this apparently trivial decision would prove to be a brilliant stratagem, containing within it the key to regaining mastery of the situation.

The author of this plan was Chief Secretary to the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi, then forty-seven years old. Since the Lord Privy Seal and the Grand Chamberlain had been struck down, the Court’s response to the Incident was being mapped out in consultations among Imperial Household Minister Yuasa, Vice Grand Chamberlain Hirohata and Kido. Though the ranking member of this triumvirate, and a man of courage and integrity, Yuasa had not been in his post at the palace long, nor was he very conversant with the internal politics of the military.

Kido, who had started his career as a talented bureaucrat in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and who possessed an extensive and multifaceted personal intelligence network, emerged naturally as the key planner. This was a serious blow to the rebel forces, who had miscalculated in assuming that by eliminating Saitō and Suzuki they were clearing the Court of skilled advisers capable of assisting the emperor.

Kido’s judgement and actions immediately after the outbreak of the Incident were shrewd and nimble. First, he telephoned Prince Saionji in Okitsu to ascertain the elder statesman’s safety and advise him to take refuge. Then he met with Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō and requested him to investigate (1) whether phoney orders had been issued in the emperor’s name by either the War Ministry or

Army General Staff, and (2) how the Imperial Guards Division would respond if rebel forces attempted to invade the palace.

This request was largely intended to nail the slippery Honjō down on the right side of the fence, for Kido reckoned that no such orders had appeared, and that the Guards Division would be reasonably dependable if it came to a showdown. He believed that if the Okada Cabinet could somehow be maintained, if only in name, and the establishment of a new cabinet staved off, then the rebellion would be left hanging in midair.

It was traditional practice for a cabinet to resign *en masse* in the wake of such a serious incident; in fact as dusk approached on the first day of the rebellion, Home Minister Gotō Fumio, in his provisional role as representative for the prime minister, tendered the unanimous resignation of the cabinet to the emperor. It was not accepted. The emperor stood firm in support of Kido's strategy.

Though the cabinet remained in place, without a prime minister it was as good as dead, its constitutionally prescribed advice and signatory functions paralysed. But now a system more or less naturally established itself in which the emperor himself assumed some of the prime minister's functions, as the lack of a first minister freed him from the usual constitutional restrictions upon his decision-making power. This proved invaluable to the court.

'I shall personally assume command of the Imperial Guards'

The language the military authorities used to describe the rebels was remarkably inconsistent. On the first day they were described as 'mobilized units', and on the second as 'occupying' or 'insurgent units'; on the third day they were labelled 'mutinous', and it was not until the last day of the Incident that the term 'rebel units' was finally settled upon.

These subtle shifts in wording reflected changes in the dominant climate of opinion within the Army high command concerning the rebel forces. In fact, when martial law was declared before dawn on the 27th, and Lieutenant General Kashii was appointed martial law commandant, he integrated the rebel units into the troops under his direction, and even began providing them with rations. Small wonder rumours began to circulate that the leader of the rebel forces was actually the martial law commandant himself.

Had Kashii actually been one of the conspirators, as this rumour suggested, things might have worked out very differently indeed. But Kashii was at most a sympathizer or a fence-sitter. Despite the resources at his command – both the 1st and Imperial Guards Divisions, as well as parts of two additional divisions (the Fourteenth and Twenty-first divisions, stationed outside Tokyo) and the authority over the entire capital region vested in him by the martial law decree, Kashii seems to have lacked both the ambition and the acumen to exercise decisive leadership; he was borne helplessly along by events. The emperor's direct and stern command to him not to abuse the martial law decree may also have been ringing in his ears.

Another important figure who could have played a decisive role but passed up the opportunity was War Minister Kawashima. After meeting with the rebel leaders and promising them that he would 'take matters in hand himself', he left his official residence for the palace, arriving there about 11.00 a.m. for an audience with the emperor. After reporting to the emperor on the current situation, he presented the following proposal:

I think one of the reasons such a grave incident has occurred is that many of the policies of the present cabinet do not accord with the will of the people. I believe it is essential to form a cabinet immediately which will aggressively implement policies aimed at clarifying the national polity, stabilizing the public welfare and strengthening the national defence.

The war minister then treated the emperor to an ostentatious reading of the rebels' manifesto.

The rebels' list of demands had not included the formation of a provisional cabinet, but General Mazaki had put this particular bee in Kawashima's ear just before the war minister left for the palace, and, agreeing with the idea, he presented it to the emperor.

The emperor responded to this with extreme displeasure, snapping: 'This is not something I should be hearing from the minister of war. Shouldn't your first priority be coming up with a way of suppressing the rebels as quickly as possible?'⁴⁷ Kawashima bowed and beat a hasty retreat.

He did not, however, return to his official residence. He remained at the palace, vacillating over what he should do, and

turning the resolution of the incident over to an unofficial meeting of the Supreme Military Council dominated by Mazaki and Araki, both sympathetic to the rebels.

The Supreme Military Council was supposed to be an advisory body irregularly convened in response to requests for consultation by the emperor. This time, however, no such request had been made, and the Council was convened at the initiative of Araki and Mazaki. Aided by Kawashima's abdication of responsibility, the Council sat itself down within the palace and began its deliberations without any reference to what the wishes of the emperor might be.⁴⁸ Since Aide-de-Camp Honjō was also attending the meeting, the emperor, completely left out of things, had no recourse than to summon him every twenty or thirty minutes and press for the suppression of the rebellion.

Irie Sukemasa, a young man who had just begun service as a Chamberlain, recalls:⁴⁹

Since the Supreme War Council (and Honjō) were sequestered in the East Rooms of the Meiji Palace, each time he was summoned Honjō had to make his way down a long, long corridor to the emperor's chambers. Then, after thirty or forty minutes with the emperor, he would retire. Back down the long corridor again. Then another summons, and the Chamberlains would go flying down the hallway to grab Honjō and bring him back. This happened time and time again on the 26th and 27th.

Honjō's diary records an imperial summons as late as two o'clock in the morning on the 27th; if the emperor displayed remarkable endurance, it must also be noted that Honjō managed to keep up with him.

As the Incident moved into its second day, 27 February, dealings between the two men took on an air of distinct hostility. Honjō openly attempted to defend the young officers, saying:

Their unauthorized mobilization of Your Majesty's troops ... should of course not be condoned. Their spirit, however, prompted them to act out of concern for the empire, and they should not necessarily be condemned for that.

Shortly afterwards, the emperor summoned Honjō and retorted bitterly:

What is there to condone, even in spirit, in these terrorist officers who have massacred the elder statesmen who served me as my own hands and feet?

On another occasion, the emperor returned to this theme, remarking:

Striking down all of my most trusted senior retainers in this fashion is like slowly but surely tightening a noose around my neck.

These exchanges are the most intriguing point in the Honjō Diary, but it is difficult to understand why Honjō should choose to report them in such vivid detail, since they certainly do not put him in a very favourable light. Nevertheless, he blusters on:⁵⁰

I reiterated my point that what drove the officers to act as they did was the belief that they were serving the nation, to which His Majesty replied: 'That means that all you can say for them is that they were not acting out of the desire for personal gain.'

One can see how Honjō's obtuseness – real or feigned – must have frustrated and disappointed the emperor.

It was at this point that the emperor suddenly said: 'I shall personally assume command of the Imperial Guards Division, and use it to restore order.' Though Honjō notes in his diary how moved he was by the emperor's words, he did not offer to summon the Imperial Guards. Instead, he quashed the idea by 'repeatedly telling His Majesty that it was absolutely unnecessary for him to trouble himself in this way'.

What reason did Honjō have for such stubborn resistance? Kido's diary for the afternoon of the 26th reads:⁵¹

Apparently Honjō has conveyed to the emperor the opinion of the Supreme Military Council that a provisional cabinet should be formed.

Since Honjō had met with General Kashii in one of the palace chambers just prior to this and discussed the formation of a Mazaki cabinet,⁵² it seems safe to assume that the term 'provisional cabinet' meant one headed by Mazaki.

However, since there is no record of the Supreme War Council having actually arrived at such a decision, unless Kido was mistaken, Honjō had deceived the emperor with false information.

As one might expect, the Honjō diary is silent on this point. Yet it is possible to imagine the sparks flying in another heated exchange, with Honjō going beyond his defence of the rebels to press for the creation of a Mazaki cabinet, and the emperor rejecting this with equal vigour.

The author has long conceived of Honjō Shigeru as heading the list of renegade officers of the Shōwa era. But in the wake of the Incident, Honjō, and Kashii and Kawashima as well, all escaped punishment for their misdeeds, beyond being retired from active duty.

In Kashii's case, this was probably due to his skilful justification of his actions as 'a means of bloodless suppression' of the Incident; but Honjō was not even investigated. In fact, when he tendered his offer of resignation 'there was sentiment that I should be allowed to remain in active service as one of the long-standing senior officers of the Army',⁵³ and in fact the potential for his retention was high.

Perhaps Honjō fancied himself in the role of Chizaka Hyobu in *Chūshingura* who risked his life 'for the honour of the clan' in order to prevent his lord from sallying forth to suppress the forty-seven rōnin of Akō.

Machinations among the silent majority

The Israeli historian Ben-Ami Shillony offers the following ironic observation in his study of the February 26 Incident:⁵⁴

The emperor was enraged and reiterated his order to suppress the 'mutineers' at once. This was, however, only a verbal instruction, reflecting the personal wish of the emperor, and not an imperial decree, countersigned by a minister of state. Kawashima could thus disregard the order of his monarch and wait until the political situation became clearer.

While the emperor and Honjō bickered back and forth, the leaders of the military engaged in a complex and intimate minuet of mutual appraisal as they groped towards a resolution of the crisis. What united them all was a common resistance to any intervention on the part of the emperor until such a resolution was reached.

The meeting of the Supreme Military Councillors (with Kawashima, Kashii, Honjō, and Vice Chief of Staff Sugiyama

Hajime also in attendance) at the palace on the afternoon of the 26th was dominated by Mazaki and Araki, who set its agenda. In order to convince the rebel troops (who were referred to in the meeting as 'Restoration forces') to return to their original units, the meeting drafted a war minister's proclamation containing the following points:

- (1) The purpose of your rising has been reported to the emperor.
- (2) Your motives, based upon a sincere desire to manifest the national polity, are acknowledged.
- (3) We too are gravely concerned about the present state of the national polity, and the taint of corruption.
- (4) The Supreme Military Councillors have unanimously pledged to move forward together, basing themselves on these principles.
- (5) All else waits upon the Imperial Will.

On first reading, the true intent of this document is difficult to grasp, the third point in particular making very little sense. Apparently, the rebel leaders thought so, too, for when they were read the proclamation by Major General Yamashita Tomoyuki of the Imperial Way Faction, they asked whether or not this meant their actions had been approved. Yamashita then simply reread the document to them, offering no further interpretation.

Confusion still reigned, but when they were shown a copy of a 'Restoration Rescript' drafted by Colonel Murakami Keisaku of the Military Affairs Section and told that it might soon be promulgated, and when the rebel units were placed under the command of the 1st Division and issued field rations, they took it as a sign that the Army had approved the rebellion, and cries of 'Banzai!' welled up from the ranks.

As may be seen, things were moving in a positive direction for the rebels. All that remained was to see whether or not Mazaki and the Imperial Way faction could use the rebel forces as a springboard to control of the Army as a whole. This was essential, for in the face of what they knew about the true nature of the 'Imperial Will', it would take a united front on the part of the entire Army to overturn it.

Therefore, from the night of the 26th into the following day, ambitious men, great and small, engaged in furtive machinations behind the scenes to win the support of the Army majority. Particularly since these took the form of collisions and standoffs between the Imperial Way and Control factions, opportunists among the neutral camp, who hoped to gain ascendancy in the guise of mediation, were especially active.

Among them were Colonel Hashimoto Kingorō, of a clique known as the Clean Army Faction (*Seigunba*) who supported the idea of a cabinet led by General Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, commander of the 4th Division in Osaka; and Admiral Yamamoto Eisuke, associated with the Navy's Fleet Faction. Both men had swung into action upon first catching wind of the plot in the final days of 1935.

Even General Mazaki began to come around to the idea of a Yamamoto cabinet after his own hopes for leadership had been shattered on the 26th. Mazaki and Admiral Katō Kanji of the Fleet Faction had met that morning with Navy Chief of Staff Prince Fushimi to persuade him to call on the emperor to propose a provisional cabinet headed by Mazaki, but the emperor's refusal to so much as consider this had nipped this plan in the bud.

Late on the night of the 26th, Hashimoto Kingorō, Lieutenant Colonel Mitsui Sakichi and Colonel Ishiwara Kanji gathered at Hashimoto's behest in a room at the Imperial Hotel to discuss the resolution of the Incident. At this point Mitsui served as a representative of the rebel forces and Ishiwara of Martial Law Headquarters, but all three men had been in contact with one another since the previous year, groping towards a settlement of the Imperial Way/Control factional dispute or, if that was not successful, the creation of a 'third force' to break the deadlock. This prior association allowed them to talk freely with each other.

Hashimoto proposed that the emperor should be persuaded to exercise his supreme authority and announce a Restoration, at which point the insurgent troops would withdraw.⁵⁵ Ishiwara and Mitsui agreed with this, but opinion divided over who should lead the successor cabinet, with Ishiwara suggesting Prince Higashikuni and Hashimoto backing General Tatekawa. Mitsui stuck to the idea of a Mazaki cabinet at first, but was soon convinced of the slim chance this proposal had for success. He then proposed Yamamoto

Eisuke as an alternative, and the other two men agreed to proceed along this line.

The rebel forces, however, were resistant to the Yamamoto plan, and when Ishiwara brought the idea back to Martial Law Headquarters and broached it to Army Vice Chief of Staff Sugiyama Hajime (Chief of Staff Prince Kan'in being on sick leave), Sugiyama immediately rejected it, saying: 'It is absolutely out of the question for the Army to lay such a proposal before His Majesty.'⁵⁶

Sugiyama's memoirs give one the impression of firmness and resolution on his part; yet he was nicknamed 'privy door' (opening in whichever direction pushed), and in his habitual indecisiveness and lack of fixed perspective, he rivalled War Minister Kawashima.

Neither Sugiyama nor Kawashima possessed either the courage or the resourcefulness to confront the emperor with advice or proposals he was not likely to want to hear. In contrast, Ishiwara had already clearly demonstrated such audacity during the Manchurian Incident, a drama he had stage-managed without retreating an inch in the face of pressure from either the government or the central Army command.

But Ishiwara, normally a careful and meticulous planner, had jumped into this particular Incident in the middle of things, and, concluding that little more could be done with the situation as it stood, he swiftly joined the ranks of those urging its suppression.

Prince Chichibu's demonstration of loyalty

At one o'clock in the afternoon of 27 February, the up-train for the capital, with Prince Chichibu on board, pulled into the Minakami station on the Jōetsu line. A smallish gentleman hopped across the platform to meet it.

He was Professor Hiraizumi Kiyoshi of the Faculty of History of Tokyo Imperial University. He was renowned for conservative, emperor-centred historical views, and he had been Prince Chichibu's tutor in Japanese history some years earlier. His studies of the Jinshin Revolt of 672 and the struggle between the Northern and Southern Courts in the fourteenth century had convinced him that any division within the imperial house would be disastrous.⁵⁷ According to his own account, he had rushed from the capital to

advise Prince Chichibu to join forces with Prince Takamatsu to support the emperor during the current crisis.⁵⁸

Hiraizumi suspected that Prince Chichibu was headed for the capital to lend his support to the rebel forces. There was some basis for this assumption. The commander of the Prince's unit, the Eighth Division in Hirosaki, was Lt. General Shimomoto Kumaya, a fairly hardcore Imperial Way adherent sympathetic to Captain Suematsu Tahei and other radical younger officers on Suematsu's and his staff.

On the day of the Incident, Shimomoto summoned Suematsu and his fellow radicals and showed them the problematic proclamation the war minister had issued. The next day, when his enthusiastic subordinates sent a jointly signed telegram to the three top Army officials urging them to 'seize the opportunity of the present uprising to launch a Restoration', he affixed his official approval to the document as division commander.⁵⁹

Prince Chichibu's trip to the capital was also, at least formally, at the behest of the division commander, and news of his departure disturbed both the Imperial Household Ministry and the central Army authorities. In fact, quite apart from any intentions the Prince may have had, rumours flew about the Hirosaki area that 'Prince Chichibu is about to leave for the capital at the head of the Eighth Division', while in Tokyo rebel officers gave speeches applauded by street corner crowds claiming that 'Prince Chichibu is on his way to the capital to become our leader'. Shigemitsu Mamoru, then Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, recalled: 'I even heard the statement (from the lips of a military man) that if the emperor opposed reform he should be deposed in favour of a certain other member of the imperial house.'⁶⁰

In any event, Prince Chichibu's train arrived at Ueno Station in Tokyo on the evening of the 27th. It was still uncertain what the effect of Professor Hiraizumi's intervention might be. The prince was met at the station by an official of the Imperial Household Ministry named Iwanami, a detachment of troops from the Imperial Guard (Konoe) Division, and a mob of newspaper reporters. Since there was a rumour that the rebels might also turn out in force to greet him, the prince did not stop at his own residence in Akasaka, but proceeded directly to the Imperial Palace, where he and Prince Takamatsu had an audience and dinner with the emperor. Only

then did he go to his Akasaka palace, also heavily guarded by Kono division soldiers. There he was visited one after another by such members of the Army top brass as Sugiyama, Kashii and Furushō, who briefed him on the latest developments.

Prince Chichibu listened to them in silence, but the tide had already turned. On the morning of the 28th, the Imperial Command ordering the rebel forces to return to their original units was handed down to the martial law commander, and the officers of the 3rd Infantry began voluntarily to set about persuading their troops to withdraw before an armed suppression got underway.

On the afternoon of the 28th, Captain Morita Toshihachi, acting as the rebels' representative, paid a call on Prince Chichibu at the Akasaka Palace. He found the Prince take an unexpectedly hard line. He expressed the opinion that the ringleaders of the uprising should commit suicide, and this was quickly conveyed to the rebel leaders as 'the prince's command'. The rebel forces must have felt their last faint hopes shatter at this point. The same day, the ailing Prince Kan'in, Army Chief of Staff, also visited the Imperial Palace, further solidifying the posture of unanimous support for the emperor adopted by the members of the imperial house.

Much speculation and conjecture, truth and falsehood have been voiced concerning the behaviour of Prince Chichibu during the February 26 Incident. There is little evidence to suggest that the rebel forces actively tried to enlist the prince, either immediately before or immediately after the rising. Indeed, as Captain Suematsu had claimed, one can even detect a conscious effort on the part of the rebels to avoid causing problems for the prince.

Yet even if they had intended to bear the prince aloft as their champion, this would only have been attempted in the fullness of time, as a final trump card in their game. Since the rebellion collapsed at a much earlier stage than this, one might say that even if the prince had harboured such ambitions, there was no opportunity for him to make a move.

In fact, in the interest of self-protection, Prince Chichibu was confronted first and foremost with the necessity of dispelling the emperor's 'misconceptions' about him. In this sense, his advice to the rebel leaders to take their own lives was a kind of pledge of his own loyalty to the throne.

No one knows what the emperor and Prince Chichibu said to each other on the night of the 27th. Yet the following day, when he was asked by Captain Morita if he had been reprimanded by the emperor for being the *éminence grise* behind the Incident, the prince responded quite clearly: 'Of course not. Nor would it be like His Majesty to do so.'⁶¹

Nevertheless, it is to be doubted that the meeting of the two brothers was as harmonious as Prince Chichibu would lead us to believe. For instance, Major Tanida Isamu heard on 28 February from the prince that he had been scolded thoroughly by the emperor.⁶² And Kido's diary for 28 February reports that Chamberlain Hirohata passed on to him the following rating by the emperor of the degree of loyalty of the principal members of the imperial house:

Prince Takamatsu is the best of the lot. Prince Chichibu has improved a lot since the May 15 Incident. Prince Nashimoto is a weakling. Prince Haruhito is fine. Prince Asaka talks a lot about duty and principles, but he's become an extremist; he's no good. Prince Higashikuni is a little better than Prince Asaka.

These brief, barbed assessments show how much attention the emperor paid to the behaviour of Prince Chichibu and the other powerful members of the imperial family, perhaps less in his official institutional capacity than out of a strong sense of his role as leader of the clan.

The reason Prince Asaka got such bad marks and Prince Takamatsu such good ones may have had something to do not only with the unsteady qualities Prince Asaka had long displayed, but also with the fact that it was he who had argued on the 27th that an imperial family conference should be convened in order to form a new cabinet immediately, and that it was Prince Takamatsu who forcefully rejected this notion.

Prince Higashikuni was an even more disconcerting presence, with Ishiwara Kanji backing him for prime minister and the rebel forces trying to enlist him on their side, but during the Incident he sat tight, taking no action. Prince Nashimoto held the rank of Army Field Marshal, but he was a dithering and undependable old man not capable of doing much harm or good. So it is not surprising that it was the alert and intelligent Navy man, Prince Takamatsu, whom the emperor most trusted.

What is at issue here is the problem of interpreting the significance of the emperor's assessment of Prince Chichibu. It is at least conceivable that the prince, who had earlier argued for direct imperial rule and who had quarrelled with the emperor to advocate the cause of General Mazaki, now saw the error of his ways and resolved to sever his ties with the young officers and the Imperial Way Faction. Kido's diary for 3 March, which reports that Prince Chichibu came to the palace to advise the emperor not to approve a Hiranuma cabinet and to suggest that Mazaki ought to be cashiered, is another indicator of such a change in the prince's attitude.

One thing that can certainly be said about the February 26 Incident is that through it the emperor reaffirmed his authority as head of the imperial house.

Change of heart, suppression of revolt

As we have seen the tide of events turned in the course of 27 and 28 February until the victory of the emperor and his supporters became all but certain. The neutralists and fence-sitters who had watched the situation carefully from the sidelines now began to line up quickly behind the idea of suppressing the revolt. The rebel army itself was being eroded by a variety of efforts to talk it down, and it had been pushed to the brink of collapse.

In the midst of all this there were two stalwarts who struggled to prop up the rebel forces until the bitter end: Martial Law Commander Kashii and Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō. Despite his receipt of the Imperial Command to suppress the rebels, Kashii hesitated to act, claiming that he wanted to 'avoid fratricidal conflict within the Imperial Army'. On the morning of the 28th Kashii, looking very determined, confronted War Minister Kawashima and Vice Chief of Staff Sugiyama and said:⁶³

Now that things have come to this point, the only way to avoid the tragedy of bloodshed is to appeal to His Majesty for enactment of a Shōwa Restoration, and await the Imperial Decision ... We must act resolutely on the basis of this firm conviction.

According to the Sugiyama memoirs, he did not stop there, but went on: 'In principle, I do not necessarily repudiate their actions.'

This gives a valuable glimpse into Kashii's state of mind; his timing, however, could hardly have been worse.

But Kawahima and Sugiyama immediately rejected Kashii's proposal, saying that 'it would be a terrible thing indeed to forcibly demand a Shōwa Restoration from His Majesty', and urged Kashii to implement the orders he had received to suppress the rebels. But then in his own record of the Incident, Kashii writes that 'I had expected something of the sort', hinting at his frustration and lack of willingness to give in.

By comparison, Ishiwara Kanji, who was now chief of operations for the martial law headquarters, shifted his position coolly and adroitly. When Captain Yamaguchi of the rebel forces, sensing the futility of the situation but still clinging to a last line of defence, approached Ishiwara tearfully with the request that the Imperial Command for suppression of the revolt be delayed, Ishiwara barked: 'I will speak for the Martial Law Commander. Offensive operations begin tomorrow morning at 0600. Winner take all. Dismissed.'⁶⁴

About this time, Sugiyama reported to the emperor that Kashii, too, had undergone a change of heart, and had decided to proceed with the suppression. But at this point Major General Yamashita Tomoyuki appeared with a message for Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō:

The group of activist officers has assembled at the war minister's residence and are prepared to commit suicide to atone for their crimes and send the non-commissioned officers and troops back to their original units, but they request the honour of an imperial messenger as witness to their deaths.

Caught off guard, Honjō relayed this bizarre request to the emperor. As he recorded it, the emperor responded sharply:⁶⁵

His Majesty was extremely displeased by this. He said, 'If they want to kill themselves let them go ahead and kill themselves. But the idea of sending an imperial messenger out for something like this is ludicrous.'

Honjō could find no words to reply, and left the imperial presence. The emperor made no reply either, retreating silently into his private chambers. When he summoned Honjō again shortly afterwards, and the aide-de-camp began another tearful complaint

about the slanders being directed at the Army, the emperor cut him short, snapping 'Just do something to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.'

The emperor must have been deeply disturbed at this childish display by the man who happened to hold rank and title as an army general and as aide-de-camp to the emperor himself. But what is difficult to understand is why Honjō should have chosen to record his own disgraceful behaviour so faithfully in his diary. Perhaps his motivation was to inscribe for posterity his vain efforts at 'loyal remonstrance' with his sovereign. If so, the irony is that the strongest impression left by his document is that of the aide-de-camp as a 'disloyal retainer'.

In any event, the rebel army began to show signs of submission before the general punitive assault scheduled for the morning of the 29th took place. By evening of the 28th most of the non-commissioned officers and troops had returned to their barracks, the leaders had given up their thoughts of suicide and had been taken into custody by the military police, and the four-day revolt had been put down without any additional blood being spilled.

At the end of April the trial of the rebel force commanders and their associates began before the Tokyo Army Court Martial. It was a speedy trial, closed to the public,⁶⁶ and without counsel for the defence. In July, Captain Kōda Kiyosada and seventeen other defendants were sentenced to death and executed immediately. The trial of collaborators in the Incident dragged on into the following year, and took on a strong political cast. Background figures like Kita Ikki and Nishida Mitsugi, who had no direct participation in the Incident, were sentenced to death, while General Mazaki was declared innocent for lack of evidence.

Misapplied paradigms

Tsutsui Kiyotada has discovered a fascinating document among the secret archives of the Police Bureau of the pre-war Home Ministry, entitled 'A survey of the leadership of armed insurrections in the Soviet Revolution'.⁶⁷ The document was seized by the police in 1936 from Lieutenant Tsushima Katsuo and several others of the officers involved in the revolt of 26 February. Tsutsui suggests that

it may have been written by rebel leader Isobe Asaichi. Isobe never mentioned the Russian revolution in his extensive writings in prison, and this casts some doubt on the hypothesis. Still, the fact that Lieutenant Tsushima, who was executed for his role in the Incident, had a copy of this document on his person when he was arrested means that there is a strong possibility that other leaders of the revolt had read it and used it for reference.

The document reviews the tactics employed by Lenin in the course of the October Revolution, and discusses their applicability to the Japanese situation. After reviewing the concept of 'seizure of power' through 'armed insurrection', the 'strategic objectives' to be targeted for that purpose, the importance of the capital as the 'flash-point for revolutionary insurrection', and the tactics of urban combat, the text goes on to consider 'capturing the emperor' and the 'revolutionary management of the government'. Applied to the February 26 Incident, this would have meant, first of all, abandoning dependence upon management of the emperor by manipulation of surrogates in favour of a direct seizure of the palace and the person of the emperor, forcing him to do the bidding of the rebels; and secondly, the establishment of a cabinet controlled directly by the young officers themselves.

In actual fact, the rebel forces were unable to bring themselves to adopt such a decisive strategy. They relied instead upon indirect attempts to bring the emperor around to their side through the manipulation of their superiors, backed by the seizure of strategic points within the capital – and this misfired because of the emperor's instinctive rejection of their efforts.

In his prison notes, Isobe wrote that the revolt had failed because 'His Majesty would probably not deign to take note unless one appeared before him stained with blood.' Muranaka reflected with regret that the rebels should have 'Raised our bloody swords immediately after the attack ... prostrated ourselves before the Imperial Presence ... and begged for the attainment of our aims', but confessed that 'though we had considered this earlier, when it came down to it ... we shrank from coercion against His Majesty'. As these statements indicate, the rebels were so fettered by their own ideal of reverence for the emperor that the dispassion of the revolutionary was unattainable for them.

In addition, the rebel forces lacked a clearly defined chain of command, and they ended up governed by a loosely organized system of collective leadership. Even if Isobe, Muranaka, Kurihara, and the other hardliners had embarked upon more forceful and direct action, they would have found it difficult to bring their subordinates along with them.

As far as the rebels' perspective on a new regime is concerned, Lieutenant Kurihara's statement to a newspaper reporter immediately after the rising – 'about all we can do at this point is form a Kerensky cabinet. The real thing will come later'⁶⁸ – hints at a two-stage strategy leading from a provisional military regime to a revolutionary government. The former would probably have been organized around Mazaki and a core of Imperial Way generals,⁶⁹ the latter would have been a government of the young officers themselves, along with figures such as Kita Ikki and Nishida Mitsugi.

Oddly enough, the February Revolution which toppled the Romanov dynasty and brought Kerensky to power bears a number of coincidental resemblances to the February 26 Incident. The uprising by citizens and mutinous troops in the capital city of Petrograd took place on 26 February 1917 (old Julian Calendar). On the 27th the cabinet resigned *en masse* and soviets of workers and soldiers were formed. On 2 March, realizing the futility of his position, Nicholas II abdicated, after reassurances from the representatives of the Duma that he would be succeeded by his brother Grand Duke Mikhail. Mikhail, however, renounced the throne, and the three-hundred-year Romanov dynasty toppled like a rotten tree. The provisional government established the same day was headed by Prince Lvov (soon to yield to Kerensky), and the transfer of power to this new regime was determined through behind-the-scenes dealings among the members of the ruling elite, with hardly a drop of blood spilled. The coalition governments which ensued were swept away eight months later by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

It remains unclear how many lessons the young officers of Japan's February 26 Incident learned from this complex chain of events, particularly from the bloodless February Revolution. But in plotting the strategy of a revolution or *coup d'état* common sense

would dictate the search for relevant historical models. From this perspective, the dominant image in the minds of the young officers, with their slogans of a 'Shōwa Restoration' and their self-conceptions as loyal warriors of the emperor, was overwhelmingly that of the Meiji Restoration, which provided a readily available and indigenous paradigm for action.

The officers' rhetoric of destroying the 'traitors around the throne' linked them with their nineteenth-century predecessors, and employing the historical schema of loyalist versus shogunal supporters gave them a simple and convenient explanatory device for sorting out contemporary events. That is the logic that informs a passage from Isobe's account:

Seizure of sovereign authority (from the hands of the Tokugawa = from the hands of the senior statesmen), returning it to the emperor, and thus clarifying the relationship between sovereign and subject ... this is what Restoration means.

A similar interpretive mode was applied to the suppression of the rebels by the military authorities, in an anonymous document that circulated at the time of the Incident. Entitled 'The Ansei Purge of the Shōwa Era', it compared the action of the authorities to those of the Regent Ii Naosuke in suppressing nineteenth-century loyalists.⁷⁰ Control Faction luminaries were cast as Tokugawa leaders and agents: Nagata Tetsuzan as [the Tokugawa official] Manabe Norikatsu, Colonel Mutō Akira and Major Katakura Tadashi as [Ii Naosuke's agent] Nagano Shuzen, Captain Tsuji Masanobu as [the informer] Meakashi Bunkichi, and so on. More specific analogies extended to the Forbidden Gate and Toba-Fushimi violence. From his prison cell Isobe summed it up as follows: 'In the end we failed, because the time was only ripe for the Forbidden Gate, but we had planned on Toba-Fushimi.'⁷¹

Yet it is doubtful that the rebels were aware of the fact that the core of the Satsuma-Chōshū Restoration strategy in 1868 for the overthrow of the shogunate lay in their struggle for control of 'the jewel' – the person of the emperor. The proclamation of Imperial Restoration in 1868 was achieved when the radical court nobles led by Iwakura Tomomi, backed by the power of the Satsuma-Chōshū armies drove the more moderate factions from the court. But in

1936, Chief Aide-de-Camp Honjō did not have the skill or ingenuity to re-enact Iwakura's role.

Most different, however, was that in contrast to the boy-emperor Meiji, only fifteen at the time of the Restoration, Emperor Hirohito was a mature and politically experienced man of thirty-four, and this difference proved to be decisive. And if one last analogy to the Meiji Restoration can be drawn, it is that Emperor Hirohito neither desired nor encouraged an 'overthrow of the shogunate', but chose, as his great-grandfather Emperor Kōmei before him had, to work towards a more moderate 'union of court and camp'.⁷²

Bitterly awakened to the rebels' misapplication of precedent, and soon to face the firing squad, Isobe penned a passage that is like a curse:

I cannot comprehend how His Majesty can allow his loyal sons to be shot ... This will surely provoke the wrath of the gods!

The unquiet spirits of the young officers

Article 11 of the Meiji Constitution reads: 'The emperor has the supreme command of the Army and Navy.' In purely legal terms, this meant that the emperor was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but in practice and through longstanding precedent it meant that the emperor served as a rubber stamp for the decisions and policies served up to him by the minister of war and the chiefs of staff.

However, when the *coup d'état* attempt of February 1936 temporarily paralysed the functioning of the government and armed services, the emperor was presented with a predicament: he had to intervene personally in order to resolve the crisis. He may have trembled with rage, but he assessed the situation coolly, swiftly rejected the notion of a provisional cabinet, and decided in favour of the immediate suppression of the rebel forces. Moreover, he stuck resolutely to this course, allowing no obstructions or appeals to sway him from his path.

According to Clausewitz's classic definition, a commander has to have courage and a strong will, and he must guide operations with clear and consistent reasoning. In the final analysis, it was the emperor's adherence to this spirit and stance which carried the day,

for it was his firm resolve which brought the wavering fence-sitters within the Army back into the fold, convincing them of the wisdom of suppressing the revolt.

It seemed that the emperor had won a complete victory. In the Army purge that followed in the wake of the Incident, the young officers and the Imperial Way Faction were swept away. The purge was extended to the Army Purification Faction and the Fleet Faction of the Navy as well, and the military troublemakers and right-wingers that might serve as an irritant to the emperor disappeared from view. At the same time, the emperor had solidified his authority as master in his own imperial house, leaving the princes and other members of the clan no room for rash or foolish behaviour. However, this soon proved to be but a temporary victory, for in chasing the tiger from his front gate the emperor had unwittingly allowed a wolf to slip in through the back door.

What the emperor had hoped was that the Army, chastened by the revolt from within its ranks, would return to the spirit of the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, behaving more prudently and keeping itself out of involvement in politics.⁷³ This is what the emperor had in mind when he spoke to Honjō on the morning of the rebellion, speaking of 'making the best out of a dire situation'. Instead, the Army made the fullest possible use of the scare value inherent in the revolt and employed it for even more blatant excursions towards political dominance. As Iokibe Makoto has pointed out, the Army's logic ran as follows:⁷⁴

With the punishments and personnel purges, the Army felt that it had fulfilled its responsibility as far as the Incident was concerned. In return, it expected an unrestricted voice in politics.

From the emperor's perspective, the mountain had laboured and brought forth a mouse. Hegemony had merely passed from the hands of the Imperial Way Faction into those of the Control Faction and its epigones, and Japan would soon plunge headlong down the path to destruction in the China and Pacific Wars.

In the course of these events, the Army was to achieve something close to a military dictatorship, but the after image of the February 26 Incident never faded entirely from sight. Not long after the Incident, Professor Hiraizumi opened a private academy called the

Seiseijuku which attracted a new crop of young officers, among them Takeshita Masahiko, an elementary school classmate of the executed Lieutenant Kurihara. Takeshita, Ida Masataka, Shiizaki Jirō, and Hatanaka Kenji would later be comrades in the *coup* attempt of 15 August 1945,⁷⁵ and would take their paradigm not from the Meiji Restoration, but from the February 26 Incident itself. Emperor Hirohito would once again face terrorism by extremist officers of his own Imperial Army.

Notes

¹ Katakura Tadashi, *Senjin zuiroku*, p. 172.

² This post made him liaison officer between the emperor and the War Ministry and General Staff and the emperor's alternate for inspection of forces. It was limited to army generals or lieutenant-generals or admirals or vice-admirals, but in practice only army representatives were chosen.

³ The February 26 mutiny was staged by the officers of a division about to be sent overseas as a desperate attempt to install an 'Imperial Way' radical military government. It included the murder of three elderly political leaders, the attempted assassination of the prime minister, and the occupation of the area around the palace in the expectation that the emperor would appoint an Imperial Way military government. More rational leaders of the Control (Tōsei) Faction carried out the emperor's order for suppression of the revolt. See Ben-Ami Shillony, *Revolt in Japan: The Young Officers and the February 26, 1936 Incident* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

⁴ Honjō Shigeru, *Honjō Nikki* (Hara shobō, 1967); trans. by Mikiso Hane as *Emperor Hirohito and His Chief Aide-de-Camp: The Honjō Diary, 1933–1936* (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1982).

⁵ Kishida Hideo, *Jijūchō no Shōwasbi*, p. 80.

⁶ The statement appears in a monologue Hirohito dictated to court officials, probably in anticipation of involvement in the International Tribunal, Far East, shortly after surrender, to the effect that after his bitter experience with the Tanaka Cabinet in 1928 he had refrained from putting forth his own will or thwarting that of his ministers, with the exception of 'two times only, 1936 and the end of the war, when I carried out my own will'. The text was discovered and published in *Bungei Shunjū*, December 1990, 'Shōwa Tennō no dokuhaku hachijikan', p. 104; also published in book form shortly afterwards.

⁷ Translation in *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), Vol. 2, p. 7.

⁸ This is specified in Article 55, Paragraph 2.

⁹ These issues receive detailed consideration in Frank O. Miller, *Minobe Tatsukichi Interpreter of Constitutionalism in Japan* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1965.) Critics of Hirohito hold that his silence during these turbulent times was tantamount to acceptance of the role of absolute monarch and that this, added to his unchallenged responsibility for leadership of the armed services, weakens his protestations of constitutional procedure. See Irokawa Daikichi, *Shōwashi to Tennō* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1991) pp. 156–160. Clearly the author disagrees.

¹⁰ As Hirohito's monologue described it, the young emperor was so angry when Tanaka failed to keep his promise to find and punish those responsible for the murder of Chang Tso-lin in 1928 that he bluntly suggested he resign, thereby bringing down the cabinet. At this, rumours began to spread of palace machinations by senior officials, who timidly came to him urging that he be more conscious of constitutional limitations. 'After that I resolved not to dispute formal cabinet recommendations even if I disagreed with them.' 'Shōwa Tennō no dokuhaku hachijikan', *loc cit.* p. 101.

¹¹ Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku*, 9 vols. A rough English translation was prepared for the International Military Tribunal for the Far East as *Saionji-Harada Memoirs*. The first section receives careful translation and analysis in Thomas Francis Mayer-Oakes, *Saionji-Harada Memoirs – Fragile Victory: Prince Saionji and the 1930 London Treaty Issue* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968).

¹² Harada, *Saionji kō*, Vol. 2, p. 288 (19 May 1932). The remark came during the process of selecting a successor for the murdered Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi.

¹³ *Honjō nikki*, 10 May 1933.

¹⁴ *Bungei shunjū tokushū*, April 1957.

¹⁵ Endō Saburō, *Nitchū 15-nen sensō to watakushi*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Harada, *Saionji kō*, 27 April 1933.

¹⁷ *Honjō nikki*, 11 March 1935.

¹⁸ *Honjō nikki*, 22 May 1935.

¹⁹ Mazaki issued the directive on 4 April 1935. Shillony, *Revolt in Japan*, p. 51.

²⁰ Navy factions were crystallized by disputes surrounding the London Naval Limitations Treaty of 1930. See Hata Ikuhiko, *Gun fuashizurnu undō shi* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1962), pp. 53–61, and, for the army, James B. Crowley, 'Japanese Army Factionalism in the Early 1930's', *Journal of Asian Studies* XXI, 3 (May 1962), pp. 309–326.

²¹ Discussed in Hata, *Shōwashi no gunbu to seiji*, Chapter 5, 'Kantai-ha to jōyaku-ha'.

- ²² *Mazaki Jinzaburō nikki* (Tokyo: Yamakawa, 1981–2), Vol. 2.
- ²³ Suzuki would later serve as prime minister at the time of Japan's surrender in 1945.
- ²⁴ Kishida, *op cit*, p. 64.
- ²⁵ The 'Shōwa Restoration' was a slogan used by extremists who thought of themselves as continuing or completing the work of their samurai predecessors in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Besides a call for imperial (as opposed, theoretically, to bureaucratic) rule and bold steps to 'free' Japan from the shackles of international restrictions, however, their programme, though it had vague overtones of social reform, was extremely nebulous.
- ²⁶ Maruyama Masao, *Gendai seiji no shisō to kōdō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1964), p. 62. Translated in Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 56.
- ²⁷ The early Meiji government made good use of the names and prestige of court nobles and former feudal lords before power settled in the hands of the young samurai.
- ²⁸ Tsutsui Kiyotada, 'Kita Ikki shisō to 2/26 jiken' in Matsuzawa Tessei ed., *Hito to shisō: Kita Ikki*.
- ²⁹ Otani Keijirō, *Shōwa kempei shi*, p. 152.
- ³⁰ Again, echoes of Meiji, when the slogan was 'Revere the emperor! Drive out the foreigners!' (*sonnō-jōi*)
- ³¹ Ashizawa Noriyuki, *Chichibu no miya to ni-niroku*.
- ³² Kōno Tsukasa, ed., *Ni-niroku jiken*, p. 102.
- ³³ Ashizawa Noriyuki, *Chichibu no Miya Yasuhiro Shinnō*, p. 207.
- ³⁴ Nishida, *Sen'un o sashimaneku* (unpublished).
- ³⁵ Saitō Ryū, *Ni-niroku*, p. 115.
- ³⁶ *Nakabashi chūi gokuchū shuki*, in Kōno, *op cit*, p. 89.
- ³⁷ *Honjō nikki*, 7 September 1933.
- ³⁸ O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *Militarism and Fascism in Japan*, With an Introduction by Karl Radek (New York: International Publishers: 1934), p. 182.
- ³⁹ Harada, *Saionji kō*, 27 April 1938.
- ⁴⁰ Higashikuni, (1887–1990) as a major, was sent to study in France in 1920 and enjoyed his life there so much that it caused comment in Japan; he did not return until 1927. He headed Japan's first post-surrender cabinet, from August to October 1945.
- ⁴¹ Kashii Ken'ichi, ed., *Kashii kaigen shireikan hiroku ni-niroku jiken*, p. 19.
- ⁴² Ishibashi Tsuneyoshi, *Shōwa no hanran* II, pp. 88–90.
- ⁴³ Ashizawa, *Akebono no kaigenrei* (1975), p. 54.
- ⁴⁴ Kanroji Osanaga, *Sebiru no Tennō* (Tōzai bunmei: 1977), p. 188.

- ⁴⁵ *Honjō nikki*, 26 February 1936.
- ⁴⁶ *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo*, p. 106.
- ⁴⁷ Takamiya Taihei, *Tennō*, p. 210.
- ⁴⁸ Shillony, *Revolt in Japan*, pp. 152–153.
- ⁴⁹ Irie, *Ikutabi no baru kyūtei gojūnen* (TBS Britannica, 1981), p. 185.
- ⁵⁰ All of these passages may be found in different wording on p. 213 of the Hane translation of the diary.
- ⁵¹ *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo*, p. 273.
- ⁵² Kashii, *op cit*, p. 19.
- ⁵³ *Honjō nikki*, 7 March 1936.
- ⁵⁴ Shillony, *Revolt in Japan*, pp. 149–150.
- ⁵⁵ Hata, *Gun fuashizumu undō shi*, p. 154.
- ⁵⁶ *Sugiyama shuki*; Takamiya Taihei, *Gunkoku taibei ki*, p. 254.
- ⁵⁷ The Jinshin war erupted after the death of the Emperor Tenji when Prince Ōama, Tenji's younger brother, succeeded in deposing Prince Ōtomo, Tenji's son and designated heir, before assuming the rule as Emperor Temmu (r. 672–686). Ōtomo, who committed suicide, was posthumously designated Emperor Kōbun in 1870. The Northern/Southern Courts dispute lasted from 1336 to 1392 with two rival courts, each claiming legitimacy, until it was resolved through alternations between them. This posed a major ideological problem for loyalist historians with their profession of an 'unbroken line' and figured in twentieth-century political warfare. In the first decade of the twentieth century Emperor Meiji (who himself was a descendant of the Northern Court) was prevailed upon to declare the Southern Court legitimate. In pre-war decades the warriors who fought for the Southern Court were enshrined as examples of imperial loyalty.
- ⁵⁸ This is according to Hiraizumi's own account after the fact, published as *Higeki jūshō* (Kōgakkān daigaku, 1980), p. 458. Others, (e.g. Shillony, *Revolt in Japan*, pp. 175–6), however, speculate that Hiraizumi hoped to sway the prince towards the rebel course.
- ⁵⁹ Suematsu Taihei, *Watakusbi no Shōwa shi* (Misuzu shobō, 1963), pp. 267–269.
- ⁶⁰ Shigemitsu, *Shōwa no dōran* (Chūō kōron, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 102.
- ⁶¹ Akizawa, *Chichibu no Miya to ni-ni roku* (Hara shobō, 1973), p. 266.
- ⁶² Tanida, *Tatsu-tora no arasoī*, p. 363.
- ⁶³ *Ni-niroku* (unpublished.), p. 218.
- ⁶⁴ Interview with Lt. General Manaki Takanobu.
- ⁶⁵ *Honjō nikki*, 28 February 1936.
- ⁶⁶ Previous trials, especially that of Colonel Aizawa for the murder of General Nagata, had been turned into public spectacles with bathetic

professions of loyalty and morality that served to glamourize the defendants and stir up the people.

⁶⁷ *Naimushō keibokuyoku hoanka kimitsu bunsbo*, 'Sobieto kakumei busō bōdō shidō yōryō'; Tsutsui Kiyotada, *Kita Ikki shisō to Ni-niroku jiken*, pp. 243–247.

⁶⁸ Wada Hidekichi, 'Yuki no hanran shireibu ichiban nore', *Bungei shunjū* – *Shōwa memo* (1954).

⁶⁹ Since this was written, hard evidence has proved it correct. In 1988, the chief investigator's files, that had been concealed for the sake of personal and historical preservation, came to light. These showed, among other things, projects for attacks on the political party and *zaibatsu* headquarters that had not been carried out, and included projections for a cabinet headed by General Mazaki; Araki Sadao was to head the Home Ministry, Kita Ikki would be Minister with Portfolio and Nishida Mitsugi Chief Cabinet Secretary. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, 15 February 1988.

⁷⁰ Ii Naosuke's stern repression of dissent in 1858 (the Ansei era) ranged from retirement and house arrest for feudal lords and court nobles who had protested the shogunate acceptance of Townsend Harris's treaty (as contrary to the emperor's wishes) to the execution of retainers who had served as agents or instigators of loyalist passion. Ii himself was assassinated in 1860.

⁷¹ In 1864, Chōshū forces attempted to seize the Kyoto palace and establish control over the court, but they succeeded only in starting a conflagration that burned the city. In 1868, at Toba-Fushimi, Satsuma and Chōshū forces turned back Tokugawa units and initiated the civil war that ended Tokugawa power.

⁷² In the 1860s, manoeuvring Emperor Kōmei, who had been angered by Tokugawa actions in the Ansei Purge, favoured a new and more cooperative approach some shogunal officials tried to work out with the court (and great domains), symbolized by the slogan *kō-bu gattai*.

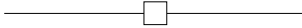
⁷³ The 1882 Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, together with the 1890 Rescript on Education, functioned as a basic text of morality in pre-surrender Japan. It was issued after indications that calls for representative government were finding echo among members of the armed service. In 1878, shortly after fifty-three men were executed after the Takebashi Mutiny, General Yamagata issued a stern warning against political activity, and the 1882 Rescript put these sentiments in the emperor's mouth: 'neither be led astray by current opinions or meddle in politic, but with single heart fulfil your essential duty of loyalty ...'

⁷⁴ 'Rikugun ni yoru seiji shihai' in *Shōwashi no gunbu to seiji*, vol. II, p. 24.

⁷⁵ A desperate attempt to invade the palace and seize the recording of the emperor's surrender rescript in order to continue the hopeless war.

CHAPTER 2

The Decision to End the War



‘A grand peace for all generations to come ...’

The emperor's illness

The diary of Aide-de-Camp Colonel Ogata Ken'ichi contains the following entry for 14 June 1945:¹

His Majesty is said to be feeling unwell; he ordered the foreign policy briefing suspended midway through. This has almost never happened before, so it must be something fairly serious.

Nevertheless, the emperor and the empress did not alter the rest of their day's agenda. That afternoon they departed as scheduled for the Omiya Palace to visit the Empress Dowager and offer her their condolences on the bomb damage to her residence. Yet the strain of the trip seems to have affected the emperor, as Ogata noted:²

His Majesty was ill yesterday evening, with several attacks of diarrhoea, and today stayed in bed recuperating. Tomorrow's presentation of the colours has been postponed.

The Ogata diary continues with a terse account of the emperor's movements during the following days: ‘Today His Majesty went to his office.’ (16 June); ‘Presentation of the colours, audience with the Army Chief of Staff, at 2100 summoned the Prime Minister.’ (19 June); ‘Something of great importance is afoot.’ (22 June).

The emperor's ‘illness’ was not reported in the newspapers, nor does it appear in the diary of Kido Kōichi, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. Yet Ogata's account should be accepted as fact, for it is substantiated by a similar entry in the diary of another of the aides-de-camp, Navy Captain Noda Rokurō. While the emperor lay abed, the Japanese Empire rushed towards the brink of disintegration.

Devastating air raids by American B-29s had incinerated more than half of the capital city of Tokyo, and the State Chamber of the Imperial Palace itself was destroyed in the raid of 25 May. The Okinawa garrison force had been wiped out after a bitter three-month defence of the island; and the once invincible Combined Fleet had virtually ceased to exist after the final suicidal mission of its last major warship, the battleship *Yamato*.³

After the surrender of Germany in May, it looked as if the only path of continued resistance open to an isolated and beleaguered Japan was a final desperate defence of the home islands predicated on the horrific wager of '100 million shattered jewels' (*ichioku gyokusai* a phrase widely used late in the war to glorify dying and create a heroic image of courageous soldiers; what it really meant was 'one hundred million die together') – the extinction of the entire Japanese population.

Though it is of course impossible to know for certain what passed through the emperor's mind as he lay stricken with the first illness he had suffered since the beginning of the war, the momentous events in which he participated during the days surrounding his illness give us some grounds for speculation:

8 June – Imperial Conference (*gozen kaigi* conference held in the presence of the emperor) affirms the policy of a decisive battle for the home islands.

9 June – Privy Seal Kido proposes approaching the Soviet Union to have it act as intermediary in ending the war; Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō, recently returned from an inspection tour of the Asian mainland, reports on the present state of military preparedness.

12 June – Admiral Hasegawa Kiyoshi reports on his inspection tour of the Navy; report from the Navy chief of staff.

13 June – Privy Seal Kido reports on plans to relocate Imperial Headquarters to Matsushiro [in the mountains of Nagano Prefecture]⁴

16 June – Report by the Army chief of staff

18 June – Meeting of members of the Supreme War Council⁵

20 June – Report from Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori.

22 June – Imperial Conference

In addition to this, the emperor's closest adviser, Privy Seal Kido, had audiences with and reported to the emperor on an almost daily basis during this period. But the most disturbing of all were the reports the emperor received from Army Chief of Staff Umezu and Admiral Hasegawa. The concept of a 'decisive battle for the home islands' (*bondo kessen*) was predicated (in the words of Kawabe Torashirō, representing the Army chief of staff at one of the Imperial Conferences) on 'confidence of certain victory' in beating off the first wave of the invading forces. Yet the emperor knew, from Umezu's and Hasegawa's reports, that the actual state of Japan's strength and military readiness was far from assuring success in such an effort.

The emperor pressed Umezu, raising his voice to ask sharply, 'Well, that means a battle for the home islands is impossible, doesn't it?' But his response to Hasegawa was a resigned nod, and the words, 'This is pretty much what I had imagined. Your report has been quite clear.'⁶

The emperor was an intelligent man, but up to this point, despite being consistently betrayed and disillusioned by the irresponsible optimism of the armed forces, he had been unable to give up the hope of eventual victory. One might say he occupied a position in which he could not afford to abandon such hope. Yet he must have been gripped by a deep sense of remorse at being misinformed and deceived once again into giving his approval to the strategy of a final battle for the home islands.

Unbeknown to the emperor, the Army had begun construction of an underground headquarters complex in the mountains near Matsushiro in Nagano Prefecture in the autumn of 1944 in preparation for this Armageddon. A throne room and Imperial Shrine (*kasbikodokoro*), finished with the rarest cypress and Akita cedar, had been prepared for the emperor's use, and the prototype of a special armoured tank to convey him safely from the capital had already been completed. Ushiba Nobuhiko, then a Foreign Ministry official, recalls that he had received secret instructions to accompany the emperor to Matsushiro, and that he had actually camped out for a time in an office in the Dai Ichi Seimei Building while working out plans for the evacuation of the emperor.

When Privy Seal Kido, who had caught wind of the evacuation

plan, pressured the Army into divulging the details and relayed them to the emperor, the emperor shook with rage and insisted that he would not go. He fell ill the following day.⁷

Restless, wracked with doubt, the emperor must have spent an unpleasant time on his sick-bed. But when he returned to his office two days later, his mind appears to have been made up.

At his own initiative, he would try to reverse the flow of events and channel them in the direction of an end to the war. For this purpose, he convened an unprecedented Imperial Conference on 22 June 1945.

The emperor at war

At the Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941 (Tokyo time) which initiated final preparations for war with the United States, the emperor had made a last, though oblique, appeal for avoidance of the conflict, by reading the following poem by his grandfather, the Emperor Meiji:

The seas reaching to the four corners of this world
Are all of them brothers
Why then do the wind and waves
Rise up in such turmoil?

This vain hope of peace had dissolved on 8 December 1941, when Japan took the fateful plunge into war with America.

With the advent of war, the emperor was, at least in name, Supreme Commander of all Japan's armed forces. The orders which sent Japan's soldiers into battle to fight, to suffer, and to die were issued in his name. And the emperor, who had always possessed a deep sense of his responsibilities, now gave himself body and soul to the war effort, despite his earlier misgivings. After the tide turned against Japan in 1943, he gave up his customary winter and summer vacations and sacrificed his evenings and Sundays as he struggled to find some way to lead the nation out of the crisis. The diaries of the aides-de-camp show that the emperor heard almost daily reports on the progress of the war from the chiefs of staff; in addition, he energetically attended an extraordinarily busy daily schedule of meetings with cabinet ministers, audiences with officers

returning from the front, imperial tours of inspection, and the normal round of court ceremonials.

His one bit of relaxation was the time he devoted each Saturday afternoon to his biological research, but when word reached his ears that there were those in the military who felt such hobbies were inappropriate during wartime, he suspended those pursuits as well.

Whether this image of 'the emperor at war' really meant that 'the emperor literally exercised supreme command of the Army and Navy,' as Sanada Jōichirō, Chief of Operations for the Army General Staff once put it,⁸ is a delicate question. Though there were occasions on which the emperor delayed approval or suggested partial modifications to the plans submitted to him by the leaders of the Army and Navy, he never rejected any of them outright. On the other hand, there are numerous instances of his wishes being disregarded by the military authorities.

For example, the emperor conducted a wordless protest against the suspension of operations to retake Saipan, and he was persuaded to give his approval only after a special meeting with his top military advisers, the Council of Generals and Admirals. On another occasion, imperial approval for the withdrawal from Guadalcanal was given only on condition that a plan to secure the Japanese position in eastern New Guinea be adopted.

More often his strategic advice was disregarded even when it was expressed. In the defence of the Solomons against the American counter-attack, the emperor urged the dispatch of Army Air Force units on three separate occasions before they were finally sent into action. Lieutenant Colonel Kumon Arifumi, chief of the air operations section for the Army General Staff, resisted each time, saying 'As long as I draw breath I cannot allow the Army Air Force to be wiped out at Raboul.'⁹ It was, in fact, only after Kumon's accidental death that the emperor's wishes were heeded, and by then it was a case of too little and too late. Thus opposition by a single lieutenant colonel could derail the exercise of imperial authority.

In sum, the emperor could lead the General Staff horse to water but he could not make it drink; moreover, and when the horse was thirsty, it could usually find a way to brush aside the admonitions of its supposed master.

There were also times when a chance remark by the emperor would be seized upon by military officials for their own purposes. The last mission of the battleship *Yamato* against the American forces invading Okinawa is a case in point. When Navy Chief of Staff Oikawa Koshirō informed the emperor of the planned naval air assault on the Okinawa invasion forces, the emperor asked him 'Do you intend to use air units alone?' Oikawa replied, 'We will of course employ the full fighting strength of the Navy.' This exchange appears to have become the grounds upon which the hardliners on the staff of the Combined Fleet convinced their Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Toyoda Soemu, to overcome the objections of the Navy General Staff and send the Special Surface Attack group and its flagship, the *Yamato*, on its suicidal mission.

The Meiji Constitution, at least in theory, concentrated ultimate decision-making authority over national policy, and particularly over military affairs, in the hands of the emperor. Yet if the emperor's responsibility for the outcome of political affairs was not to be called into question, there was little choice other than to interpret the constitution after the British model, with the sovereign offering inspiration and advice but never issuing direct commands.

In the post-war era, when the emperor became a symbolic figure both *de facto* and *de jure* he made it a point to not even mention the names of his favourite sumō wrestlers, lest he should accidentally influence the sport he followed so avidly. So one can imagine the restraint he needed to exercise in the heat of wartime, when a careless remark of his on the conduct of the war effort might contribute to conflict between the Army and Navy, or the armed services and the government – and in the worst-case scenario, might lead to a head-on collision between the military and the emperor himself.

The emperor was well aware of this risk, and in fact took great pains not to step outside the bounds of 'inspiration and advice'. Yet in retrospect, if the military authorities had chosen to heed this advice, which was on a number of occasions was surprisingly prescient, it is at least possible that the course of the conflict might have been altered.

The debate over sending Army Air units to the Solomons is one example of this, and indicative of a more general difference in

perception between the emperor and the Army. When American troops first landed on Guadalcanal, Imperial Headquarters interpreted this move as a probing operation, not a full-scale counter-attack, and sent reinforcements of less than regiment strength in response.

Yet when the emperor heard the first reports of the Guadalcanal landings at his summer retreat in Nikko, he was so disturbed by the news that he expressed the desire to return immediately to the capital, only to be told by Navy Chief of Staff Nagano Osami that the matter was not of such great importance as to require that he suspend his holiday.

Plagued by this initial slackness of response, Japanese forces eventually had to abandon Guadalcanal after a six-month struggle to retake the island. As the emperor himself pointed out, the major reason for this defeat was underestimation of the American forces.¹⁰

There is little evidence, however, to suggest that Japan's military leadership took this lesson seriously and applied it to their later operations. On the eve of the battle for Saipan, the Army once again expressed confidence and optimism, only to be countered by the emperor's question, 'Are you sure you have enough ammunition and supplies?'

The striking thing about the behaviour of Japan's military leaders during this period is a lassitude and lack of planning that forces one to conclude that despite their outward show of strength within themselves they had lost their confidence and will to win. Even at the front the veterans had lost their enthusiasm, and the brunt of the fighting began to be borne by the younger troops and student draftees, whose morale was high but who were unseasoned and inexperienced. The suicide tactics of the special attack units (the *tokkō kamikaze*) which required more spirit than skill, evolved almost inevitably out of this dilemma. Even their originator, Vice Admiral Onishi, spoke disparagingly of his own idea as 'an abdication of leadership'.

When the emperor was informed of the suicide attacks, he whispered to the Navy chief of staff, 'Was it necessary to take things to that point? But they have done splendidly.' This remark contained an implied criticism of the military for having been unable to come up with anything more intelligent, but whether the

General Staffs noted this or not, they chose to stress the latter part of the emperor's comment, transforming it into 'His Majesty's blessings' for consumption at the front.

As the initially unorthodox special attack units became the main line of Japan's defence, the *raison d'être* for generals, admirals, staff officers, and so forth began to fade; and, like it or not, the emperor himself also ended up playing the unenviable role of commander-in-chief to legions of kamikazes.

Burdened with this unrelenting moral pressure, the emperor desperately sought some way out of the hopeless corner into which Japan had been driven by the fortunes of the war.

After the fall of Saipan a quiet and secretive movement to end the war had already begun, led by some of Japan's elder statesmen, but also including certain members of the imperial house and elements of the military. The emperor himself had ordered Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki in February 1942, soon after the war began, to 'be very careful that you do not miss any opportunity to conclude the conflict,¹¹ but as the tide of battle turned against Japan, he did not mention the matter again. Since he disliked intensely listening to rumours and opinion-mongering from individuals not in positions of responsibility, the emperor even kept his distance from his brothers, Princes Takamatsu and Mikasa.

In February 1945, the elder statesmen finally succeeded in persuading Privy Seal Kido to give them a chance to put their views before the emperor, but the result – Prince Fumimaro Konoe's bizarre memorial, in which he urged ending the war to avoid, of all things, the bolshevization of the armed forces – seems to have had anything but the intended effect. The emperor lightly dismissed it, saying any move toward peace negotiations would be very difficult unless Japan could solidify its position with at least one more major victory on the battlefield.

Yet the emperor was not sanguine about the chances for victory. At about this time, he commented to Aide-de-Camp Nakamura Toshihisa, 'I believe we could certainly win this war if we stick it out, but I don't know how much more of it the people can take.'¹² And in an even more pessimistic mood, he remarked to Privy Seal Kido, 'If worst comes to worst, I may have no choice but to die defending the Three Sacred Treasures.'¹³

Direct imperial rule?

The much-maligned Koiso cabinet, which critics compared to the underpowered charcoal-burning buses spawned by wartime rationing, collapsed in early April 1945 and was replaced with a government headed by Suzuki Kantarō, a seventy-nine-year-old admiral in the naval reserves. Suzuki was the unanimous choice of the elder statesmen; his appointment was strongly supported by Okada Keisuke and other members of the 'peace faction', but he was an elderly man long removed from the front line of Japanese politics, despite his tenure as chairman of the Privy Council, and his selection as prime minister was puzzling to many.

Prince Takamatsu, a keen and well-informed observer of the political scene, was optimistic: 'He's the safest choice, since he'll do exactly what His Majesty tells him to do.' Several months later, the prince remarked in a similar vein, 'If we are now to have what amounts to direct imperial rule, all he has to do is implement His Majesty's wishes.'¹⁴ But then the hardline stance Suzuki took immediately after his cabinet was formed surprised and dismayed the 'peace faction' among the elder statesmen.

Prime Minister Suzuki's real intentions at the time he assumed office are still the subject of debate, with little concrete evidence for conclusive determination. His grandson, Suzuki Tetsutarō, was a student in the Imperial University of Tokyo at that time. In 1988, he published an essay in which he told of his grandfather's telling him, on 6 April 1945, 'I am going to be the Badoglio of Japan.' The young man was so shocked by this statement that he did not breathe it to anyone until after Japan's surrender.¹⁵ Others, however, including Marquis Matsudaira Yasumasa, chief secretary to Privy Seal Kido, argue that Suzuki was originally in agreement with War Minister Anami about the need to delay peace negotiations until a major counter-attack had been launched.¹⁶

The Army's response to the new cabinet was far from promising. As it was being put together on the evening of 6 April, the Military Police Provost Marshal urged Sugiyama Hajime, war minister under Koiso, to abort its formation, 'since it is clear that this will be a peace cabinet'.¹⁷ But the Army backed off when Prime Minister Suzuki swallowed its three principal demands without complaint: (1) vigorous prosecution of the war, (2) close

coordination of Army and Navy, and (3) commitment to a final decisive battle for the home islands.

Something which should not be overlooked is the complex web of personal relationships among the six-member Supreme War Council as it was restructured at the time of the Suzuki cabinet's formation. Of the Big Six, Prime Minister Suzuki had spent eight years as grand chamberlain, and War Minister Anami four years as aide-de-camp – their records of personal service to the emperor were well-established. Moreover, Suzuki's wife Taka had served the Court for eleven years during Hirohito's years as Crown Prince, assisting in the education of the young emperor-to-be. Thus, neither the prime minister nor the war minister was likely to be unaware of bonds of personal sentiment which linked them to their sovereign.

Yet of the two, it is clear that the emperor placed much greater trust in Suzuki. He later spoke of their relationship in the warmest possible terms, saying 'We shared both the bitter and the sweet,'¹⁸ and 'We opened our hearts to each another.'¹⁹

In fact, it was a personal appeal by the emperor himself which convinced the reluctant Suzuki to accept the post of prime minister after the old gentleman had made several attempts to decline the honour. The emperor was less enthusiastic about the choice of war minister: 'Prince Mikasa says it ought to be Anami, but I'm not so sure.'²⁰ Anami had his differences with the emperor as well, as can be seen in his comment that 'His Majesty's thinking is pacifistic and liberal. His advisers ought to be changed to get him to alter this point of view.'²¹

Another set of personal ties affecting the Supreme War Council was between War Minister Anami, Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō, and Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda Soemu. All of them were from Oita Prefecture on the island of Kyushu. The relationship between Anami and Umezu was particularly close and unequal. Ever since Umezu, as Vice Minister of War, had recommended Anami to head the Ministry's Bureau of Security Affairs during the clean-up of the Army in the wake of the February 26 Incident, Umezu had served as Anami's direct superior officer: on the China front, where Anami headed one of the area armies while Umezu was army commander, and again in Manchuria where Anami commanded an area army

under commander-in-chief Umezu. In other words, Anami was accustomed to following Umezu's lead, and this nuance in their relationship would be directly reflected in the events surrounding the termination of the war.

The remaining two members of the Big Six were Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori and Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa. Like the others, they were certainly competent to represent their respective services on the Council; like the others, they too lacked any special qualities of leadership that would raise them above mere competence. The Council had no star players.

The former prime ministers and other figures making up Japan's informal elite of elder statesmen (*jūshin*) did not present a much brighter picture. The incomparably circumspect and pragmatic Privy Seal Kido Kōichi, referred to them as 'paper tigers', and observed 'The military is blind, and the *jūshin* are impotent.' Basing themselves on this shared perception of the situation, from the fall of Saipan on, Kido and former Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru began to work with the assumption that if the war was going to be brought to an end, it would have to be the result of a decision by the emperor himself.

In order to bring this about, it would first be necessary to wean the emperor away from his attachment to the concept of striking a final decisive blow against the enemy before trying to negotiate a settlement. Moreover, ever since the Casablanca Conference of 1943 the Allies had been calling publicly for Japan's unconditional surrender, and that meant that any approach to peace would have to take into account the possibility that the Allies might insist on Japan's abandonment of its 'national polity' (*kokutai goji*), i.e. that either Emperor Hirohito or even the imperial system itself might have to be sacrificed in order to end the war. It was unthinkable for one of his subjects to approach the emperor with this dilemma, and as Prince Konoe Fumimaro remarked to his son-in-law Hosokawa Morisada 'The emperor is the only one who can decide on the issue of the national polity.'²²

Timing was also a subtle factor. A mistake in this regard risked a head-on collision between the emperor and the military, or else an all-out struggle for control of the emperor between the pro-peace and pro-war factions.

Japan's defeat in the battle for Okinawa proved to be a turning point. The Navy had been gutted, with its surface fleet wiped out and better than half of its remaining air strength destroyed. No longer an effective fighting force, it had little stomach for a battle for the defence of the home islands. War Minister Yonai, who had long been sympathetic to the peace faction, now leaned decisively towards a rapid resolution of the conflict, and the majority of his subordinates followed his lead. One of the wheels of the Army-Navy chariot had begun to wobble and seemed in danger of falling off altogether.

With that, the argument in favour of a final battle before undertaking peace negotiations became weaker, and the remaining chance had to be seized before the main landings began. The example of Hitler's Third Reich was there as warning.

Yet the Army remained adamant in its insistence on a major land battle as prerequisite to peace negotiations. It was convinced that a massive engagement on Japan's home soil offered it a last chance. Preparations for such a battle had been begun earlier, while the battle for the Philippines was still underway, and in June a last-ditch mobilization campaign intended to field 2.5 million troops was initiated.

The Imperial Conference of 8 June adopted the Army's draft of a fundamental policy statement on the conduct of the war, setting every cog in the entire state apparatus grinding along towards Armageddon. The emperor, as was customary, looked on in silence as the conference followed its prearranged script.

Yet after he had left the conference, the emperor summoned Kido and said 'Everyone seemed as if they were waiting for someone else to say something,' and Kido, sensing that the time was finally ripe, agreed that they were waiting 'For Your Majesty's brave decision ...'²³

Cross-fire at the Imperial Conference

The aides-de-camp serving the emperor numbered nine in all: the chief aide, always an Army general; five other Army aides, holding either general or field-grade rank; and three aides representing the Navy, headed by an admiral and all holding the rank of commander

or above. They regularly rotated duty between service at the palace, where they handled liaison with the War and Navy ministries and the general staffs, and with service as the emperor's representative on inspection and morale-boosting tours of military posts and units.

While they were not allowed to participate in policy formation, they were well placed to assess the flow of events through the movements and moods of the principal policy-makers. Thus Colonel Ogata Ken'ichi, one of the Army aides, was on target in his speculation on 22 June that 'something of great importance is afoot'.

That afternoon at three o'clock a top secret Imperial Conference was convened, attended by the members of the 'Big Six', the Supreme War Council. The meeting opened unconventionally with a remarkable request by the emperor:²⁴

I am aware of the decision that was reached at the previous Imperial Conference with regard to the need for a major land battle. However, at this time I would like to ask that you set aside all your previous notions regarding a termination of the conflict and give this matter immediate and concrete attention, exerting yourselves towards achieving this end.

In effect, the emperor's statement had nullified the outcome of the Imperial Conference of 8 June, and wrenched the rudder of the ship of state decisively in the direction of ending the war. This move by the emperor was not without precedent. Back in October 1941, when the Tōjō cabinet was formed, the emperor had ordered the new prime minister to 'go back to blank paper' – telling him not to be bound by the decisions reached at the Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941, which had set Japan on the road to war with the United States, and to undertake an exhaustive review of Japan's policies.

Yet that had been a personal instruction to Prime Minister Tōjō, and as such was not interpreted as binding on the military supreme command, nor did the emperor give explicit guidelines for the 'review' he had in mind. When the review had been conducted, and the cabinet and military leaders still unanimously supported the commencement of hostilities, the emperor had accepted that decision in silence.

Now, in the summer of 1945, the emperor was once again attempting to reverse the flow of events and bring an end to the conflict. Despite his disclaimer that the conference should proceed 'as a discussion, not an Imperial Command', the emperor, at his own initiative, had made clear his desire for peace. Moreover, since Privy Seal Kido's advance work trying to soften up the recalcitrant Army had met with little success, the emperor had an uphill fight on his hands.

The conference proceeded much as Kido's preparatory footwork might have predicted. According to his diary and the notes made by Foreign Minister Tōgō, the prime minister, foreign minister, and the navy minister all voiced their agreement with the emperor's position, while the Army chief of staff and the war minister's responses were more difficult to read. This did not escape the emperor's attention. Chief of Staff Umezu stated his position as follows:

Since a proposal of peace would have massive impact at home and abroad, I think it is necessary to take sufficient stock of the situation and handle matters very cautiously.

The emperor's response to this was brisk and pointed:

When you speak of handling matters cautiously, are you suggesting that we delay action until after we strike yet another blow at the enemy?

In the face of this pressure, Umezu was forced to back down, replying, 'No, that is not what I meant.'

The emperor then turned to War Minister Anami for his opinion, but Anami wriggled away, claiming 'I have nothing in particular to say.' Whether he was in fundamental agreement with Umezu and simply did not want to get caught in a similar exchange with the emperor, or whether he lacked the confidence to try to line up the entire Army behind a new policy and therefore preferred silence, is open to question; yet among the Big Six the war minister was known to have been a proponent of the 'hit them again, then sue for peace' school of thought. If that was indeed so, then Anami probably could come up with no better way of avoiding a head-on collision with the emperor than by offering a feeble 'no comment'.

Thus the emperor's first decisive move towards ending the war

took the form of cornering the Army in its own unreasonableness. And yet it was that very unreasonableness which was a crucial factor in sparking the military insurrection on the last day of the war. And it is interesting to note that the roles played by both Anami and Umezu in that incident reproduced, in a changed context, the difference between their responses at the Imperial Conference of 22 June.

That, however, still lay in the future, and the fact that the emperor had succeeded by late June in imposing a fundamental direction upon Japanese policy is of enormous significance. The argument for a last-ditch defence of the home islands had been damped down, and as the final series of shocks came – the Potsdam Declaration (26 July), Hiroshima and Nagasaki (6 and 9 August), and the Soviet entry into the war against Japan (9 August) – the limits of the debate had shifted from whether or not Japan should surrender, to the question of the conditions under which it could.

The first imperial decision

On 27 July 1945, the Japanese government received the text of the Potsdam Proclamation, in which the leaders of the United States, Great Britain and China agreed that 'Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war.' It ended with a 'call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces... The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.' Within days the atomic bombs and the Russian entry into the war underscored that warning.

The author has long made it a habit, when meeting with former members of the Imperial Army and Navy, to ask which had the greater impact at the time: the atomic bombs or the Soviet entry into the war? The responses run about 50-50, yet all agree that neither blow alone would have been sufficient; if they had not coincided, an end to the war in August 1945 would have been impossible.

The so-called peace faction, which had pinned vain hope on a peace mediated through the Soviet Union, had to give up that chance with the Russian entry into the war, and now turned sharply towards accepting the Potsdam Declaration, which the Japanese government had until this point officially 'ignored'.²⁵

The script for the Imperial Conference of 8 August 1945 at which Japan's surrender was pushed through, not as a consensus among the Big Six, but as an Imperial Decision, was agreed upon through consultation among the emperor, Prime Minister Suzuki, Foreign Minister Tōgō and Privy Seal Kido, with the meticulous Chief Cabinet Secretary Sakomizu Hisatsune planning the details. These preparations ignored a long-standing precedent by which the agenda for Imperial Conferences was always cleared with the armed services in advance. It is not surprising that the Army reacted with anger, seeing this as a plot on the part of defeatist cabinet officials and elder statesmen. In fact, midway through the sessions of the Supreme War Council and the cabinet which dragged on for more than twenty hours from 11.00 a.m. on 9 August into the following morning,²⁶ Vice Chief of Staff Kawabe Torashirō, acting under pressure from subordinate staff officers, contacted War Minister Anami and Chief of Staff Umezu at one point to propose a plan for a *coup d'état* involving the declaration of a nationwide state of martial law, the overthrow of the cabinet, and the establishment of a military regime [dedicated to a continuation of hostilities].²⁷

At the Imperial Conference, War Minister Anami, supported by the Army and Navy chiefs of staff,²⁸ demanded that four conditions be attached to any offer of surrender: (1) 'preservation of the national polity' (*kokutai goji*), (2) disarmament of the Japanese forces by their own command, (3) rejection of an Allied occupation of Japan, and (4) no punishment of war criminals. If these four conditions were met, then Japan could accept surrender. Yet this was tantamount to a declaration of continued hostilities, since the last three conditions directly contravened the Allied position set down in the Potsdam Declaration.

This stubborn stance was opposed by Foreign Minister Tōgō, Navy Minister Yonai and Privy Council Chairman Hiranuma Kiichirō, who were willing to accept the Potsdam Declaration so long as some assurance was offered that the imperial system would be preserved – a point the Allied text did not touch on directly. The result was that the conference was caught in a three-to-three deadlock, unable to reach a decision. Prime Minister Suzuki could have carried the majority by voting for surrender himself; instead, he took the unprecedented step of appealing to the emperor for his

personal decision – which was to communicate to the United States government Japan's willingness to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration on the basis outlined by Foreign Minister Tōgō, that Japan would accept the Potsdam Proclamation on condition that the emperor's prerogatives be maintained.²⁹

Kobori Keiichirō surmises that the reason Suzuki called for an Imperial Decision rather than forcing a majority vote, with full knowledge he would be disparaged for having abdicated his responsibilities as prime minister, was actually based upon shrewd and far-sighted calculation that it would have been extremely difficult to resolve the situation if the decision had come, not as an expression of the emperor's own will, but as imperial acceptance of a narrow majority opinion within the government.

This may have been the case, but the authority manifested in the Imperial Decision could work its magic only among the more reasonable members of the military; with the diehards, fanatically determined to carry on the war and accustomed to their own interpretation of the Imperial Will, it still invited a head-on collision.

No doubt the emperor was aware of this. After he had voiced his decision for surrender, he castigated Umezu, saying 'The opinions of the chief of staff are at odds with the reports I have received myself from aides-de-camp who have made tours of inspection. They tell me that there is absolutely no hope for victory against the technological superiority of the American and British forces.' One can see in this a flaring-up of the accumulated distrust for the Army the emperor had gradually built up over the sixteen years since 1929, when he had reprimanded Prime Minister General Tanaka Giichi for failing to carry through on his promise to investigate fully the Army's role in the assassination of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin. The emperor's comment to Umezu did have one salutary effect: when Umezu told Vice Chief of Staff Kawabe that 'His Majesty has completely lost confidence in the Army,' Kawabe was stunned into inactivity.³⁰

Yet the Army was certainly not going to let itself be spurned by the emperor without a protest. Unable to resign himself to what had just taken place, War Minister Anami stopped Prime Minister Suzuki as the conference was about to break up and engaged him in

the following dialogue, recorded by Lieutenant Colonel Takeshita Masahiko in his diary:

‘Suppose you are unable to receive confirmation [from the Allies] that the emperor’s sovereignty will be acknowledged – will you continue the war?’ The prime minister quietly answered that he would. Then [Anami] turned to the navy minister and asked the same question, to which Yonai replied that the war would be continued.

The Imperial Decision had been handed down, but the road ahead would still be rocky.

The Byrnes response

Lieutenant Colonel Takeshita has left us a detailed diary of the events surrounding Japan’s surrender from his vantage point as chief of the internal affairs desk of the War Ministry’s Military Affairs Section. His entry for 11 August reads:

The atmosphere within the ministry is restive; people are determined to find some means to crush the movement towards peace. Some officers advocate the use of terrorism, calling for the murder of Hiranuma, Kono, Okada, Suzuki, Sakomizu, Yonai and Tōgō. Others argue that the war minister should exercise his authority to deploy troops for the maintenance of public security in order to effect a *coup d’état*. The wildest kind of schemes are discussed quite openly.

Having never experienced defeat, knowing nothing of the conventions of surrender, and steeped in the atmosphere of insubordination (*gekokujo*) that prevailed during the years of military dominance, the members of Japan’s elite officer corps were startled and enraged by the news that the war was about to end. Neither the weight of the Imperial Decision, their implicit obligation to obey it, nor the withdrawal of the emperor’s confidence in the Army could serve to contain and defuse their agitation.

The leaders of this diehard faction within the Army’s high command were Takeshita himself (who happened to be War Minister Anami’s brother-in-law); Lieutenant Colonels Inaba Masao, Ida Masataka and Shiizaki Jirō; Major Hatanaka Kenji, and

other staff officers in their early to mid-30s, centring on the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry. Many of them had been disciples of the right-wing scholar Hiraizumi Kiyoshi. Among them the driving force was Major Hatanaka, a mercurial and hypersensitive person. Without his extraordinary personal magnetism, the attempted palace coup of 14–15 August would probably never have occurred, and the history of Japan's surrender would have turned out quite differently.

On the morning of 12 August, the response by US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes to Japan's initial offer of surrender was delivered to the Japanese government.³¹ The Japanese offer had contained the key condition that acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration was contingent upon:

... the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler.

Byrnes' reply to this was that:

From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers ...

The ultimate form of the government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people.

The Foreign Ministry translation of the Byrnes Note carefully softened the crucial clause 'subject to' with a Japanese phrase meaning 'restricted by' or 'under the limitations of' (*seigen no moto*); the Army prepared its own translation, employing a different phrase, 'subordinated to' (*reizoku suru*) which was closer to the force of the English original. The two chiefs of staff brought this second version with them to the palace. In audience with the emperor they argued that the Byrnes Note 'clearly debased the dignity of the emperor, the foundation of our national polity' and invited 'the destruction of our national polity and the ruin of our Imperial Land'; consequently, they urged, it should be 'summarily rejected' along with the Potsdam demands for disarmament and Allied occupation of Japan.³²

The military argued that these issues, some of them seemingly

settled earlier, had to be raised again because under foreign occupation 'free expression' of the will of the people would be impossible. Their four conditions were, therefore, essential as an independent guarantee of the preservation of the national polity. War Minister Anami had an audience with the emperor soon after the chiefs of staff, and is believed to have presented much the same case.

It is true that the Byrnes Note did not guarantee the preservation of Japan's national polity – in other words, the imperial system. In this sense, the fears of the chiefs of staff were not without foundation. But the Foreign Ministry chose to interpret the note differently, arguing that the demand that the emperor be 'subject to' the Supreme Commander was predicated on the retention of the imperial system, and that there was no reason to fear the 'freely expressed will' of the people mentioned by Byrnes, given 'the loyalty of the Japanese'.³³

The sessions of the Supreme War Council and the cabinet on 12 and 13 August were a wrangling mess. The Foreign Office pressed for immediate acceptance of the Allied terms, the Army stood in direct and steadfast opposition, and Privy Council President Hiranuma introduced even greater confusion by proposing that Japan communicate a second time with the United States to seek clarification of the disputed points. Debate ground along in endless circles, until War Minister Anami and the chiefs of staff at last conceded to the idea of a second communiqué, while still refusing to budge an inch on the issue of ensuring the preservation of the national polity.

At one point the emperor himself stepped in, addressing the war minister directly: 'Anami. Don't worry. I have been assured of this,' and at the meeting of the Supreme Military Council (*Gensui kaigi*), on the morning of 14 August, he remarked, 'The security of the imperial house is not threatened',³⁴ but it is difficult to believe that he was as confident as these statements would indicate. To his confidant Kido he spoke more candidly:³⁵

[The free will of the people] shouldn't be an obstacle. Even if the Allies come to accept imperial sovereignty, it won't matter very much if the people themselves have become alienated from the throne.

Kido later spoke of this remark as 'a revelation'; one thing it may have revealed is that the emperor himself headed the list of people

anxious for liberation from the spell cast over Japan by the mysterious and abstract concept of the 'national polity'.

Severed from the armature of the 'national polity', however, Emperor Hirohito was a weak and lonely individual. He had no way of knowing that American policy-makers were already making a clear distinction between 'the imperial system' and 'Emperor Hirohito'. Yet his statement at the Imperial Conference of 14 August that the surrender should be accepted 'regardless of what happens to me personally ...' indicates that he had steeled himself in resignation to whatever fate might lie in store for him at the hands of the victorious Allies.

In order to see what was on the minds of American policy-makers at this juncture, we must now turn to the events surrounding the drafting of Secretary Byrnes's note.

'The Secretary of State spoke of Prince Chichibu brother of the emperor'

On 18 June 1945, ten days after the Imperial Conference which had committed Japan to a last-ditch defence of the home islands, the US joint chiefs of staff finalized their plans for the invasion of Japan and received the approval of President Harry S. Truman. The campaign would be divided into two phases: Olympic, involving landings in southern Kyushu by 650,000 men, would begin on 1 November 1945; Coronet, the assault on the Kantō plain surrounding Tokyo, was scheduled for the spring of 1946, and was expected to require more than 1.5 million troops. The joint chiefs' timetable called for the conclusion of operations – in other words, complete military occupation of the country – by 15 November 1946.

Although the American forces possessed overwhelming material superiority, they would be facing a defending army (including the National Volunteer Corps) of 28 million men, and monstrous casualties would be unavoidable.³⁶ United States Navy and Air Force commanders had proposed that Japan be blockaded and starved out rather than invaded, but Army leaders insisted on occupation by ground troops, and this point of view prevailed. Fear of being beaten to the punch by the Soviet Union, which had promised, at America's request, to enter the war against Japan, was also a factor.

In fact, when the first atomic bomb was dropped and the end of the war seemed imminent, the Soviet Union speeded its entry into the conflict by a week, commencing the invasion of Manchuria and Sakhalin on 9 August instead of 15 August as originally planned.

A Dōmei News Agency radio broadcast from Tokyo brought President Truman his first news of Japan's willingness to accept the Potsdam Declaration, and he immediately convened a special conference at the White House at 9.00 a.m. (EST) on 10 August to discuss the American response.³⁷ Among those present were Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal, White House Chief of Staff Admiral William D. Leahy, and the newly appointed Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes.

Stimson, who knew Japan well enough to have issued a special directive forbidding the bombing of Kyoto in order to preserve its irreplaceable cultural legacy, had joined Assistant Secretary of State (and former ambassador to Japan) Joseph C. Grew in arguing that a clause guaranteeing the preservation of the imperial system be inserted in the Potsdam Declaration in order to encourage Japan's surrender. When this idea was rejected by Byrnes and Truman, Stimson had refused to give in, proposing that the essence of this position be conveyed informally to the Japanese through neutral channels.

Reading Japan's initial offer of surrender, Stimson was satisfied that his intuition had proven correct, and he was deeply impressed by the fact that even in the extremity of their situation, the Japanese were still holding out for assurances that the imperial system would be maintained.

The 10 August conference, as reconstructed from the memoirs of Stimson, Forrestal, Byrnes and Truman, illustrated the difference among military men like Leahy, who was inclined to downgrade the importance of the imperial system, statesmen like Stimson, who argued for agreeing to leave the emperor in place and holding him responsible for carrying out Allied directives, and political figures like Byrnes, who saw no need to make concessions of any sort to a Japan which now had its back to the wall; America should be setting the terms, he thought, and not Japan. Forrestal proposed that the response imply acceptance of the Japanese request but couple this with insistence upon full implementation of the

Potsdam terms. Truman accepted this and asked Byrnes to draw up a note to this effect.³⁸

The Byrnes Note was speedily prepared by Joseph Ballantine and Hugh Borton, Japan specialists in the State Department's Office of Far Eastern Affairs, and completed by the afternoon of 10 August. Byrnes deliberately avoided inviting former Ambassador Grew to participate in formulating the note.

The Byrnes Note was approved without alteration in an afternoon cabinet meeting and dispatched immediately. Great pains had gone into its wording, which managed to encompass a number of subtleties: it avoided acceptance of the Japanese proposal, reaffirming the US commitment to the terms of the Potsdam Declaration and offering no clear and concrete assurances with regard to the preservation of the imperial system. Yet at the same time, it did not reject this crucial concept.

In Stimson's view, the note 'tacitly promised the retention of the emperor system ... all the more credibly because it was not spelled out'.³⁹ Byrnes, too, was confident of its acceptance by the Japanese. So Washington's version of an Imperial Conference⁴⁰ concluded with a directive by President Truman summarized by Forrestal as follows:⁴¹

We should keep up the war at its present intensity until the Japanese agreed to these terms, with the limitation, however, that there would be no further dropping of the atomic bombs. He [Truman] expected it would take about three days before negotiations were completed.

Forrestal's account of the meeting suggests the possibility that the fate of the imperial institution was also on the minds of those who attended. It may be that Byrnes, a Southern politician born and bred, was aware that adverse American public opinion regarding the retention of the emperor system might be deflected if Hirohito abdicated and was replaced by his brother.⁴²

The Secretary of State [Byrnes] spoke of Prince Chichibu, brother of the emperor. He said that the institution of the throne could be preserved without commitment as to who should occupy it.

Yet the subtle nuances of the Byrnes Note were lost on the popular press and the mass of the American people. The *Chicago Herald Tribune* for 10 and 11 August ran banner headlines

proclaiming 'US Willing to Keep Mikado', and 'We'll Accept Hirohito If He'll Obey Orders', and across the country there were fireworks displays in premature celebration of Japan's surrender.

It is ironic that while Japan's leaders argued themselves blue in the face over the interpretation of the Byrnes Note, newspapers in America's second largest city had already declared the imperial system safe and sound.

Coup plans: double suicide of Army and nation

In contrast to the optimism uniting the American leaders involved in the drafting of the Byrnes Note, US military intelligence specialists awaited Japan's reaction with a cooler and more cautious attitude.

Major General Clayton Bissell, Assistant Chief of Staff in Army Intelligence, produced a memo dated 12 August entitled 'Forecast for Japan in the Coming Month'. In it, Bissell argued that 'Japan is faced with a choice between three courses of action,' which he listed as:

- (a) Drawing out negotiations in the hope of improving the terms of surrender.
- (b) Rejecting the Allied response and fighting to defend the home islands.
- (c) Accepting the Allied response for unconditional surrender.

Bissell's memo continued with a sober analysis of each of these options, without drawing any conclusions as to which of the three Japan would actually choose.

Option A had the advantage of saving face for the hardliners and giving the Japanese government an excuse for claiming a diplomatic victory, but Bissell advised against permitting Japan to follow this course since it could lead to further problems by creating an appearance of weakness on the part of the Allies. This assessment, linked with the stance adopted by the president and the secretary of state, indicates that the Americans felt further communication with Japan would be fruitless.

Bissell turned next to Option C. He predicted that the Japanese Navy would probably follow an imperial order to surrender, but that there would be fierce opposition on the part of the Army. Yet even if an underground resistance movement should continue after the occupation of Japan by Allied forces, Bissell argued that the Japanese would ultimately adapt themselves to the new situation, much as they had after the arrival of Commodore Perry a century before. He also speculated that with surrender, the emperor would abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince, and a regency would be established to exercise the imperial authority. This was a slightly different scenario than the one Bymes mentioned to Forrestal, but in any case, the Americans seemed willing to leave such matters to the Japanese, without direct intervention.

The Bissell memo's reading of the internal Japanese political situation was truly impressive for its accuracy and concision. Yet as the wrangling at the top level over the choice between Options A and C reached its climax, with the Army officially espousing Option A, elements within the Army began moving in the direction of Option B – in the form of a military coup which would enforce the continuation of hostilities.

The diary of Lieutenant Colonel Takeshita for 12 August reads:

... briefed the war minister ... on a plan for a sham [*gisō*] *coup d'état* in which troops from the Eastern Army District and the Imperial Guards Division would occupy the Palace; the residences of the court nobility, the *jūshin* and the cabinet ministers; the radio network; the war and navy ministries; and the headquarters of the general staffs, placing the emperor, members of the imperial house, and other key figures under armed guard.

War Minister Anami, who was on his way to a cabinet meeting, would not give a clear yes or no response to this plan, but he did agree to the suggestion that the chiefs of staff of the Eastern Army and the Imperial Guards Division be ordered to begin preparations for such an action, and directed Vice Minister Wakamatsu Tadaichi to attend to this. Responsibility for negotiation with the four Army generals who were in a position to determine the fate of such a *coup d'état* plan was also divided up; Lt. Colonel Takeshita would handle War Minister Anami; Lt. Colonel Hara Shirō was responsible for Army Chief of Staff Umezu; Lt. Colonel Shimanuki Shigeyoshi

would take care of the commanders of the Eastern Army District and the Imperial Guards Division. Major Hatanaka would take charge of the task of drawing the regimental and battalion commanders of the Imperial Guards, the units that would serve as the shock troops of the *coup*, into the conspiracy.

According to the written testimony of Lt. Colonel Inaba Masao, the final plan framed by this group of War Ministry staff officers was as follows:

- (1) Troops to be employed – Eastern Army and the Imperial Guards Division
- (2) General plan – To sever the connections between the Court and the peace faction, isolating Kido, Suzuki, Tōgō, Yonai, and other peace faction leaders via the use of military force. Martial Law to be imposed in the process.
- (3) Purpose – To continue negotiations with the Allies and to refuse surrender until we were given definite assurances of the acceptance of our conditions with regard to the preservation of the national polity.
- (4) Method – Mobilization of troop units in accordance with the Army minister's authority to order emergency deployments for the maintenance of public order.
- (5) Conditions – Unanimous approval by the war minister, Army chief of staff, and the commanders of the Eastern Army District and the Imperial Guards.

Since implementation would have had to come prior to the what was anticipated as the emperor's second 'Sacred Decision', it was set for midnight on 13 August, but since the plotters were delayed in getting to War Minister Anami and the Imperial Conference hour was changed to 10 a.m. on the 14th, the Plan (Item 2 above) was changed to an even more drastic: 'In the event of an Imperial Conference (we shall) force our way into the next room, make the emperor's Aide-de-Camp admit us, and seize the others.'

The final part of the plan was to make a 'direct petition' to the emperor to 'change His Majesty's way of thinking,' even if this meant 'becoming rebellious subjects' (Takeshita's phrase) or 'resigning ourselves to being branded as traitors' (Lt. Colonel Ida).

The idea was that if the emperor could only be cut off from the influence of the peace faction statesmen, he would be amenable to the will of the Army hardliners; but if this alone were insufficient, Takeshita proposed to War Minister Anami that the conspirators were willing to kill themselves in the presence of the emperor in order to press their demands home.

Here it might be worth considering the sources of the fanatical logic and energy which had driven the conspirators to this point:

Preservation of the national polity takes precedence even over the obligation to obey the will of the emperor. (Ida Masataka)

Continuation of the imperial line and its succession alone is not preservation of the national polity. (Lt. Colonel Oyadomari Chōsei)

We can't have the emperor thinking that we can do without the imperial system. This emperor has no right to decide whether or not the system itself should continue to exist. (Takeshita Masahiko)

An emperor who does not behave like an emperor doesn't deserve to be called emperor. (Hatanaka Kenji)

The thread running through all these statements by the major conspirators is the use of the concept of the 'national polity' as a shield for angrily venting their grievances and discontent with an individual emperor – Hirohito – who refused to do their bidding. Moreover, their frustration was indicative of a deeper dilemma: for while the emperor could choose to abandon them, they could not do without the emperor.

If the imperial system disappeared, then that gargantuan bastion of special privilege known as the Imperial Army would also collapse into rubble. This was spelled out fairly plainly, if in reverse logic, in one of the objections to the Byrnes Note drafted by the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry on 12 August: 'If the Empire should be deprived of its armed forces, then His Majesty will no longer enjoy the status of Supreme Commander.' At the psychological core of the war faction lay an instinctive reaction against the dissolution of the Imperial Army – which, as it became clear the Army could not be saved, translated with remarkable ease into a desire to have the nation itself join the Army in a spectacular variation on the traditional dramatic theme of *muri shinjū* – murder and suicide.

The second Imperial Decision

At 8.00 p.m. on the evening of 13 August, the hardline staff officers pressed War Minister Anami, who had just returned from a cabinet meeting, for final approval of their plans for a *coup d'état*. An anguished Anami said 'Now I know how Saigo felt', and said to them 'My life is in your hands', but he continued to withhold a clear statement of authorization.⁴³ Late that night, however, alone with his brother-in-law Lt. Colonel Takeshita, he hinted at agreement with the conspirators by saying, 'There were too many people present for me to say what I really felt.'⁴⁴

Such hesitation on the part of key figures prevented the initiation of the coup as planned for the morning of 14 August; the conspirators still felt that unanimity on the part of the war minister, the chief of staff, and the commanders of the Eastern Army District and the Imperial Guards was essential to the success of their plot.

Anami was not the only obstacle. From the beginning, the conspirators had put little faith in winning over Lt. General Mori Takeshi, commander of the Imperial Guards, and had plans to detain or murder him and replace him with his chief of staff, Colonel Mizutani Kazuo, if he refused to go along. But the real surprise for the plotters was the negative response of Army Chief of Staff Umezu.

The details of the ten or fifteen-minute meeting which took place between Anami and Umezu at 7.00 a.m. on the morning of 14 August are lost to us now, for the only witness, Colonel Arai Okikatsu, Chief of the Military Affairs Section, War Ministry, preserved silence on this point until his death. The subsequent meeting between Anami and General Tanaka Shizuichi, commander of the Eastern Army District, is also a matter of dispute, since Lt. Colonel Takeshita and Tanaka's chief of staff, Major General Takashima Tatsuhiko, have left conflicting accounts.

According to Takashima, when the war minister tried to sound him out on the subjects of preservation of the national polity and the placing of the elder statesmen and cabinet ministers under protective custody, General Tanaka preserved an aloof silence, letting Takashima respond for him by saying 'As long as we are given a formal imperial directive, the Eastern Army will do anything you wish.'

In contrast to this account, the Takeshita diary relates that Takashima expressed opposition to the surrender, and suggested that even the Imperial Decision would not be valid without the countersignature of the war minister.

In either case, the passivity of these responses, coupled with Umezu's earlier refusal of support, fell far short of the unanimity that the plotters had predicated as a necessary condition for a successful *coup*.

Just when Takeshita had given up hope and was resigning himself to the end of all their plans, word reached him that there were indications that Umezu had been persuaded to change his mind. The source of this information remains unclear, but it restored Takeshita's determination, and he set about roughing out a substitute plan with Shiizaki and Hatanaka, centring upon a seizure of the palace by the Imperial Guards Division. They raced to the palace to convey this to the war minister, but found him unavailable, as the Imperial Conference had already begun.

The Imperial Conference of 14 August, which began at 10.50 a.m. and lasted about an hour, has been treated so exhaustively in other accounts that a bare outline of the proceedings should suffice. Prime Minister Suzuki, following an agenda set in advance in consultation with Kido and the emperor, first allowed Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda to reiterate their demands for further assurances by the Allies. Then, as planned, the emperor was asked for his judgement on the matter, and the Imperial Decision to end the war was handed down.

The most reliable version of the emperor's statement on this historic occasion was set down immediately after the conference by Shimomura Hiroshi, Chief of the Cabinet Information Bureau. Yet the account left by Lt. General Yoshizumi Masao, Director of the Military Affairs Bureau of the War Ministry, has an even greater sense of immediacy, especially in its treatment of the remarks the emperor directed to War Minister Anami:

I have not made this decision lightly. Will the steps we are about to take lead to the destruction of our national polity? No. I believe the enemy will extend it their recognition. I haven't the least bit of anxiety in this regard ... though I am concerned as to what may happen after our land is placed under enemy occupation. Yet if we

should continue the war, the national polity will disappear, and everything else along with it. It would be nothing other than the suicide of our nation. The disarmament of the brave and loyal armed forces of Japan is an unbearable thought. But for the sake of our nation, we must carry this out ... I implore you to give your assent.

The desperate urgency of the emperor's effort to persuade Anami and Umezu, and through them, the entire Japanese Army, of the necessity of surrender is vividly transmitted by these remarks. Expressed with equal clarity is the eloquence of his determination to sacrifice the military for the sake of the nation and its people.

The game was now nearing its end. But a single trump card remained to be played; one that the leaders of the peace faction had secretly feared. In order to confirm the Imperial Decision as the will of the Japanese state, the entire cabinet would be required to affix their signatures to the Imperial Rescript declaring the end of the war. If the war minister refused to sign and resigned his post, he could force the cabinet to resign *en masse*, and the Imperial Decision would be rendered ineffectual.

It was this very card that Lt. Colonel Takeshita brandished before the war minister when he caught up with Anami in the cabinet room of the prime minister's residence after the conference had adjourned. According to Takeshita's diary:

I looked about the room, and seeing the brushes and ink already set out, said to the minister, why don't you resign and withhold your signature [from the rescript]? He was greatly moved by this, even ordering his adjutant, Colonel Hayashi Saburō, to prepare a letter of resignation. Yet just as quickly, he gave up the idea, muttering that even if he resigned it was inevitable that the Imperial Rescript would be promulgated, even without the participation of the war minister, and that he would have betrayed the emperor's trust.

The issue of the war minister's resignation was also linked to the revival of the plans for a *coup*. Takeshita pressed Anami to take decisive action before the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript, and the war minister appeared to be 'more than a little affected' by these importunings, but in the end he did not budge.

Anami's adjutant, Colonel Hayashi Saburō, coolly supported the surrender. Hayashi accompanied Anami to the basement washroom, where Anami, with anguish written on his face, suddenly said after

a moment's reflection, 'The Americans are rumoured to have an assault force positioned just off our coast. What if we were to hit it with our special attack units and then negotiate for peace?'

Hayashi saw that 'the minister was terribly shaken,' and when they returned by car to imperial headquarters in Ichigaya, he had the driver let them out at the entrance to the Army General Staff, hoping that he could calm Anami down by having him meet with Chief of Staff Umezu.

Umezu was not in. When they returned to Anami's office in the War Ministry, a group of staff officers headed by Lt. Colonel Ida rushed in, demanding to know why the war minister had changed his mind and accepted Japan's surrender. Anami hesitated for a moment, and then slowly and deliberately said:

His Majesty spoke to me directly, with tears in his eyes, saying 'Anami, I know very well how you feel, but as painful as this is, please bear with it' ... After that, I could not bring myself to offer any further opposition.

To this the war minister added bluntly, 'If anyone among you has a problem with this, then you may kill me first.'⁴⁵

The tense silence was broken by a nearly hysterical outburst of sobbing coming from a corner of the room. It was the volatile Major Hatanaka, who, when he had done weeping, spun smartly about and dashed out of the war minister's office.

The abortive coup

The majority of the staff officers who had staked their hopes on the initiation of a *coup d'état* were stunned into lethargy by the news of the Imperial Decision. Major Hatanaka was the only one of them who did not lose any of his will to fight, and in the hours remaining before the imperial broadcast that was scheduled for noon on 15 August to announce the end of the war officially, Hatanaka raced about in a last desperate effort to turn back the tide.

A coordinated *coup* involving the prior commitment of the Army authorities was now out of the question, but Hatanaka had other plans. If units of the Imperial Guards Division could be used to occupy the palace, seize the recording of the imperial message, and

take the emperor himself into custody, then orders could be issued encouraging the pro-war forces scattered throughout the country to unite, rise up, and pull the rest of the Army along with them.

Hatanaka had some confidence that this plan could work because he had been able to gain a fair number of supporters among the Imperial Guards through the contacts he had made during the course of the previous week, and because he had already drawn up a loose network of civilian right-wingers and radical young officers who could be called upon to carry out the assassination of key figures in the Japanese leadership.

Among the War Ministry staff officers, Lt. Colonel Shiizaki Jirō was the first to be won over to this new plot by Hatanaka's eloquence and charisma, and Lt. Colonels Ida and Takeshita were quick to follow. Ida was assigned the difficult task of persuading Imperial Guards Commander Mori to join them, while Takeshita took on the task of bringing War Minister Anami on board once the *coup* had become a *fait accompli*.

By the time Ida, with Shiizaki in tow, was ushered into the office of Imperial Guards Commander Mori, who had been an instructor of Ida's during his days at the Military Academy, it was nearing one o'clock in the morning of 15 August. The last day of the war had begun. With Lt. General Mori was his brother-in-law, Lt. Colonel Shiraishi Michinori, a staff officer with the 2nd General Army. Though the conspirators were unaware of this at the time, Shiraishi was meeting with his brother-in-law at the behest of one of Hatanaka's comrades, Yoshiwara Masami, in an independent effort to convince Mori to mobilize the Imperial Guards behind the *coup*.⁴⁶

Ida's presentation of the case for a *coup d'état* took nearly an hour. Mori listened in silence, his eyes shut as if deep in meditation. Finally, he spoke:⁴⁷

I understand what you are thinking very well, and I have to say that I am impressed. To tell you the truth, at this point I no longer know what is the right thing to do ... I want to go to offer my prayers at the Meiji Shrine now, and make my decision with a heart purified in the presence of the gods.

Mori's real state of mind remains a mystery to this day, but Ida was convinced that he had succeeded in persuading him to back the *coup*, and withdrew from the divisional commander's office. In the

corridor outside, he ran into Major Hatanaka, accompanied by Captain Uehara Jūtarō, an instructor at the Air Academy, and Major Kubota Kenzō, instructor at the Aviation Communications School. Both men had abandoned their posts in order to join Hatanaka in his plot; like Meiji Restoration loyalist terrorists who fled their domain feudal lords, they were fully prepared to kill the division commander Mori if he offered any resistance to the *coup*.

According to Kubota,⁴⁸ who is still a living witness to the events of that night, Hatanaka entered first, and after being shouted at by Mori, stepped once again into the corridor. He then signalled Uehara and Kubota, who rushed into the room with drawn swords.

The tragedy was over in an instant. Hatanaka shot Mori with his pistol, while Uehara, an expert swordsman, cut the commander down with a swift diagonal slice through the torso, whirling about to slash at Shiraishi, who was grappling with Hatanaka. Kubota dealt Shiraishi the death blow.

Hearing the shot, Ida rushed back into the room. Choking back tears, his voice tense, Hatanaka explained, 'It's done ... there just wasn't enough time.' Hatanaka, seething with impatience and calculating that the entire plot would collapse if the troops were not mobilized by 2.00 a.m., had exploded into violence. But the murder of the divisional commander would prove to be a fatal mistake.

Things went smoothly for a time. Through his comrades Major Ishihara Teikichi and Major Koga Hidemasa, Imperial Guards staff officers, Hatanaka was able to issue forged orders to the 2nd Guards Regiment, and succeeded in seizing key points within the palace grounds and severing external communications. The troops also captured Shimomura Hiroshi, director of the Cabinet Information Bureau, but were unable to locate the disks bearing the pre-recorded imperial broadcast announcing the surrender.

But the authority of the forged orders could not be sustained very long. The Eastern Army soon learned what was really going on, and conveyed this information to the regimental commander, who ordered Hatanaka and his comrades to disperse. The revolt of the Imperial Guards had lasted only two hours.

Lt. Colonel Ida, who had carried out a fruitless mission to persuade the Eastern Army to join the coup, now headed for the war

minister's official residence. It was 4.00 a.m., with dawn about to break over the capital. Anami was preparing to commit *seppuku* with his brother-in-law Lt. Colonel Takeshita serving as his witness and second. He had already written a simple testament:

In death, I respectfully atone for my grave offence [to the Emperor].

Minister of War Anami Korechika

The night of 14 August, Shōwa 20
(his sign)

Major Kubota had rushed to the war minister's residence with the first report of the palace *coup* an hour-and-a-half earlier, but Anami had given no orders, saying simply, 'This, too, I will be apologizing for.'

Anami turned his sword upon himself at 4.40 a.m. on 15 August; it is recorded that he took over seven hours to die.

At the nexus of loyalty and treason

If the emperor was one of the principal actors contributing to the drama of the war's end, then few would disagree that Anami was the other.

While the emperor struggled to employ Anami as a channel through which to convince Japan's 5.5 million men in arms to lay down their weapons, for his part Anami served as the representative of that army in imploring the emperor to the last possible instant to reverse his decision and continue the fighting. The Army and Navy chiefs of staff were also on Anami's side, but at the last it came down to a deadly showdown between the emperor and his war minister.

This fierce collision of two powerful wills ended in the victory of the emperor's sacrificial courage over the resistance of Anami and the Japanese Army, but it was a closely fought match, with Anami's dramatic death tending to obscure the realities of the struggle.

As a result, there have been many variant interpretations of Anami's role, with opinion divided even among those who participated in the events of August 1945. Anami's biographer Tsunoda Fusako has arranged these various assessments into four

principal categories, according to whether they see Anami as: (1) advocate of a final counter-attack to improve Japan's negotiating position; (2) a bluffer using carefully camouflaged means in an attempt to contain the restive army; (3) a man gripped by confusion and indecision, ultimately unable to act; or (4) a diehard proponent of a continuation of the war at any cost.⁴⁹ Her analysis of these four positions leads her to accept the second as the most likely. Yet a survey of Anami's speech and actions during this critical period provides some ammunition for each of these opposing viewpoints.

Anami was fond of using vague expressions that could be interpreted according to the disposition of his listeners. One of these was his remark about 'seizing life out of the jaws of death'; another was his comparison of his own position to that of Saigo Takamori – which naturally enough was taken very differently by his adjutant Hayashi, who wanted an end to the war, and his brother-in-law Takeshita, who was determined that the fighting continue. In this sense, Anami stands in vivid contrast to Army Chief of Staff Umezu, who consistently avoided language or behaviour that could be subject to misinterpretation.

Yet, if we take a long, hard look at Anami, undistracted by each twist and turn of his complex evasive actions, we begin to see him as being much more deeply embroiled in the *coup* plot than the images of the ineffectual bumbler or clever bluffer would indicate.

From a tactical standpoint, most *coups d'état* are made or broken by the degree of success the conspirators achieve in their preparatory manoeuvres to win over a majority within the military. In the Japanese case, and for obvious reasons, the group surrounding the emperor had the advantage from the beginning in blocking the *coup* plotters from attaining such a majority. This was particularly true because the peace faction had split the Navy – the only bloc rivalling the Army in terms of actual power – and held a very strong card in Navy Minister Yonai's unwavering allegiance to their cause.

On the other hand, Anami had given the go ahead for *coup* preparations on 12 August, leaving the details to Takeshita and his subordinates on the ministry staff, while he himself concentrated on weaving a network of opposition among Japan's elite during the moments he could tear free from the interminable cabinet sessions.

He requested meetings with Prince Mikasa, Prince Takeda, former Army Minister Minami Jirō, former Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, and Professor Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, and he summoned Field Marshal Hata Shunroku, commander-in-chief of the 2nd General Army, all the way from his headquarters at Hiroshima for consultation. Anami seemed particularly intent on sounding out Prince Takeda, who was a lieutenant colonel attached to the staff of the 1st General Army, for he met with him on several different occasions though the prince recalls that Anami's purpose remained obscure, even to him.⁵⁰

In any case, the responses to these feelers by Anami were largely negative. According to Anami's adjutant Hayashi, Prince Mikasa, who encountered Anami on returning from a conference of imperial family members, spoke to him so sharply that Anami complained to Hayashi he thought the prince was being unfair and that 'His Highness had no call talking to me that way.'⁵¹

In the meantime, the efforts of the group surrounding the emperor were meeting with greater success; by 13 August they had managed to pull most of the members of the cabinet into their camp. Kido and Suzuki, who sensed the likelihood of a *coup* attempt or terrorism, reaffirmed their commitment to the course they had chosen, agreeing that '... if anyone is to be killed, it will probably stop with three or four of us',⁵² and preparing for the showdown the next morning at the Imperial Conference.

In a memo dated 13 August, Lt. Colonel Kunitake Teruto of the War Ministry's Military Affairs Bureau wrote: 'The situation has been deteriorating gradually since the 12th ... As of today it seems that may already be too late to do much of anything.' It was on the evening of the 13th that Anami, impatient with the way things were going, indicated to Takeshita that the *coup* should be set in motion.⁵³ Yet the timetable –

0700: Meeting between war minister and Army chief of staff.

0730: Meeting between war minister, Eastern Army Commander, Imperial Guards Division Commander.

0800: Assembly of ministry personnel of the rank of deputy section chief and above.

1000: Mobilization.

was thrown off by the ‘unexpected’ opposition of Army Chief of Staff Umezu, as related above.

Takeshita and his comrades later regretted this as evidence of insufficient preparation on their part; yet it is debatable whether there was ever any real hope that Umezu might be brought on board.

General Umezu had a reputation for being stern, taciturn, cool-headed, wise, and also self-protective. So it comes as no great surprise that we have been left with almost no sources from which a hypothesis might be constructed as to what went on in Umezu’s mind during this critical period. Yet, judging from the scrap of information he let slip to Colonel Hayashi on the morning of the 13th, when he said, ‘The argument for ending the war [through unconditional surrender] seems reasonable’,⁵⁴ it seems safe to assume that he was not dead set on a continuation of hostilities.⁵⁵ We may even speculate that after his impassioned opposition to surrender at the Imperial Conference the day before, he had reassessed the pattern of events and undergone a change of heart.

At any rate, there is clear evidence that after Anami sensed that Umezu was unwilling to cooperate, the war minister was genuinely perplexed as to whether or not to go through with the *coup*, despite his earlier arrangements with Takeshita. This is the basis for the speculations of Hayashi and Colonel Matsutani Makoto, the prime minister’s adjutant, that after getting a clear ‘no’ from Umezu, Anami tried to put the brakes on the situation.

Yet Anami’s confusion and indecision continued on to the very end. Immediately after the Imperial Conference of 14 August at which the final decision to end the war was made, the war minister once again approached Chief of Staff Umezu and blurted out, ‘There’s talk that the war should be continued even if that means a *coup d’état*. What do you think?’ Lieutenant General Ikeda Sumihisa, Director of the Cabinet General Planning Bureau, who witnessed this exchange, recalls that Umezu responded without hesitation:⁵⁶

The emperor’s command has already been handed down. The people will not follow the Army’s lead, and the Army would be torn apart from within ... Let’s surrender cleanly and honourably.

Anami nodded in assent, and ‘dragged himself out of the room with a crestfallen expression’.

Even so, at the meeting in the war minister's office at 2.30 that afternoon, where the Army Big Three⁵⁷ and the three commanders-in-chief of the Air Force pledged their obedience to the Imperial Decision, Anami displayed 'an expression as anguished as any I have ever seen', according to Lt. General Kawabe Torashirō, 'and muttered something to the effect of "Isn't there anything else we can do?"'⁵⁸

It was precisely because he had taken such a sensitive reading of the war minister's state of mind that Major Hatanaka believed Anami could be brought on board if a palace *coup* could be presented as a *fait accompli* and this was also why Lt. Colonel Takeshita had set out as the plotter's emissary to his brother-in-law.

We shall never know precisely what went through Anami's mind in the hours between his suicide preparations late in the night of the 14th and his lingering death by *seppuku* as the sun rose on the last day of the war. Yet the fact that he babbled to Takeshita 'Kill [Navy Minister] Yonai!' and handed to him the war minister's official seal, raises a variety of speculations.

Takeshita showed the seal to Lt. Colonel Ida, saying, 'With this we can now issue ministerial orders,' but the thoroughly discouraged Ida simply said, 'Now that the war minister is dead it is much too late to accomplish anything,' and the subject was not brought up again.⁵⁹

It is the author's belief that to the end Anami remained unconvinced by the logic of the Imperial Decision, and that he went to his agonizing death filled with deep pessimism about the future of Japan's national polity.

Final sparks: Major Kubota's later life

The shock of the Imperial Decision to end the war sent broadening ripples of despair and demoralization throughout the Army's entire officer corps. The collapse of their world left these men with little choice other than to act in accordance with whatever private convictions they might possess.

Some chose to follow Anami in ritual suicide; others pledged resistance to the Occupation forces and went underground. Still others hurried home to civilian life, taking whatever military

supplies they could lay their hands on; and some went immediately into hiding, fearing that they would be named as war criminals.

Scattered here and there across the country were groups of military men and civilian right-wingers, their morale unbroken, who refused to abandon the idea of a fight to the finish. Among them were the 302nd Naval Air Unit at Atsugi, the Army Air Squadron at Kodama and the Army Aviation Communications Division stationed at Mito. In addition, Lt. Colonel Nakajima Kenichirō, staff officer with the Tokyo Bay Army Corps, was plotting with a handful of comrades to depose Emperor Hirohito and to kidnap the twelve-year-old Crown Prince Akihito, who had been evacuated to Nikkō to escape the Allied bombings.

For whatever reason, neither the central military authorities nor the Military Police took aggressive action to contain such pockets of unrest, though they were certainly aware of them. Perhaps they were farsighted enough to realize that these plots would fizzle out of their own accord if they were left alone.

After he had been ejected from the palace, Major Hatanaka went to the offices of NHK,⁶⁰ the national radio network, where he demanded to broadcast an appeal for insurrection. NHK employees had the presence of mind to disconnect the line between the studios and the broadcasting tower, however, and Hatanaka's last effort failed. He committed suicide with his comrade Lt. Colonel Shiizaki in the park facing the Imperial Palace a few moments before the Imperial broadcast at noon on 15 August.

At dawn that same morning, Reserves Captain Sasaki Takeo and a gang of right-wing students fired a machine gun into the prime minister's official residence and set fire to his private residence and that of Privy Council President Hiranuma before giving themselves up to the Military Police. Remarkably, they were released almost immediately, but Sasaki spent the next fourteen years underground. At about the same time as that assault, another right-wing group torched Privy Seal Kido's residence. Both groups had been acting under instructions from Major Hatanaka.

This sporadic violence, like summer fireworks, soon sputtered to an end. By 20 August or so, most resistance groups had thrown in the towel and disbanded themselves. The drama of the war's end rang down its curtain on a farcical note on 24 August with an

incident that has come to be known as the Hijacking of the Kawaguchi Radio Station.

The protagonist was Major Kubota Kenzō, Hatanaka's accomplice in the assassinations of Mori and Shiraishi at Imperial Guards headquarters. At one point he, too, had chosen suicide, and had seated himself in the park before the imperial palace to carry out the deed. He was saved by one of the thousands of leaflets appealing for continued resistance which had been dropped over the capital by pilots from Atsugi Air Base. As he read it, Kubota had a change of heart. Thirty-seven years later, thinned a bit by age but still with a wicked glint in his eyes, Kubota slowly unfolded his story for the author:

The shame of it was that if General Anami had only stood up to be counted, the rest of the Army would have gone along with him ... After I read the leaflet, I thought things over, and decided that I would take up where Major Hatanaka had left off. I hid out in the Officers Quarters of the 2nd Imperial Guards Regiment, got a few comrades together, and began working on plans to kidnap General MacArthur and hold him hostage, figuring this was the quickest way to ensure the preservation of the national polity. But one by one, the others gradually dropped out, and I ended up on my own again. Lt. Colonel Inaba didn't know what to make of me, he said, 'Boy, you sure are stubborn, aren't you.'

At this point an old classmate of mine showed up, Lieutenant Honda, who was an instructor at the Military Academy Preparatory School, and since it didn't seem that there was much else we could do, we decided to take a gamble on hijacking the Kawaguchi Radio Station and broadcasting an appeal to the Japanese people ...

On the night of 23 August, Honda mobilized sixty-seven of his students for what he said would be night manoeuvres, and bright and early the next morning Major Kubota led this troop in an assault on the Kawaguchi (then officially known as the Hatogaya) Radio Station. They forced their way into the studios and demanded to be allowed to broadcast, but a technician quick to appreciate the lunacy of the situation severed the power lines to the transmitter.

Kubota, an electronics instructor himself, saw this happen as he argued with the other station employees. He cursed himself as a fool

for having neglected to secure the power supply, and slapped his forehead in chagrin, realizing the game was up.

General Tanaka Shizuichi, Commander of the Eastern Army District, soon arrived on the scene with a detachment of Military Police, and after giving the students a scolding and ordering them to disperse, took Kubota and Honda into custody. The sole result of this escapade was a nine-hour disruption of radio transmission in the Tokyo area – a rather sorry finale to the high drama of the preceding weeks.

General Tanaka shot himself that night, carrying out the suicide he had been contemplating since Japan's surrender. At about the same time, Kubota was released from the Kudan Military Police Station.

Japan changed rapidly under the Allied Occupation. Making the most of his technical training, Kubota went to work for Iwasaki Telephone and Telegraph, before long transferring to a subsidiary firm where he became chairman of the company labour union and the scourge of its communist faction. Kubota's concern with the preservation of the national polity had now developed into a fervent anti-communism, but after three years he resigned from his job and returned to his native Kagoshima, where he lived modestly as the business manager of a small hotel.

The war had been over for more than thirty years before the truth of Kubota's involvement in the assassinations of Lt. General Mori and Lt. Colonel Shiraishi finally came to light.

Notes

¹ *Ogata Ken'ichi jijū bukan nikki* (unpublished).

² *Ogata nikki*, 15 June 1945.

³ On which see Russell Spurr, *A Glorious Way to Die: The Kamikaze Mission of the Battleship Yamato, April 1945* (New York: New Market Press, 1981).

⁴ On which see the recollections of Yamane Masako in Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York, New Press, 1992), pp. 430–436, 'The Emperor's Retreat'.

⁵ Supreme Council for the Conduct of the War: composed of the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Minister of War, Minister of the Navy, and the Chiefs of Army and Navy General Staffs. It was also known as the Big Six.

- ⁶ *Kaigun Taishō Yonai Mitsumasa ukesho*, pp. 123–124.
- ⁷ The Dai Ichi Seimei Building later served as General MacArthur's headquarters. By 13 June, however, as the schedule given above indicates, the emperor was receiving reports on the progress of the Matsushiro redoubt.
- ⁸ Sanada, *Kaisō roku* (unpublished).
- ⁹ Tsuji Masanobu, *Guadalcanal*, p. 105.
- ¹⁰ Higashikuni Naruhiko, *Ichi kōzoku no sensō nikki*, p. 111.
- ¹¹ *Kido nikki*, 10 February 1942.
- ¹² *Kido nikki*, 10 February 1942.
- ¹³ *Kido nikki*, 31 July 1945. The three symbols of imperial rule – jewel, sword, and mirror.
- ¹⁴ Hosokawa Morisada, *Hosokawa nikki*, 3 April and 1 August 1945.
- ¹⁵ Suzuki Tetsutarō, 'Sofu Suzuki Kantarō', *Bungei shunjū*, March 1988, p. 81.
- ¹⁶ Kobori Keiichi, *Saishō Suzuki Kantarō*. Yatsugi Kazuo, *Tennō arashi no naka no go-jūnen*, pp. 24–30.
- ¹⁷ *Gunnuka seihen keii* (unpublished). The Army could abort formation of a cabinet by refusing to provide a war minister, who had to be a general on active service.
- ¹⁸ Press conference, 2 September 1980.
- ¹⁹ Fujita Hisanori, *Jijūchō no kaisō*, p. 206. Fujita was grand chamberlain.
- ²⁰ *Hosokawa nikki*, 16 February 1945.
- ²¹ *Hosokawa nikki*, 17 August 1945. Anami killed himself the morning of 15 August, but the diarist reports that he heard this statement of his from Imperial Household Minister Ishiwata Sōtarō in early August.
- ²² *Hosokawa nikki*, 2 April 1945.
- ²³ *Hosokawa nikki*, 21 June 1945.
- ²⁴ *Kido nikki*, 22 June 1945.
- ²⁵ The Suzuki cabinet, after some hesitation, announced that Japan would 'ignore' the demand for surrender, and used the term *mokusatsu* a term defined by a standard dictionary as 'take no notice of; treat with silent contempt, ignore'.
- ²⁶ War Council and cabinet meetings went on throughout the day of the 9th; the crucial Imperial Conference was convened just before midnight on the 9th and went on into the morning of the 10th. See Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, pp. 158–178; Toland, *The Rising Sun*, pp. 908–917.
- ²⁷ *Kawabe nikki*.
- ²⁸ I can find no position in any tables of military organization corresponding to the *rikukaigun tōsuibuchō* used in this sentence: I assume it refers to the chiefs of staff.

²⁹ The author's account concentrates on the emperor. The details of the conference decision are fully described in Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1954) and, more recently, Pacific War Research Society, *Japan's Longest Day* (Tokyo, Kōdansha, 1968).

³⁰ *Kawabe nikki*.

³¹ Text of this and other documents related to the surrender can be found in Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*.

³² *Miyazaki Shūichi nikki* (unpublished).

³³ Tōgō Shigenori, *Jidai no ichimen* (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1952), p. 328.

³⁴ *Daini sōgun shūsenki*

³⁵ *Kido Kochi kankei monjo*, p. 195.

³⁶ The battle for Okinawa had brought the highest casualty rate in United States Army history.

³⁷ See Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 186.

³⁸ The major sources of the participants are Henry M. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harpers, 1948); James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, edited by Walter Millis (New York: Viking Press, 1951), Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs* (New York, Doubleday, 1955–56), and William B. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York, Whittlesey House, 1950).

³⁹ Diary notation for 10 August 1945, in *On Active Service in Peace and War*.

⁴⁰ With the significant differences that there was vigorous discussion and the president made the final decision.

⁴¹ *The Forrestal Diaries*, p. 84 (10 August 1945).

⁴² Unpublished Forrestal Diaries, Mudd Library, Box 1, 052; Princeton University; 10 August 1945.

⁴³ Saigō Takamori (1827–77), the pre-eminent military figure of the Meiji Restoration, lent his name and life to young samurai followers in the Satsuma Rebellion which presented the greatest danger to the young Meiji government.

⁴⁴ *Takeshita nikki*.

⁴⁵ *Ida shuki* (contained, together with Takeshita Diary, in Nishiuchi Masashi and Iwata (Ida) Mastaka (eds), *Otakebi* (Tokyo: Nihon kōgyō shimbunsha, 1982)).

⁴⁶ *Otakebi*, p. 209.

⁴⁷ *Ida shuki*.

⁴⁸ Interview with author.

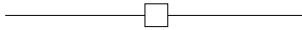
⁴⁹ *Isshi daizai o shasu* (Shinchōsha, 1980).

⁵⁰ *Yomiuri* interview with Takeda, *Shōwashi no tennō* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha), Vol. 7, pp. 346–347.

- ⁵¹ Interviews with Hayashi Saburō, 24 October 1982 and 6 June 1983.
- ⁵² *Kido monjo*, pp. 89–90.
- ⁵³ *Takeshita nikki*.
- ⁵⁴ *Shūsen wa yūryoku na an da to omou* interview with Hayashi Saburō.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Hayashi Saburō.
- ⁵⁶ Ikeda Sumihisa, *Nippon no magarikado* (Chishiro shuppan, 1968), p. 200.
- ⁵⁷ The war minister, the Army chief of staff, and the director-general of military education.
- ⁵⁸ *Kawabe nikki*, 14 August 1945.
- ⁵⁹ Interviews with Ida Masataka, 18 May 1983, and with Takeshita, 12 June 1983.
- ⁶⁰ It was still held by troops of the First Imperial Guards Regiment, acting under the spurious orders that Hatanaka himself had issued.

CHAPTER 3

Schemes for Survival of the Imperial Line



‘We now begin a mission more important than death’

EDITOR'S NOTE

Up to this point the author has dealt with the two cases in which Emperor Hirohito's personal intervention made a decisive difference in Japanese history: the suppression of the military mutiny in 1936, and the decision to surrender in 1945. The events described in this chapter are quite different; they owe nothing to Hirohito, who was not even aware of them.

They have never been told in this detail, which is further enriched by recent interviews with participants. They are of great interest, for they illustrate the way perpetuation of the imperial institution obsessed Japanese who saw in it the deepest substratum of their culture.

The interlude between surrender and the arrival of the Occupation forces in September produced a number of plans that centred on the protection of Hirohito and his line. One, originating with Prince Konoe, was discussed even before the surrender, and contemplated abdication and withdrawal by the emperor into the safety of Buddhist orders as a cloistered abbot. This Hirohito dismissed cursorily – if, indeed, it was brought to his attention at all. The shift from white steed to white robes would hardly have been successful in any event.

More interesting were plans concocted to hide a future candidate for the throne from the victorious Americans. The same desperation that produced the extremist plots to negate Hirohito's surrender decision led officers in both the Army and the Navy to develop post-surrender plans for the perpetuation of the imperial institution in the event Japan's occupiers should take steps against Hirohito and his line. The Army plan, as will be seen, was more radical and

self-generated; the Navy, with support from higher echelons, utilized some of Japan's finest airmen. It is clear from these stories that if the Occupation authorities had decided to move against the emperor or the imperial institution there would have been, at least initially, sabotage and opposition. These bizarre plots ended as almost comic escapades, as it gradually became clear that the emperor and the imperial institution were not in danger. But though little known, these plans were not without importance. Handsomely funded by central headquarters of the Imperial Army and Navy, they illustrate the ease with which large sums of money could disappear into private hands in the interval between defeat and occupation. They were part of a short-lived but long-range plan for underground resistance and future recovery for an imperial Japan.

For those who took part in them these schemes provided a sense of identity and purpose during the transition from war to peace, and served as a substitute for terrorist violence and self-immolation. Men whose self-definition had centred on the 'imperial way' and 'national polity' could imagine no meaningful existence for themselves in a Japan without an emperor or military. Yet within months they awakened to find themselves and their concerns virtually irrelevant to their fellow Japanese. They emerged with a deflated sense of self that gives a histrionic bathos to the days when these officers laid plans and then awakened from them as if from a dream.-Ed.]

The debate over 'preservation of the national polity'

On 9 August 1945, ten days after the emperor expressed to Kido his determination to perish in the defence of the realm, the Imperial Decision was handed down to accept the Potsdam Declaration on the sole condition that Japan be given assurances that its national polity would be preserved. A week of turmoil and violence followed, as Japan continued to wrestle with the question of whether to surrender or to fight on. The pivot around which this historical drama unfolded was the intangible concept of the 'national polity' (*kokutai*). Related to it was the question of the emperor's personal fate.

At no other period in Japanese history was the word *kokutai* used with such frequency and abandon as during the chaos of the 1930s and 1940s. Its slogans are linked forever with our image of the era: 'clarification of the national polity' (*kokutai meichō*) 'the glory of the national polity' (*kokutai no seika*) 'the fundamentals of the national polity' (*kokutai no hongi*) and finally 'preservation of the national polity' (*kokutai no goji*). Vague, obscure, subject to widely variant interpretations, this concept exerted a mesmerizing magnetism which held all Japanese, the emperor included, in its thrall.

Though there were as many versions of the concept as there were people to offer them, *kokutai* was not without an orthodox and public definition. The infamous Peace Preservation Law¹ placed heavy penalties, up to and including death, on any person 'organizing an association with the goal of altering the *kokutai*'. In practice, this law was primarily intended to be applied to communists, and in 1931, in a decision regarding one of the first cases tried under the statute, the Great Court of Cassation (the pre-war equivalent of the present Supreme Court) ruled that 'the national polity of our country is a system of imperial sovereignty reigned over by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal'.

This definition is echoed in the text of Japan's first offer of surrender, dated 9 August 1945, in which the key passage read:²

The Japanese government are ready to accept the terms enumerated in the joint declaration which was issued at Potsdam with the understanding that said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler.

In other words, the two essential constituent elements in Japan's 'national polity' were a system in which the emperor was recognized as sovereign ruler, and a firmly held faith in the continuity of the imperial lineage which did not admit the concept, present in other monarchies, of a change in dynasty.

The Byrnes Note responding to this surrender offer by Japan had arrived in Tokyo on 12 August 1945:³

From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied powers ... The ultimate form of the government of Japan shall ... be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people.

With receipt of this note, the Japanese government and military had fallen into discord, for the subtlety of its phrasing allowed it to be construed either as an assurance of the preservation of Japan's national polity – or as a failure to provide any such guarantee.

The vanguard of the hardliners resisting surrender was made up, as we have seen, of a group of younger officers within the central Army bureaucracy who pressed War Minister Anami into service as their standard-bearer. Although a minority, they had a potential force of three million men behind them. Intent upon 'seizing life out of the grip of death' by a relentless continuation of the conflict, they presented an irrepressible obstacle to the efforts of the elder statesmen and bureaucrats trying to end the war, and in the force of their vehemence, they led to a final showdown between the emperor and the Army over the issue of the national polity.

The peak of that crisis lasted from the night of 13 August into the following morning.

In the underground air-raid shelter beneath Imperial Headquarters in Ichigaya, War Ministry staff officers Takeshita Masahiko, Shiizaki Jirō, Hatanaka Kenji, Inaba Masao and Ida Masataka plotted a *coup d'état* involving the entire Army as a means of shifting the situation decisively in favour of a continuation of the war. As was shown in Chapter 2, they planned to force their way into the Imperial Conference scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on 14 August, place Japan's leaders under armed guard and press the emperor to reverse the Imperial Decision to surrender.

These men were members of Japan's military elite. They prided themselves on being the emperor's strong right arm, and were inculcated with an ethos of unquestioning obedience to the wishes of their sovereign. So the fact that they would contemplate such extreme action, 'even at the risk of being branded as traitors',⁴ is evidence of some powerful underlying rationale. That rationale lay in the idea that preservation of Japan's national polity took precedence over the wishes of Emperor Hirohito, who was, after all, only one in 'a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal'. For them the emperor's determination to end the war and save his people from utter annihilation, even if this meant the demise of the imperial system, meant that he had a faulty conception of the national polity, and that a 'direct appeal' on their part to correct His Majesty's error was permissible.

These men can be described as adherents of the ‘emperor-centred history’ (*kōkoku shikan*) taught by Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, professor of national history at Tokyo Imperial University. In Hiraizumi’s view, the emperor’s refusal to evacuate to Matsushiro and his insistence on remaining at the helm in the capital was an expression of the spirit of the *kokutai* and the moral bonds uniting the sovereign and his subjects. But when the professor learned of the Byrnes Note, he feared for the preservation of the national polity, and he had advised both Anami and Hatanaka to ‘give it one more try’ in order to attain the necessary assurances. Thus, in a sense, the conflict over the conception of the *kokutai* which brought the emperor and the Army staff officers into direct opposition regarding the terms of surrender was at base a conflict between the emperor and the Hiraizumi school of Japanese history.

In contrast to the *coup* fever sweeping through the Army, the Navy, reined in by Yonai and the peace faction, remained calm. In large part this was due to the fact that the Navy had lost nearly all its surface fleet: sword broken and arrows spent, it had little will to fight on.

One notable exception was Vice Admiral Onishi Takijirō, the Navy vice chief of staff and creator of the special attack forces – the *kamikaze*. With bloodshot eyes and a voice trembling with emotion, he stalked the corridors of Navy headquarters preaching continued resistance. According to the memoirs of Tomioka Sadatoshi and Yatsugi Kazuo, in his excitement Onishi delivered himself of remarks that bordered on lèse-majesty – ‘The emperor himself should lead the special attack forces’, ‘He may be the emperor, but there are times when His Majesty is an imbecile,’ and ‘We may just have to give His Majesty’s arm a bit of a twist ...’ – yet the response from his Navy comrades was indifferent at best.

We have seen how the Imperial Decision of 14 August shook the members of Minister of War Anami’s staff. Some burst into inconsolable tears, while the group around Major Hatanaka raced to carry out a last desperate attempt for a *coup*. The news of the surrender leapt like an electric arc to every corner of the vast imperial headquarters complex at Ichigaya. After the initial shock and agitation, a profound sense of lassitude settled in. Only yesterday, these officers at the nerve centre of Japan’s armed forces

had been secure in their position as the emperor's most trusted retainers, the elite of a nation in arms. Now they stood, bewildered and alone, as each among them wrestled blindly with an uncertain future.

Hatanaka and his associates chose the path of rebellion and suicide. Others, however, found meaning in projects to hide and protect a member of the imperial lineage so that upon the departure of the victorious Americans *kokutai* could be restored. And prior to any of these plans, Prince Konoe Fumimaro had worked out a more subtle plan under which Hirohito might leave the secular world for Buddhist orders in the hope the Allies would maintain the throne once its offending occupant was removed.

Get thee to a monastery?

Konoe's belief in the inevitability of Japan's defeat and his concern for the emperor's future had begun with the fall of Saipan the previous summer. He had gone so far as to discuss a plan for Hirohito's abdication, succession by Crown Prince Akihito and a regency under Prince Takamatsu with Privy Seal Kido Kōichi. In the succeeding months, the war situation had worsened sharply and with dramatic speed. The campaign for the defence of Leyte – styled 'Tennōzan'⁵ by Imperial Headquarters – had been an unmitigated disaster and the death blow to Japan's Combined Fleet; the tide of battle had then swept on to Okinawa, and stood poised to engulf the home islands. Yet the military still loudly and boldly paraded the slogans of 'a decisive battle for the home islands' and 'one hundred million shattered jewels',⁶ and was constructing an underground headquarters complex and haven for the emperor at Matsushiro in the mountains of Nagano prefecture in preparation for the abandonment of the capital of Tokyo.

To Konoe, as he desperately groped for some means to conclude a peace before this horrifying scenario played itself out, it began to look as if it might be too late for the emperor merely to abdicate. On 6 January, he remarked to his son-in-law and private secretary Hosokawa Morisada:⁷

One possibility would be for His Majesty not just to abdicate, but to retire to the Ninnaji or the Daikakuji and to devote himself to

offering prayers for the souls of the officers and men fallen in combat. Of course I would accompany him in his retirement.

A few weeks later he pursued this idea further.

At a little past one in the afternoon of 26 January 1945 a gleaming black limousine drew up in front of Prince Konoe Fumimaro's villa in Udano on the outskirts of Kyoto, an area famous for the cherry trees surrounding the Ninnaji Temple, which had served as the retreat for the cloistered Emperor Uda (867–931) after he had abdicated the throne and withdrawn into religious orders. The Konoe villa was also known as the Yōmei Library,⁸ and served as the repository for the treasures and the archives of this noble family from the Heian Period onwards. Construction of a new tea pavilion had begun the year before and had just been completed.

The tall and slender Prince Konoe and his wife Chiyoko stood before the villa's entrance to greet their visitor, who alighted from his car with a cheery and casual greeting. It was Emperor Hirohito's younger brother Prince Takamatsu, clad in the uniform of a captain in the Imperial Navy. Two days earlier, before both Konoe and Takamatsu had left Tokyo on the same train to attend the festival celebrating the 1,300th anniversary of the Omi Shrine, Konoe had then proceeded on to Kyoto, while Prince Takamatsu had remained to attend to some public ceremonies at the shrine, promising to pay a visit when he was done.

After showing the Prince some of the treasures of his family's collection, Konoe ushered his imperial visitor into the new tea pavilion, still redolent of freshly worked wood. Preparations for the visit had been undertaken by Kiya Ikusaburō, a friend of Konoe's and a fringe player in the complex world of Japanese politics. The household staff had all been let go for the afternoon; the wives of two men close to the Konoe family had agreed to stand in for the maids.

There was a reason for such extensive precautions. Konoe, regarded as a leader of the 'peace faction' among Japan's elite, now had his every move watched intently by the Military Police.

Konoe began the conversation by referring directly to this problem:

Your Excellency, lately the Military Police have been following me everywhere I go. I'm also told they have spies among my maids and

drivers, and my secretary Hosokawa tells me that a group from the Nakano Academy⁹ is tapping my phones ... But I think we should be safe here in Kyoto, so please relax and make yourself at home.

To this Prince Takamatsu replied,

Yes, I know. They seem to think I had something to do with the movement to bring down the Tōjō cabinet last summer, and I'm on guard too.

Konoe murmured a word of sympathy, and, drawing closer to the prince said carefully:

As Your Excellency is well aware, the war has entered a most desperate phase. If we cannot come up with some means for bringing it to an end, the imperial house itself will be threatened. Your servant Konoe, after much thought, has come to the conclusion that it is time to address His Majesty the Emperor directly, and I have taken the liberty of preparing a memorial to the throne.

He then picked up a sheaf of papers lying on a nearby writing table, and handed them to Prince Takamatsu, who after reading them intently, nodded and said:

Yes, I agree completely. But His Majesty is most impatient with loose talk from those not in positions of responsibility within the government – to the point that even members of the Imperial family aren't given any opportunity to speak with him. I've only had one audience with him myself since the beginning of the year, though there are things I would like to say to him, even at the risk of incurring his anger.

The prince sighed. The water in the kettle bubbled briskly, but the Kyoto winter, whipped by the winds rushing down from the northern hills, penetrated to the bones.

After a moment's silence, Konoe straightened his posture and spoke again, his voice lowered:

I feel there is something I should say concerning His Majesty. I've had the Foreign Ministry look into how the Allies are likely to behave with regard to the imperial house in the event of a termination of the war, and there isn't much cause for optimism. It seemed to me that some decisive steps should be taken to deal with this problem, and so I took the opportunity of this trip to Kyoto to make a few tentative arrangements. Last night, I had Okada and

Yonai¹⁰ meet me here, and we had a talk with Abbot Okamoto of the Ninnaji.

Both the Ninnaji and the Daikakuji were famous temples that had served since the middle ages as retreats for emperors who had withdrawn into the religious life; after much thought, Konoe had settled on the Ninnaji. The present abbot, Mori Taien, recalls that Konoe had a series of private conversations with Okamoto Jikō, the 39th abbot of the temple, as a result of which arrangements were initiated for the Ninnaji to welcome Hirohito quietly as its new abbot; he was to assume the title of Cloistered Emperor Yūnin¹¹ and take up residence in the temple's Golden Hall, with Okamoto serving as his chief priest.

The only problem remaining was how to convince the emperor himself and his principal palace advisers of the wisdom of this plan. To accomplish this, Konoe had first summoned his 'peace faction' allies former Prime Minister Okada Keisuke and Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa to Kyoto to meet with Abbot Okamoto, and then sought Prince Takamatsu's approval of the idea. Imperial Household Ministry records show that the conversation between Konoe and Prince Takamatsu lasted for more than nine hours. When they had done, Prince Takamatsu boarded the night train to return to Tokyo. Konoe remained in the ancient capital for several days, indulging himself in elegant pursuits he had not enjoyed for some time: inscribing scrolls at the studio of the master painter Dōmoto Inshō close by the Kinkakuji, performing the tea ceremony with the master of the Rikyū school at the master's private tea-house, and inviting his old friend, the author Yoshii Isamu to pass a pleasant evening banqueting at the Tsuruya, one of Kyoto's most distinguished restaurants.

After listening in Kyoto to Konoe's plan for the emperor's retirement to the Ninnaji, Prince Takamatsu returned to Tokyo and relayed the idea to Privy Seal Kido Kōichi. From the beginning the prince had little faith in its utility, though, for he was dubious as to whether the Allies, as Christian nations, would understand the Japanese custom, grounded in the Buddhist faith, of withdrawing into the religious life in order to atone for one's sins in the secular world. Nor is it likely that Kido, an ex-bureaucrat and consummate realist, approved of Konoe's plan, for even after the surrender he was

convinced that the emperor would actually place himself in greater danger by abdicating than he would by remaining on the throne.

But the decisive factor was that the emperor himself was resolved on a course very different from that outlined by Konoe. The underground headquarters complex and imperial refuge at Matsushiro had now been completed, and a special armoured train had been readied to convey the emperor to it, but the emperor flatly refused to abandon the capital. When Privy Seal Kido proposed at the end of July that perhaps the Three Sacred Treasures¹² should be removed there, even if the emperor himself did not go, the emperor refused, resolutely insisting, 'If worst comes to worst, I think I have no choice but to die defending them.'¹³

The Konoe Memorial

Twenty days later, on 14 February 1945, Konoe was granted an audience with the emperor, in which he submitted his now famous memorial to the throne. For the first time in years, the custom of formal presentation to the emperor of the opinions of Japan's elder statesmen had been revived.

The Konoe Memorial serves us as an excellent source for understanding Konoe Fumimaro's character as a statesman. The text begins, 'I believe that defeat, unfortunately, has now become inevitable,' and goes on to state:

Although defeat will deeply scar the essence of our nation [*kokutai*] public opinion in America and Britain has not yet advanced to the point of demanding the alteration of our national polity. Therefore, I believe that with regard to the national polity, we have little to fear from defeat alone. What should concern us most deeply from the perspective of preservation of the national polity is the likelihood that a communist revolution will occur in the wake of that defeat.

The reasons Konoe advanced for the threat of communist revolution that his memorial, however, involved a rather startling leap in logic.

Konoe argued that 'communists cloaked in the guise of patriots' [*kokutai no koromo o tsuketaru*] had infiltrated the Imperial Army, and from early on manipulated the military into planning and executing a disastrous series of conflicts, with the ultimate goal of

leading the country into a crushing defeat that would serve as the springboard for the communization of Japan. He then urged that Japan should end the war as quickly as possible in order to forestall this elaborate plot.

The bizarre implication of Konoe's thesis was that former Prime Minister Tōjō, Prime Minister Koiso, Army Chief of Staff Umezu, and the mainstream of the Army at the time, were all communists or communist pawns. This leads one to wonder about Konoe's own political responsibility, since he had been three times prime minister, largely through the backing of the Army, and yet never seems to have caught wind of this immense conspiracy before.

At any rate, Konoe's deep concern for the preservation of the national polity and the personal safety of Emperor Hirohito seemed now to stem from a perception that the crisis faced by the imperial system came less from the prospect of external pressure on the part of the Allies than it did from the threat of domestic communist revolution.

Added to this was the fact that Konoe, the scion of the premier family of Japan's ancient court nobility, felt closer to the emperor personally than any other of the elder statesmen and government ministers did. He had always shown this by the casualness he displayed during his imperial audiences, crossing his legs and chatting easily with the emperor.

His feeling of friendship for the emperor, and the romantic strain in his personality that in his youth had made him a devotee of Oscar Wilde, no doubt led to a genuine desire on his part to do what he could to ensure the emperor's personal safety; but Konoe also never lost sight of the fact that the imperial system was, after all was said and done, a system and an institution of the Japanese state.

The emperor seemed intent in perishing along with his capital, if that were the fate in store for him. Kido left the audience in which he had proposed moving at least the Three Sacred Treasures to the mountain redoubt in Nagano in silence, deeply troubled. If the emperor and the Sacred Treasures were both extinguished, could Japan's national polity survive? Could the unity of its people be preserved? There was no one who could answer these perplexing questions.

The diehards of the Nakano Academy

Within the military, however, there were men who set about preparing for the worst with plans for restoration of the imperial polity if it should be interrupted. As the life blood drained out of the Imperial Army, there was still a small group of individuals who responded coolly to the surrender as something long expected, and set calmly about preparing their next move. These were graduates of the Army's Nakano Academy, who occupied special intelligence posts throughout various parts of the Army.

The products of rigorous training as covert military operatives, these officers conceived of their real mission as beginning when the conventional warfare had ended. The graduates of the Nakano Academy – more than two thousand strong at the end of the war – were intended as the nucleus of resistance once the main force of the Army had been annihilated, and expected to operate as partisans and leaders of guerilla units on the islands retaken by the Allies and in the final stages of the battle for the Japanese homeland.

Significantly, the majority of these men were not career officers and graduates of the Army War College; they were instead civilians who had entered military service through the conscription system and had then been selected for officer candidate training. As a result, their sense of affiliation to the Army itself was relatively shallow, but their esprit de corps as products of the Nakano Academy was unusually strong, with an almost sinister twist to it that recalls the legendary *ninja* units of feudal Japan. How this Nakano group would move in response to the crisis was a major concern of both the pro-war and pro-surrender factions.

Until his transfer on 4 August, Lt. Colonel Hirose Eiichi, private secretary to the vice minister of war, had handled the liaison between the Army General Staff and the Nakano Academy. When he heard the first news of the Imperial Decision to surrender, Hirose was immediately worried about how Nakano and its graduates would react. He had reason to be, for in April of that year he had already had to busy himself defusing the plot for a *coup* the Nakano group had cooked up with members of the radical civilian right. Since that time, Major Kubota Ichirō, representative of the members of the first graduating class from the Academy stationed in Tokyo and as such the *de facto* leader of the entire group, had

secretly agreed to keep Hirose posted on their activities. What Hirose feared most was that this agreement might now have been breached, and that the Nakano group might now be operating without any supervision.

While Hirose was pondering all this, Major Kubota and another first year Nakano graduate, Yamamoto Masayoshi, were meeting in a back room at the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry with Shiizaki and Hatanaka, leaders of the ill-fated palace *coup* on the day of the surrender broadcast. The airless room, piled to the ceiling with ammunition crates and bales of documents, was stifling in the August heat, but a frigid sense of tension hung about the four men seated there.

At last, Shiizaki spoke:

I imagine you know without my telling you why we have called you here today. We need Nakano's assistance. This Imperial Decision is a fraud perpetrated by traitors surrounding the throne; it is not the true will of His Majesty. We intend to rise up and insist that we receive a true Imperial Decision.

– What do you mean by 'rise up'?

A *coup d'état*. The Imperial Guards Division will come out. If that happens, the Eastern Army will mobilize too, and it will develop into an uprising on the part of the entire Army. We'll have a bloodbath of those cowardly elder statesmen.

– But at this late date do you have any real hope of success?

We can't be concerned with success or failure. We have to act to preserve the *kokutai* for eternity.

Shiizaki's intense determination and eloquence set Kubota's pulse racing. Yet Kubota knew the atmosphere within the Nakano group better than anyone, and would not be led into a hasty response. Containing his emotions, he replied:

We are all meeting together tonight to determine our course of action. We may decide to join you. Or we may decide to take independent action. I can't say any more now ...

Shiizaki was undismayed.

Fine. That's for you and your comrades to decide. You of the Nakano group are the only ones with the potential for organized

underground action after the Army has collapsed. If we should fail, we'll ask you to take over our mission of preserving the national polity. Please talk with Lt. Colonel Hirose later. We have to go now.

Shiizaki thrust out both his hands and clasped Kubota's; then he and Hatanaka were out of the room like a shot.

A secret network to monitor the Occupation forces

As the encounter between Shiizaki and Kubota was taking place, two other men spoke quietly together in the nearby office of the Soviet Section of the Army General Staff. They were the section chief, Colonel Shiraki Suenari, and Major Inomata Jinya, a first-year graduate of the Nakano Academy attached to the Military Affairs Section of the War Ministry.

In contrast to Kubota, a typically brash and extroverted son of Kyushu, Inomata hailed from Aizu in the Tōhoku region, and was by nature more unassuming, while at the same time methodical, stubborn, and more of a thinker. Shiraki had long experience as a specialist in Soviet intelligence, and as he had been Inomata's direct superior when they had both been stationed in the Harbin Special Service Agency in Manchuria, the two officers knew each other well.

Inomata had come to Shiraki to discuss a plan: now that it appeared inevitable that Japan would be forced into surrender with the issue of the national polity still up in the air, what he proposed was the creation of a clandestine nationwide network manned by Nakano Academy graduates to monitor the activities of the Allied forces that would soon be coming to occupy Japan. He needed authorization and especially funding.

Inomata had already reviewed this idea with other first-year graduates; with Major Hata Masanori, a second-year graduate attached to the Soviet Section, and with Major Tarōra Sadao, an officer dispatched from the Academy itself, which had been evacuated from the capital to Tomioka in Gunma Prefecture. This underground network was to concern itself solely with preservation of the national polity: if the emperor or the imperial line were threatened, it would be mobilized via a central command post to carry out an assassination campaign against the officers of the

Occupation forces stationed throughout Japan. After mobilization, tactical operations would be left to the local operatives in each area, and the campaign of terror would continue until the Occupation bent under its pressure or the last member of the Nakano network died in service to this cause.

As Inomata slowly outlined his scheme, Colonel Shiraki listened intently, occasionally interjecting a question or closing his eyes in thought.

Right, I understand. And I agree in principle. How much money do you think you'll need?

Well, if we figure ¥100,000 (about ¥200 million at present values) for each prefectural leader, plus operating expenses for a headquarters unit, I would imagine we would require at least ¥5 million.

Fine. We'll draw up a written plan immediately and apply to the chief of Second Department for the funds. We've got to hurry. There's already an order out as of 11 August for the Nakano Academy to prepare to disband ...

After Inomata had left, Shiraki drafted a document entitled 'Plan for an Underground Organization to Monitor the Occupation Forces',¹⁴ had it approved by the chief of the Second Section (Army Intelligence), and the vice chief of staff, and hurriedly dispatched Major Tarōra to the Nakano Academy with a copy of the document.

When Tarōra arrived on the grounds of the Tomioka Middle School, which the academy had taken over as its temporary quarters, important records and files were already being destroyed. The director of the Nakano Academy, Major General Yamamoto Hayashi, assumed that when the American army of occupation arrived, they would take an immediate interest in the academy's records, and he was losing no time in making sure there was nothing left for them to investigate.

With the receipt of this secret authorization from Imperial Headquarters, the academy staff, under the direction of Lt. Colonels Sakamoto Sukeo and Toyama Hideo, set about preparing a detailed operational plan. Since the majority of academy graduates had already been stationed throughout the country, as a rule in their towns and villages of origin, in preparation for the final defence of

the home islands, they could easily be reassigned to meet the needs of this new mission. All that was required was to appoint leaders who had been fully briefed on the contents of the secret directive for each local team and dispatch them to their posts. These were selected from among the instructors and students currently at the academy and individually given verbal instructions as to their duties. Then a hurried and clandestine distribution of ammunition and stores began.

By the time of the imperial broadcast at noon on 15 August 1945 announcing the surrender, all preparations had been completed. Following a tearful speech by the director, the shrine to the fourteenth-century imperial loyalist Kusunoki Masashige, which was the academy's symbol, was put to the torch, and after a chorus of the school song, the students and staff of the Nakano Academy went their separate ways. The following morning, the grounds of the academy were empty, except for a small clean-up crew. Even Major General Yamamoto had dropped out of sight. It was a feat of legerdemain worthy of an organization slated to serve as underground headquarters for a secret war.

As has been shown, however, in the capital, Tokyo, the war did not end so smoothly. The leaders of the Nakano group monitored the failure of the desperate *coup* that Shiizaki and Hatanaka staged trying to head off the surrender broadcast, and followed reports of its bloodshed from a safe house in the Surugadai section of Tokyo. Shiizaki's request for their assistance had been relayed to them by Kubota, but debate was unnecessary. Their future course was clear. Final affirmation of their decision not to participate in the *coup*, and to devote themselves instead to the clandestine mission with which they had been entrusted, was reached early on the morning of 15 August as dawn began to lighten the eastern sky over Tokyo.

'Protect Prince Kitashirakawa!'

The unprecedented experience of defeat stirred up a flock of the wildest speculations and rumours in the streets of the capital. Dazed and disoriented, people temporarily lost their ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. Imperial headquarters at Ichigaya was no exception to this phenomenon.

The emperor was going to be exiled to China,¹⁵ and the rest of the imperial family put to death; the Crown Prince would be put in custody and taken to America; all career military men would be assigned to slave labour; the women of Japan would be forced into service as prostitutes for the American troops – these were the sort of rumours that reached the ears of Lt. Colonel Hirose, Secretary to the Vice Minister of War, who was already on the verge of total exhaustion from days of hard work and no sleep. But Hirose was trained as a cryptanalyst and had spent a fair amount of time stationed in Europe; his experience, intellect and common sense told him that these reports were not true.

How could they be? Japan was, after all, dealing with the armed forces of civilized nations. Yet the Potsdam Declaration had contained one ominous passage: ‘... stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals’. With the Imperial Army disarmed, demobilized and defenceless, what force would exist to defend the national polity? Would not the victors have an absolutely free hand?

After paying his last respects to the body of War Minister Anami early on the morning of the 15th, and stopping by the headquarters of the Imperial Guards Division, Hirose returned to the War Ministry, where he found nothing but despair and confusion. As he pondered the situation, an idea bubbled up and coalesced in Hirose’s mind. ‘Even if our greatest fears should be realized, we must at least ensure the continuity of the imperial line. The young Prince Kitashirakawa Michihisa is the key: he is in the direct line, but rarely in the public eye.’

Hirose and the young prince’s father, Prince Nagahisa, had both been members of the 43rd graduating class at the Military Academy, and Hirose had been selected when still an officer candidate to be one of Nagahisa’s companions, so he was a trusted friend of the Kitashirakawa family.

Prince Nagahisa had been an intelligent and handsome model of the aristocratic young officer, but had died in an accident in 1940 while serving as the staff officer of the Japanese army in Inner Mongolia. A fighter plane demonstrating low-level tactics at an air show had spun out of control and ploughed into the ranks of the spectators; Prince Nagahisa was numbered among the casualties.

He was the third generation of the Kitashirakawa house to suffer an untimely death: his grandfather Yoshihisa had died of illness during the campaign against resistance forces on Taiwan, and his father Shigehisa had been killed in a car accident in Paris. When news of Nagahisa's death reached the Kitashirakawa family, they summoned Hirose from his duties at Army General Staff to assist them in preparations for the wake and funeral, and he had maintained contact with the family ever since.

Since 1944, the family had evacuated to the home of the Tanakas, in the town of Katsunuma in Yamanashi Prefecture. In June 1945, on his way to inspect the Imperial Headquarters complex under construction in Matsushiro, Hirose had stopped off in Katsunuma to visit the Kitashirakawas and inquire after the health of the young prince, who was now eight years old. His grandmother, Princess Fusako, was the seventh daughter of the Meiji Emperor, and that made Prince Michihisa a great-grandson of Japan's first modern ruler. It was an unimpeachable pedigree, but relatively unknown to the public, and thus perfectly suited to Hirose's scheme, which was to ensure the preservation of the imperial line in the person of this young son of a former classmate. The problem was how to go about this; for the moment Hirose was stumped.

The man who came up with a solution was Kubota Ichirō of the Nakano Academy. He had come to sound out Hirose, as per Colonel Shiizaki's final request, with regard to the plans of the Nakano Group. He told Hirose that they had chosen not to join in the *coup* attempt, but to devote themselves instead to maintaining an organization for the preservation of the national polity. As he listened, Hirose realized he had been given the perfect opportunity to kill two birds with one stone: he could put the protection of Prince Michihisa in the hands of the Nakano organization, and by giving them this mission, also prevent them from engaging in more dangerous mischief. So he filled Kubota in on his idea:

What I want to do is take Prince Michihisa somewhere far away from Tokyo, and raise and train him in secret. My request to you and you comrades is to set things up to make this possible. When I give the order, I want you to be ready to arrange his disappearance from Katsunuma at a moment's notice. I'll handle getting the necessary approval from the Prince's family.

Kubota, a rather emotional sort, flushed and said:

I understand. The Nakano group pledges you our entire organization, and our lives. Do you have any idea of where we should hide the Prince?

Hirose pondered this for a time, and thought of Imanari Takuzō, vice-president of the Imperial Rule Assistance Men's Association in the town of Muikamachi in Niigata Prefecture. Though still young, he was a major figure locally, with a broad network of connections to important people in the Army – which was how Hirose had come to know and to trust him. As the operator of a ham canning factory, he would also be a good choice in the period of food shortages certain to follow the defeat.

Hirose gave Kubota a letter of introduction to Imanari, and promised to get him a clearance to visit the Kitashirakawa family, which he would need when the Nakano group went to take Prince Michihisa into hiding. Two months later, Hirose handed Kubota a small document shaped like a passport, the cover elegantly inscribed with the characters 'Imperial Line' in Princess Fusako's own calligraphy.

Major Inomata's secret plan

At dawn on 23 August 1945, a military cargo truck, its canvas sides drawn tightly down, left the Special Services Headquarters of the Imperial Army in the Shakujii section of Nerima Ward in Tokyo, bound for the Nakasendō main road leading north out of the capital.

Major Kubota Ichirō was in the driver's seat; beside him on the front seat were Major Inomata Jinya and 2nd Lieutenant Tanaka Hiroshi, a member of the sixth graduating class of the Nakano Academy. The cargo bay of the truck was crammed with enough food and other provisions to last the men for a month. Their destination was the town of Muikamachi in Niigata Prefecture.

A few hours later, a second truck rolled out the headquarters. Aboard were Major Watanabe Tatsui, a Nakano first-year graduate and special services unit commander, Captain Iwao Masazumi, a third-year graduate, and another first-year classmate, Major Abe Tadayoshi. They were bound for Omachi in Nagano Prefecture.

Together, these six men were the nucleus of the group Kubota had assembled to carry out the Army's version of the plan to protect the imperial line. The rest of their comrades had already scattered throughout the country to form an underground surveillance network. In fact, Inomata had been slated as the chief agent for the Tōhoku region and was about to leave to take up his duties there when Kubota had selected him to join the present mission. All six men were special services veterans who had survived the perils and hardships of clandestine duty in China, Manchuria, South East Asia and the Pacific. Over the past week, operating out of an office in the former Bank of Japan Club in Shakuji, which had been commandeered for special services use, they had refined their plans and busied themselves with amassing the necessary funds and supplies.

The Army General Staff had agreed to make six million yen available as operating expenses for the underground surveillance network. Each regional leader was to be given ¥100,000, and the other agents ¥10,000 apiece; the remaining funds were to be used to buy up the Dai Ichi Hotel for use as a secret base of operations, but the negotiations which Kubota and Tarōra had begun towards its purchase had fallen through.¹⁶

Problems had also arisen in the group's plans for weapons procurement. Until six months previously, Inomata had been assigned to duties at the Noborito Laboratories of the Army's Weapons Administration Directorate where a variety of bizarre secret weapons were in development or production; pistols disguised as cigarette lighters; incendiary devices in the shape of bricks; explosives camouflaged as lumps of coal; miniature spy cameras; timed-release tear gas canisters; poisons, and so on. The Nakano group hoped to lay hands on some of these devices, but the Army, under conditions of strictest security, was moving with alacrity to destroy all evidence of this secret weapons production, and nothing came of this idea.

After much effort, all the Nakano agents were able to acquire was the materiel stored by the Special Services Branch of the imperial headquarters – the unit that would later be exposed to the public eye as the communications nexus for the Japanese intelligence operatives left behind on the captured islands of the Philippines and

the Pacific, the most famous of whom was Lieutenant Onoda Hiroo.¹⁷

Kubota worried that this alone would scarcely be sufficient to serve their purposes, but was also concerned that if they did not move quickly, their plan would be uncovered, so he divided the men of his special team into two groups which set off immediately for Muikamachi and Omachi.

Watanabe's team had an uneventful journey to Omachi, but the team bound for Muikamachi lost its way in the vicinity of Mikuni Pass, came to a bridge washed out in the monsoon rains of summer, and was forced to interrupt its journey at the hot springs town of Yūdanaka. Leaving Inomata with the truck, Kubota and Tanaka proceeded by train to Muikamachi. The following day, Kubota returned with a surprising story. He had met with Imanari Takuzō and told him of the secret plan, and Imanari had readily agreed to aid them, yet the man seemed jumpy and preoccupied. It turned out that Imanari already had an important and problematic guest: Ba Maw, the wartime prime minister of Burma, who had collaborated with the Japanese forces and had fled into exile in Japan at the end of the war. The Japanese Foreign Ministry had approached Imanari for assistance in hiding Ba Maw, and for the time being Imanari had taken him to the Yakushōji, a temple in the nearby village of Ishiuchi. Imanari was now requesting the assistance of the Nakano group in protecting the Burmese statesman, and Kubota had agreed to help. Inomata flushed with anger on hearing this, and an intense debate ensued between the two:

Our mission to protect the imperial line and this business of Ba Maw have nothing to do with each other, and we can't manage both. You are acting irresponsibly.

No, I thought this over carefully before I agreed to cooperate. I am not neglecting our primary mission. It occurred to me that Ba Maw could actually serve as a cover for our real objective of protecting the imperial line.

I am absolutely opposed to this. Do you think Ba Maw can be kept hidden forever? Sooner or later he will be discovered and we are going to fall into the same net. It is very dangerous to get involved with him on some sort of whim.

It would be immoral for us to ignore the plight of a man who served as the prime minister of one of Japan's allies and is now a

refugee. If we did that, none of the Asian nations would trust Japan after it recovers from the war. Protecting the imperial line and protecting Ba Maw may seem like separate affairs; in fact they are one and the same.

Can't we just leave Ba Maw to Imanari?

No, it's too late for that. I've already met with Ba Maw, and told Imanari all about our mission. Koshimaki Katsuji, a Nakano first-year man, is already in Muikamachi. He has a background in languages and speaks English pretty well, and I have gone ahead and asked him to take care of Ba Maw. We simply can't turn back now.

The argument between the two men continued for some time as they sat drinking the local beer but Kubota refused to budge. Young Tanaka made a feeble attempt to mediate, but wound up sitting silent and pale as the others wrangled. Finally, realizing it was too late to argue with the stubborn Kubota, Inomata, too, fell silent. Seeing his change in attitude, Kubota then proposed a compromise plan:

- (1) Koshimaki would be placed in charge of the Ba Maw operation, code-named 'East'.
- (2) Inomata would be in charge of the operation to protect the imperial line, code-named 'Castle Keep'.
- (3) Kubota would oversee both operations, handling finances and liaison with Lt. Colonel Hirose.
- (4) Watanabe and Abe would be given responsibility for operations to secure further funds.
- (5) In consultation with Imanari, a safe house would be selected in the vicinity of Muikamachi to accommodate Prince Michihisa, his mother, and two or three ladies-in-waiting.

'All right. I guess we'll have to go with your plan,' was Inomata's terse response, but his heart told him otherwise. No matter which way he looked at it, the Kubota plan seemed destined for failure. This being the case, he had to come up with some way to prevent 'Castle Keep' from being dragged under by the Ba Maw operation. Tossing and turning that night, unable to sleep, he dug through every corner of his brain for an alternative plan. At last, it came to him.

The next morning he rose to inform Kubota that he had to return

to his home in Aizu to wrap up a few personal matters, and boarded a train for Tokyo. When he reached Ueno station he got off and headed for the Ginza to have a look around. The newspapers were full of photographs of MacArthur, a corncob pipe clenched between his teeth and a superior expression on his face, descending to the tarmac at Atsugi airfield. As he looked at these, an intense hostility welled up in Inomata. He knew that American troops should have already begun to arrive in Tokyo, but none was around to meet his angry look.

Inomata walked through the ruins of the city towards Tokyo Station, passing knots of men and women in threadbare military uniform or the baggy peasant trousers called *mompe* but he had no intention of returning to his home in Aizu. Instead, he was bound for Hiroshima on a secret mission of his own. In the mobbed station he somehow got himself a ticket and elbowed his way onto the waiting train, among the other passengers jammed there like sardines in a can.

Forging a false identity in Hiroshima

When he reached the railway station at Hiroshima Inomata gasped at the hideousness of the destruction he saw; it far surpassed anything he had imagined. The bomb had been dropped less than a month before, and rumour had it that the city would remain unfit for human habitation for seventy-five years. An initial effort had been made to clear some of the rubble, and here and there crude huts pieced together from unburnt odds and ends of wood and scrap dotted the blasted landscape. There were even a few open-air markets with what appeared to be black market goods set out for display among the ruins. Inomata was unfamiliar with the layout of what was left of the city. Dressed in a suit made shabbier by the jostling and heat of the crowded train, he stood for a while in a kind of daze. But then he came to his senses, and set off about his business.

The plan which had brought him to Hiroshima, and which he had kept secret from both Hirose and Kubota, was born out of his experience as an intelligence operative in Manchuria. Forced to drop out of the Second Higher School because of failure to meet tuition and fees, Inomata had continued his education in the

Support Services Training School – later called the Nakano Academy – and became a member of its first graduating class in the summer of 1939. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the Harbin Special Service Agency in Manchuria.

Eighteen other men had graduated in his class from the Nakano Academy. Kubota had been assigned to the North China Theatre Army, Koshimaki to the China Expeditionary Force, Watanabe to the Manchukuo government's consulate in Chita, and Abe to the Japanese consulate in Bombay. Since the primary purpose for which the school had been established was to train intelligence agents for extended overseas duty, other graduates were dispatched to such places as Afghanistan and the Japanese embassy in Colombia, or sent to infiltrate Java using journalistic cover.

In the summer of 1940 the twenty-four-year-old Inomata, now a 1st Lieutenant, had received orders directly from the Army Chief of Staff, Prince Kan'in: 'Provided with diplomatic credentials, you will conduct a survey of the military situation along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway, collect information regarding the probable date of the German invasion of Great Britain, and investigate the nature of Germany's military administration of its occupied territories.' Inomata was issued a passport as a diplomatic courier under the assumed name of Imura Jōji, and set out on a tour of Europe. On his return, he was ordered to Harbin once again to train agents for the infiltration of the Soviet Union, and, with a Soviet major who had defected by way of Poland, he researched techniques for illegal border penetration, the smuggling in of wireless equipment and explosives, and plans for the assassination of key Soviet personnel. Among other activities, he spent considerable effort on forging official papers for his agents to carry with them into the Soviet Union.

From this experience Inomata had concluded that the best way to foil any pursuit of the young Prince Michihisa by the Occupation forces was to create a new identity for him as a commoner. The first step in this procedure would be to get false identity papers for him; they would also be essential in providing the prince with access to the educational system and allowing him to receive rationed food.

As Inomata puzzled out the details of this plan, he had chanced upon a newspaper announcement by the City of Hiroshima calling

upon the surviving atomic bomb victims to assist the city government in the reconstruction of family registers that had been destroyed in the bombing. The family register is the basic document establishing the identity of a Japanese citizen, and it was the Hiroshima announcement which had inspired the plan to create a false family register for Prince Michihisa in the obliterated city. Thus, by the end of August, Inomata had added another secret layer of his own to Kubota's original 'Castle Keep' idea. The outlines of this plan are preserved in a memo he wrote at the time.¹⁸ The memo reads as follows:

Phase One

- (1) Create a new family register for the prince under a fictitious name, using the story that he is an orphan whose parents died in the atomic bombing; on the basis of this, secure the other documentation necessary to provide him with an education and the other benefits of citizenship.
- (2) The period for training the prince to assume a new life as a commoner should be reckoned at about six months, and should take place somewhere in the vicinity of Hiroshima. Living expenses for the ladies-in-waiting accompanying the prince should be set aside, at a rate of ¥100,000 per person.
- (3) During this period, Watanabe and Abe will move to Tokyo or its environs, secure stable livelihoods, and prepare to receive the prince.
- (4) Before moving the prince from Katsunuma to Hiroshima, clothing and other essentials should be procured, preferably in Tokyo, and his mother should inform him of the plan; in the event of an emergency, however, he will simply be seized in the course of one of his daily walks.

Phase Two

- (1) Since the long-term prospects for leading a concealed life are better in a large city than in the countryside, when the six-month period of Phase One has ended, the prince will be brought from Hiroshima to the Tokyo area, where he will live with Watanabe and his wife. Abe will reside in the same neighbourhood, with the responsibility for guarding the prince. Before the move takes place the prince will be adopted into the Watanabe family and listed in its family register.

- (2) If Inomata is able to evade arrest, or when he regains freedom of movement after his release, he will raise funds under some other pretext from graduates of the Nakano Academy, in order to supplement the prince's living expenses.

This memo of Inomata's may have passed muster as a Special Services planning document, but when he actually got to Hiroshima, a place with which he had no prior acquaintance, he no longer felt quite so confident in what he had written. He somehow felt that if he stood at Ground Zero, a flash of inspiration would come to him, but as he gazed out over what had been the city, there were only charred and blackened mountains of rubble as far as the eye could see, a spectacle so disorienting that he was unsure if he could even tell north from south.

As dusk approached, and a light rain began to fall, Inomata took shelter in the ruins, rising the next morning to tour the blasted city centre and to pick up what information he could from the survivors. He eavesdropped on the conversations of passers-by, asked about the layout of the obliterated streets and made inquiries into the extent of the damage. After having grasped some idea of the overall situation in this manner, he decided the next day to go have a look at City Hall. The quickly constructed barracks-style building which now housed the city government was swarming with bomb victims and their relatives and friends.

After queuing for some time at one of the service windows, Inomata stated his business to the clerk, who gave him a form to fill out. Spreading the rough and pulpy paper of the document before him, Inomata reviewed for a moment the story he had constructed for the occasion:

The child's father was originally from Okinawa, and conscripted for work in a munitions factory in Hiroshima, where he died in the atomic bombing, aged thirty-six. The mother, a native of Hachijōjima, also died in the bombing at the couple's home, aged thirty-two. The claimant, Imura Jōji, is a native of Aizu-Wakamatsu, and until recently a resident of Torikoshi, Asakusa Ward, Tokyo, but when he returned there after demobilization from service at the front, he found his neighbourhood burned out, and no sign of the other members of his family. He is a distant relative of the father of the child in question, and when he heard of the atomic

bombing, came to Hiroshima to check on the family. He was fortunate enough to find the child had survived, and was living in one of the refugee camps. He is now applying for reissuance of the child's family register. The family's residence was somewhere in the immediate vicinity of ground zero.

Inomata wondered if this vague a tale would stand up to official scrutiny. Worried, he put down his pen, and before filling out the form, went over to discuss the matter with the busy clerk.

A dubious tale

'Excuse me, but I'd like to speak with you for a minute...'

When Inomata had finished explaining his situation, the clerk looked a bit puzzled, and asked, 'Are you sure that both of the child's parents are dead?'

'They lived near ground zero; they couldn't possibly be alive.'

'Why was the child the only survivor? Where is he now? And copies of his family register should have been filed at his elementary school or kindergarten.'

These challenges rattled Inomata a bit, but the clerk pressed on.

'Now, what was the name of that refugee camp ...?'

Before Inomata could think of an answer, a second clerk put in 'Oh, it must have been such-and-such.' Relieved, Inomata said, 'Yes, I think so,' and the two clerks began a whispered conversation with each other.

Inomata interrupted, 'The child was also a bomb victim and rather badly hurt. I asked a friend of mine to take him back to Tokyo to be cared for.'

Inomata was developing a new appreciation realizing how difficult it was to lie, as his shirt became drenched with sweat.

Perhaps because there were many similarly confused applications, or perhaps because the clerk took pity on this big man and his melancholy appeal delivered in the slow and halting accents of the northern Japanese countryside, Inomata was finally told to simply fill out the form for the time being.

'Kimura Michio, born on 31 March 1939,' he wrote, then in the line marked 'Place of Origin,' filled in an address that no longer existed – near the centre of the bomb blast. In the applicant's

section he gave his assumed name: 'Imura Jōji, born 20 April 1916, place of origin Aizu-Wakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture', and added a fictitious local address. He handed the completed document to the clerk, who took it and said, 'Well, I guess this will do', 'to Inomata's relief. But then the questions began again.

'Do you have some form of identification? A ration booklet, perhaps?'

Nonplussed, Inomata stammered, 'Ummm... When I was demobilized, my home in Asakusa was burned out, and I had no idea what had become of my family. Since then I've been living like some kind of tramp, staying with friends, sleeping in railway stations and parks, and I'm afraid I don't have anything to give you.'

With this, the kindness of the clerk was now touched with a hint of suspicion, and he turned aside for a moment.

Inomata was disgusted with his own lack of preparedness, and wondered whether he simply ought to leave. Yet it dawned on him that if he did, all his plans would come to naught, and he decided to brazen it out. Raising his voice, he bellowed:

'I don't give a damn if you think I've fiddled with my own registration. But we are talking about a child here, a sick child that might die tomorrow for all we know. And instead of some consideration for this, all I'm getting here is a lot of bureaucratic red-tape.'

This counter-attack was surprisingly effective. All eyes in the place turned to where he was standing, and the startled clerk, mumbling a bit under his breath, took the application without any further inquiries. The whole affair had taken only about twenty minutes, but Inomata felt as if he had been standing there for hours.'

His next task was to find a benefactor in the Hiroshima area who would shelter the young prince for the six-month period called for in his plan. Nakano Tsuneo – the name floated up out of the recesses of Inomata's memory. When he had been attached to the Bureau of Military Affairs in the War Ministry, travelling about the Tōhoku region organizing Citizens' Volunteer Corps units for the final defence of the home islands, he had heard of the man from officials of the Imperial Rule Men's Association as a solid and

reliable sort. But he was not sure of his address, or even the proper characters to use in writing his name. All he knew was that Nakano lived somewhere between Hiroshima and Kure; but after a good deal of asking around, he finally got an address, though when he went to call on the man, no one was home.

He returned the following day. The house was that of a family of some means, and its master turned out to be a calm and dignified man with piercing eyes, about forty years of age. Inomata gave the man his real name, rank and position, and came straight to the point:

Ordinarily, in asking your cooperation in this manner I should let you know everything, but you will be safer if you do not know too much and leave the rest to me. What I am asking you to do for me is to look after a child and his nanny for a period of about six months. I cannot tell you the child's true identity, but I will say that he is not used to living with ordinary people, and I would like you to help get him acclimatized to the daily life of ordinary people. The date for his arrival has still not been decided, but I or one of my comrades will accompany him here. At that point we will tell you who he is. I have risked my life to come all the way from Tokyo to present you with this request. For the sake of our country, I hope you will agree to help.

The man listened in silence to Inomata's appeal, the eloquence of which may have been heightened by his bright eyes and the dust and grime of travel. When Inomata had finished, the man poured tea, still without saying a word. The silence continued as the man waited for Inomata to drink his tea, and then spoke at last:

I agree. For a request of this nature, I am always at your service. Education is not my strong suit, but I don't imagine helping him with his homework is what you have in mind, and I will do whatever I can for you.

Inomata had no idea of how much the man guessed about what had been requested of him, but guessed that it was fine at this point if he assumed he was going to be taking care of a member of the nobility or the son of some important war crimes suspect. Inomata politely declined the dinner that was offered him, and boarded the express train to Tokyo that evening, eager to get on with the rest of his plan.

The failure of 'Castle Keep'

While Inomata Jinya was creating a false family register for him in the ruined city of Hiroshima, Prince Kitashirakawa Michihisa was passing the last days of his summer holiday at Katsunuma in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan's famous grape-growing region, catching dragonflies and minnows with the children of other noble families, such as the Tokugawa and the Higashizono, who had also evacuated to the region to escape the air raids.

Prince Michihisa, who was born on 2 May 1937, had just turned eight. He had transferred from the elementary division of the Peers School to the second grade in the Katsunuma Public Elementary School, but he attended classes only once or twice a week; the rest of his instruction was handled at home by two private tutors dispatched by the Imperial Household Ministry.

The prince was a quiet lad, and it appears that it was his sister Hatsuko, two years younger, mischievous, playful, pretty – later said to be one of the prime candidates for marriage to the Crown Prince – who left a more lasting impression on the townspeople of Katsunuma.

The Tanakas, with whom the Kitashirakawa family were staying, were by far the wealthiest family in the area. The head of the household, Tanaka Tōsaku, was the chairman of a regional bank, and had known the Kitashirakawa family socially since the Taishō era. It was this connection that led the Imperial Household Ministry to ask the Tanaka family to host the Kitashirakawas when they left the capital in 1944 to escape the worsening air raids.

Although this was termed evacuation, the Kitashirakawas were hardly indigent refugees struggling to get by. The pre-war status and prerogatives of a branch family of the imperial house were carefully maintained. Although the family of Prince Michihisa was comprised of only four members, they brought with them a staff of thirty, from the major domo, Mitobe, and the various ladies-in-waiting on down to the lowliest porters and attendants. In addition, their relatives the Tokugawas, the Tachibanas and the Higashizonos also came to stay at the Tanaka estate, which grew quite crowded despite its four acres of grounds.

Tanaka Hōsaku, the second son, recalls that security was provided by an infantry platoon dispatched from the regiment at

Kōfu, in addition to three policemen stationed at the estate on rotating duty. Food and other supplies were given special attention by the Imperial Household Ministry and the prefectural government, but even with this preferential treatment there were shortages by 1945, and Tanaka remembers that meals grew rather spare.

But at least they were safe from the air raids. Prince Michihisa and his sister were fascinated by the reddish glow in the western night sky that marked the burning streets of Kōfu, thirty kilometres away. Evacuation to a more remote place of refuge was being considered, but the war came to an end before any move was made.

The simple kindness of the townspeople of Katsunuma did not change with the defeat, but the war's end nevertheless undermined the Kitashirakawa family's means of support. Their mansion in Shinagawa on the southern edge of Tokyo had been destroyed in the firebombings. They had another temporary residence in Daikanyama in Shibuya Ward, but it was cramped and food supply was uncertain, so only the grandmother, Princess Fusako, went to live there; the prince, his mother and his sister remained in Katsunuma for the time being.

Then the security guards were withdrawn, and one by one the servants also took their leave. The ten ladies-in-waiting dwindled to one old and devoted family nurse named Sasaki. And when the new school term commenced in September, Prince Michihisa began to attend the local elementary school full time.

It would be two years before the majority of the branch families of the imperial house had to surrender their royal status and become commoners, but rumours were already afoot that the Occupation forces intended to abolish the imperial house and confiscate the property and capital of its members. The Empress Dowager took this relatively calmly, saying 'If we think of it as returning to the way things were before the Meiji Restoration, I suppose we will manage somehow.' Nevertheless, the members of the princely families feared a return of the bad old days when their fortunes were in decline: days when they scarcely had enough money for fuel in the winter, and were forced to rely on the goodwill of the citizenry for their food and other necessities.

The Kitashirakawas were no exception. They put in a small vegetable garden on the grounds of the Tanaka estate and tried using hoes and rakes they had never handled before. Katsunuma was an upland basin surrounded by hills and not particularly suited to agriculture; there was talk of moving to Chiba Prefecture and taking up farming seriously, but it was finally decided that they should return to take up residence in Tokyo in the spring of 1946.

The Nakano group was not informed of this plan, but their own preparations to provide a secret haven for the prince and one of his nursemaids were nearing fruition. Kubota and Koshimaki, while continuing to care for Ba Maw, had gone ahead with the 'Castle Keep' operation, hunting for an appropriate residence for the young prince. They located what looked like a suitable house in the hot springs village of Akayu, but talks with the owner had been inconclusive, and they decided to buy a newly-built home in Urasa village instead. Lt. Colonel Hirose helped by providing them with an additional ¥500,000 in secret funds which he got from Lt. Colonel Inaba of the budget department of the Military Affairs Section.¹⁹

Judging that the operation would be an extended one, and that they would need cover, the conspirators used this money as capital to set up two dummy companies – Seven Seas Crafts (Shichiyo Kōgei) and Seven Seas Industries (Shichiyō Shōkō). Kubota became president of the first firm, which took over a plant abandoned by a company which had gone out of business at the end of the war, and began the production, marketing and export of elaborately-crafted toys. Inomata became president of the second company, which was a subcontractor for the installation of flush toilets and other plumbing facilities. Both companies were established with the cooperation of Imanari and the clout he wielded in the community, and they opened for business on 1 October 1945. But as might be expected with warriors turned merchants, both firms soon ran into management problems. As a result, the funds intended for the purchase of the house in Urasa were quickly used up, and the immediate dilemma of saving these foundering ventures and recouping their losses suddenly forced the whole 'Castle Keep' project onto the back burner.

Meanwhile, Watanabe Tatsui's team, which we last encountered

on its way into the foothills of Mt Shirouma, was encamped and waiting patiently in a farmhouse and bee-keeper's hut in the village of Morikami in Nagano Prefecture. They made preparations to lodge Prince Michihisa there if the other team was unable to find anything suitable in the vicinity of Muikamachi, but when Watanabe finally went to reestablish contact with the main team at the beginning of September and found Kubota and company preoccupied with the problems of protecting Ba Maw and managing a business he became sceptical about the direction in which things were heading, and decided to chart his own course from there on.

After stopping briefly in Tokyo to ascertain the general drift and implementation of Occupation policies, he appears to have decided that there was no longer much need for a secret operation to defend the imperial line. Abe, too, was bored to tears and beginning to wonder what hanging around a farm had to do with the primary purpose of their mission. In the end, the two men agreed to dissolve the Omachi team at the end of December 1945.²⁰ They destroyed the wireless they had brought with them from Shakujii, and leaving Iwao, who was determined to wait a bit longer, took off, Watanabe for Tokyo and Abe for Shizuoka.

The defection of the Omachi team would eventually also wreck the secret plans developed by Inomata in his efforts to provide a more effective fallback for Kubota's 'Castle Keep' idea.

Caught with Ba Maw by the Counter Intelligence Corps

Lieutenant Frank Alveis, duty officer with the 80th Metropolitan Unit of the US Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC), sat at his desk in the Imperial Life Insurance building in the Hibiya section of central Tokyo. It was near the end of December 1945, and he was reading an anonymous note sent to the Occupation forces by a Japanese resident of Rokkacho in Niigata Prefecture. Alveis had been trained in the United States Army's Japanese language programme, and had no difficulty making out the gist of the letter, which read: 'There is a suspicious-looking foreign monk hiding out in a temple in the neighbourhood.' He had been astonished at the mountain of such notes and letters which had accumulated in his

office, sent in by ordinary Japanese citizens who seemed to love informing on each other. Yet this one seemed to have more to it than most, for Alveis suddenly recalled hearing previously that Colonel John Figess, an intelligence officer attached to the Office of the British Representative, was pursuing the whereabouts of former Burmese Prime Minister Ba Maw.

The CIC acquired a considerable reputation during the Occupation – the Japanese said that even to mention its name would silence a crying child – but it had only a brief history, since it had been created soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At least initially, its reputation in the fields of intelligence and clandestine operations could not match up to the long tradition of expertise established by its counterpart, the British intelligence services. Yet CIC had two great advantages that helped to make up for its other deficiencies: a support staff of second-generation Japanese-Americans and cooperation from the Japanese population itself. One CIC veteran recalls that ‘All we had to do was sit there, and Japanese informants would come flowing in. We’d let the Nisei handle them, and then just sort out the information.’

In the CIC monthly reports from the early days of the Occupation, the names of these informants were suppressed, but the issue for January 1946 discussed its sources of information, saying that in addition to high government officials, ‘young newspapermen and other journalists sympathetic to democratization and the sweeping away of the old guard have proven useful; in addition, third country nationals such as Taiwanese, Koreans and Chinese resident in Japan should not be discounted’.

In October 1945, alone the CIC handled nearly 2,000 interrogations, more than 2,000 items of cryptanalysis, over 250 incidents of suspected sabotage and a mixed bag of more than 100 other suspected spy incidents and security violations. A widely varied set of activities, indeed, but one of CIC’s major concerns was with the collection of information relating to the emperor and the imperial system. Another was with secret investigations into underground activity directed against the Occupation forces.

With regard to the former, the CIC amassed an impressive collection of rumours currently circulating among the Japanese populace. A few representative examples:

There is a rumour that the emperor will abdicate and Prince Takamatsu will become regent. Prince Chichibu is more popular, but he doesn't have a chance at the regency. (11 October) [Metropolitan Unit #80]

According to a top secret source, a popular election to determine the fate of the imperial system is being studied, and at this point it is believed that the majority would favour retention of the system. (January 1946)

According to a friend of Count Matsudaira [Imperial Household Minister], the emperor initially wanted to abdicate, but now feels that he should fulfil his responsibilities by staying on the throne. He is also determined that if there are trials of war criminals, he should also be tried as the Emperor of Japan.

CIC also received confusing and often inaccurate information from a variety of sources concerning anti-Occupation underground activity from a variety of sources, as indicated by these excerpts from letters and anonymous testimony contained in the CIC files:

According to a source within the Japanese Communist Party, the Japanese Army prepared a four-point programme prior to the arrival of the American Occupation forces; secret funding was diverted by General Staff. (80th Metropolitan Detachment, November 1945)

A secret informant reports that Major Haruyama of the Palace Guards is the leader of an attempt to reconstruct the Japanese army for the future. He is reported to be rewriting training manuals for the future army in the Office of the Imperial Court Guards. (CIC Headquarters, January 1946)

According to a report by a former Japanese Army officer, a top secret underground organization code-named 'Operation Marumo' was set up on a nationwide basis immediately after the defeat. Ammunition was stored in various places around the country and the majority of the members are said to be graduates of the Nakano Academy. Investigation is in progress. (468th Detachment, November 1945)

CIC's 468th Detachment, which fielded this last bit of information, was charged with responsibility for the island of Kyushu and for Yamaguchi prefecture, and it seems safe to assume that they had caught wind of the underground network for

surveillance of the Occupation which the Nakano teams had established in western Japan. The regional captains of the Nakano network included Major Sakai Isamu in Fukuoka, Lt. Colonel Toyama Hideo in Beppu, Major Yamamoto Masayoshi in Kumamoto and Majors Abe Takehiko and Yamamoto Shunkatsu in Yamaguchi Prefecture. They had both managed to go underground and remain in communication with one another, but several of them were summoned by CIC and subjected to intensive interrogation.

Yamamoto Masayoshi, for example, was summoned to Tokyo and detained there for three weeks, where he was made to write out a summary of the Nakano Academy's curriculum and training programme and ordered to produce a roster of its graduates. Feeling there was little else he could do, Yamamoto drew up a list, but one from which he carefully omitted the names of Nakano graduates currently engaged in the underground operation.

CIC's pursuit of hidden weapons and ammunition stores was also rigorous, and in January 1946, thanks to a tip from an informant, the cache buried on the grounds of the Tomioka Middle School was discovered. Major Katagi Ryohei, assistant director of the Nakano Academy, was brought before a military tribunal. CIC pressed him to confess the whereabouts of Superintendent Yamamoto, but Katagi insisted repeatedly that he had no idea, claiming as well that the stores buried at Tomioka were merely a disposal operation. He was released.

Superintendent Yamamoto of the Nakano Academy, whose accomplishments included bringing Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the Indian Independence Movement, from Germany to Japan,²¹ had gone into hiding deep in the mountains of Tochigi Prefecture with a few of his most trusted subordinates, and in 1947 smuggled himself and Lt. Colonel Matsudaira Sadaaki out of Japan aboard a boat bound for China, his destination the Nationalist capital at Nanjing. There he teamed up with Lt. General Doi Akio and Colonel Tsuji Masanobu, former Japanese Army officers who were now working as military advisers to Chiang Kai-shek in his struggle against the Chinese Communists.

With the disappearance of the nucleus of its leadership, the underground surveillance network set up by the Nakano Academy

also disbanded; and in fact, its operations appear to have come to an end even earlier, sometime in the spring of 1946. In part this was because changes in the international and domestic situation had greatly reduced the need for such an organization, but the immediate cause was the series of arrests of Nakano group members by the CIC resulting from its pursuit of Ba Maw case.

The identity of the informant whose tip-off led to the arrest of Ba Maw at his hiding place in the Yakushōji in Ishiuchi remains unknown. It was announced that he was a Manchurian professor who suffered from aphasia as a result of the shock of losing his family in the Tokyo air raids, but the Burmese statesman had been spotted from time to time by the people of the village as he strolled in the woods behind the temple or in its graveyard, and it seems likely that rumours gradually spread as to Ba Maw's presence in the area.

Ba Maw himself sensed that he was in danger and began to talk of escaping to Korea by ship, but about this time GHQ issued a directive to the Japanese Foreign Ministry to surrender Ba Maw into custody. Kai Fumihiko, a Foreign Ministry section chief, was quickly dispatched to persuade Ba Maw to give himself up, but the Burmese leader refused to comply.²²

In the end, Imanari Takuzō came up with a plan by which the Nakano organization, headed by Lt. Colonel Hirose, would assist Ba Maw in escaping from Japan by sea, and an elaborate farewell party was held for him before he was conveyed to Tokyo, where the details of the escape plan were to be worked out. It turned out, however, that this was only a ruse designed to deliver him into the hands of the Allies. As Ba Maw and his companions met secretly with Hirose in a room in the Marunouchi Hotel, Colonel John Figgess of the British Army appeared and arrested the entire group. They were incarcerated in Tokyo's Sugamo Prison on 18 January 1946.

Kubota and Koshimaki were arrested soon afterwards, and in February evidence given by Imanari Takuzō disclosed the whereabouts of Inomata, who was caught lying sick in bed at a house in the city of Niitsu by American MPs and local police. His house was subjected to an extensive search, and two weeks later Inomata was taken in custody to Tokyo.

'What on earth have I been doing?'

Inomata, who had been informed by Imanari's wife of the most recent turn of events just prior to his arrest, made a vain attempt to communicate with Watanabe Tatsui and pass responsibility for the execution of 'Castle Keep' to him, but was unable to discover where he was. He wanted desperately to go up to Tokyo to discuss matters with Lt. Colonel Hirose, but had contracted such a severe case of scabies during his visit to Hiroshima that his arms and legs had gone numb and he could scarcely stand up.

Even in his weakened condition he had the presence of mind, when the MPs turned up, to tell his wife to burn his notebook and the false family register he had prepared for Prince Michihisa in the wood-burning stove which heated the family bath. What he did not know was that a rigorous search of the Imanari residence had already uncovered two pistols and their ammunition buried in a gasoline can in the garden, as well as the small passbook labelled 'Imperial Line' which had been hidden in the household shrine.

When he arrived at Sugamo Prison, dressed in civilian clothes and wooden clogs, an overcoat thrown over his shoulders and a bag of toilet articles in his hand, he was thrown into a solitary cell in Death Row on the third floor of the building, and days of gruelling interrogation began. Once a day, for only five minutes at a time, he was permitted a brief period of exercise in the corridor of his cell block, under the supervision of an MP.

Once inside the prison, he found that not only other members of the Nakano group, but Lt. Colonel Hirose, Ishizawa, Kitazawa, and Kai from the Foreign Ministry, and even Lt. Colonel Inaba, the Military Affairs Section accountant, had been arrested as well. Inaba had been nabbed for the ¥500,000 in secret funds he had diverted from the War Ministry to the Ba Maw operation at the request of Hirose, but CIC seemed to think that because he was in charge of emergency military funding, an even larger sum of money must have passed through his hands.

CIC was inspired to conduct such a major arrest and interrogation effort because Ba Maw had given rather exaggerated testimony as to the existence of a huge underground anti-Occupation organization with the Nakano group at its nucleus. In addition, Imanari had spilled the beans on the Prince

Kitashirakawa operation, and CIC grew excited by the possibility that they had just uncovered 'the biggest conspiracy since the beginning of the Occupation'. The American Major in charge of the interrogations seemed to see Inomata as the figure holding the key to the entire plot, and pressed him relentlessly:

Why did you hide the pistols?

I buried them because I didn't want them to fall into the wrong hands. And the firing pins are broken, anyway.

What about the ammunition?

I intended to melt the bullets down and sell them for scrap.

You were living in Niitsu in order to facilitate communication with the headquarters of your underground organization on Sado Island, weren't you?

No. I don't know anything about an underground organization.

Where did you intend to hide the young Prince Kitashirakawa?

There wasn't any such plan. If I had felt like hiding someone, there are places all over the country where he could be hidden.

What methods did you intend to use to spark an uprising?

There was no such intention. But if the Imperial House were threatened, all the people would rise up at once. As far as weapons are concerned, we'd simply help ourselves to yours.

The interrogation went on and on in this manner, until it reached a point which truly surprised Inomata, for the Major asked him why he had been placed on the waiting list for discharge from the Army on 10 June, two months before the end of the war, and transferred into the reserves the following day, thus becoming a civilian.

'You must have had some special purpose in returning to civilian life at that point,' the Major insisted. Inomata evaded this with a rather lame story about having become too ill to carry out his military duties, but actually this was news to him – until he suddenly realized that the Army Ministry, attempting to conceal its involvement in the plot to preserve the imperial line, must have hurriedly prepared backdated discharge orders for him in an attempt to evade its responsibility in the affair.

In the end, Ba Maw's exaggerated claims threw the Occupation investigators off course. Irritated by their inability to come up with any promising evidence, Colonel Figess decided that the whole

thing was a castle in the air thrown together by Ba Maw in an effort to buy time for himself and suspended the investigation. Ba Maw was transferred from the special cells reserved for the use of foreign prisoners at Sugamo to one of the less pleasant cells in which the Japanese prisoners were being kept in solitary confinement. But he was not discouraged. Ever since his time in hiding at the Yakushōji, he had predicted that if he could just hold out until summer, the world situation would take a turn for the better and he could return to his homeland hailed as a hero of its independence. This proved to be correct. Great Britain was moving towards giving India its independence and gradually letting go of its other colonial possessions.

At the end of July, Ba Maw was released, taken to the British Embassy, greeted with great formality by the ambassador and told that he would be sent home to Burma. In his memoirs, he gives a slightly ironic parting glimpse of Japan:²³

I had known the Japanese during their victory, and now I was seeing them in an utter state of defeat and nakedness ... Putting it in the simplest way, the Japanese revealed for the first time since they had become a great power the capacity to face facts and to accept them totally ... they adjusted to ... the fact of their total defeat and the American occupation with all the consequences openly, totally, and some would even say servilely ... It was only many years later when the result of such utter realism ... appeared in the miracle of their post-war economic recovery and the great leap forward that has taken them to the final stage in their total recovery ... that the world realized the farsightedness of their post-war policy.

On 2 August 1946, shortly after Ba Maw returned to his country, the Japanese who had been involved in aiding him were also released from Sugamo. The eight men were loaded into a US Army truck, told they would be dropped off wherever they wished, and one by one went their separate ways.

Inomata got off at Kyōbashi and stared up at the brilliant midsummer sun as he tried to put some order to the thoughts that whirled through his head. Throughout his interrogations Inomata had repeatedly denied the existence of any secret organization or any knowledge of it; his defence had frequently strained credulity to the breaking point, but he had never divulged anything of value,

determined to preserve his secrets even if that meant his own execution. Then, suddenly, he had been released and cleared of any charges. During the six months and more he had spent in prison, things had changed considerably in the outside world. In March, the imperial system had been permitted a continued existence within the framework of the new, Occupation-approved constitution, and the threat that the emperor might be tried as a war criminal had ceased to be a real possibility. In the Diet, heated debate ensued over the meaning and significance of the new, 'symbolic' status of the emperor.

In answer to a Diet member's interpellation demanding to know whether the new system 'meant that the national polity had been altered', Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru stated simply, 'As far as I am concerned, it does not', and Minister Without Portfolio Kanamori Tokujirō asserted that 'The emperor unites [the Japanese people] by serving as the focus of their aspirations, and this is what constitutes the national polity.'

Inomata, who had not seen a newspaper or heard a radio for quite some time, was still unaware of what had transpired during the last six months of rapid change. Yet as he gazed at the lively, active faces of the passers-by in the crowded heart of central Tokyo, he was assailed by the feeling that somehow he had been left behind in the course of events.

'What on earth was I doing, and who was I doing it for?' Inomata muttered to himself, as he stood motionless, submerged in the ebb and flow of the crowd.

The Navy's plans to defend the imperial line

[Throughout the war the Imperial Army and Imperial Navy had competed shamelessly for influence and for scarce materiel. Each successive prime minister had been charged with securing their unified support of the war effort, but each had failed to bring this about. It was thus entirely in character that the Army's scheme for continuation of the imperial line should have had its naval counterpart. -Ed.]

At the same time that the Nakano group swung into action, a separate plan for the protection of the imperial line was taking

shape within the Japanese Navy. In contrast to the *coup* fever which swept through the Army, the Navy, reined in by Admiral Yonai and the peace faction, had remained calm. In large part this was due to the fact that the Navy had lost almost all its surface fleet.

One notable exception, however, was Vice Admiral Onishi Takijirō, Navy Vice Chief of Staff and creator of the special attack forces – the *kamikaze*. As the surrender discussions ground on, Onishi, as we have seen, had stalked the corridors of Navy headquarters with bloodshot eyes and a voice ragged with emotion, preaching continued resistance and denunciation of the emperor. But the response from his Navy comrades to his importunings was indifferent at best, and when the emperor reaffirmed his decision to surrender on 14 August, even the recalcitrant Onishi gave up hope and took his own life.

Hearing the news of Onishi's suicide, his protégé Kodama Yoshio²⁴ rushed to the dying admiral's side, and arrived in time to find him still conscious and alert. Onishi had intentionally chosen a mode of death – *seppuku* or *hara kiri* – that would prolong his suffering. Kodama said, 'I'll run and get your wife', at which Onishi smiled ironically and said, 'Don't be a fool. Who ever heard of a warrior who cut his belly open and then struggled to stay alive until his wife shows up?'

Onishi's wife Yoshie had been evacuated to the Chigira Farm near Numata in Gunma Prefecture. Ignoring Onishi's sentiments, Kodama had a car brought round, and dashed off to bring her back to Tokyo, but by the time they returned Onishi had drawn his last breath.

They found a final testament, entitled 'To the Honoured Dead of the Special Attack Forces', beside the Admiral's body. In it, Onishi had written:

It will give me the greatest happiness if my death is taken as an admonition that rash acts will only benefit the enemy, and that what is required is to serve the imperial will with prudence and forbearance.

A separate note addressed to Chief of Operations Tomioka Sadatoshi read:

I hope that this testament will prove of some use to you in the guidance of our young officers and men.

So it seems that even Admiral Onishi, one of the most stubborn proponents of a fight to the finish, had seen that the time had finally come for Japan to lay down its arms and embark on the road to reconstruction.

Rear Admiral Tomioka could not hold back the tears which welled up as he read Onishi's testament, for he was painfully aware of how Onishi must have felt as he prepared for death, leaving all matters in the hands of one of his opponents in the bitter struggle over the decision to surrender. By this time, Tomioka, who was regarded as one of the most brilliant and resourceful officers in the Navy, was already preparing a scheme for the protection of the imperial line in case Japan's worst fears with regard to the intentions of the Allies should come to pass. By sheer coincidence, it was almost identical in inspiration and conception to that of the Nakano group.

Tomioka proposed his plan to Navy Minister Yonai and Chief of Staff Toyoda and got their approval. He also won the assent of the emperor's brother Prince Takamatsu, at the time attached to the Navy General Staff. He then engaged in a series of consultations with Ogane Masujirō, Vice Minister of the Imperial Household.²⁵ Next, he sent two of his subordinates, Commanders Doi Kazuo and Miyazaki Isamu, to the home of Dr Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, Professor of History at Tokyo Imperial University, to brief him on the plan and ask for his cooperation. Tomioka was aware that as an authority on the *kokutai* Hiraizumi had a great deal of influence at Court, and that he had also built up an extensive network of followers in both the military and civilian sectors. Hiraizumi's response to this visit is contained in his diary entry for 14 August:²⁶

I told them that I was deeply moved by their vision and concern for the future of our country, and promised that I would do whatever was within my humble means to aid them.

Word came from Vice Minister Ogane that the Imperial Household Ministry would leave all details of the plan up to the Navy, and Captain Arita Yūzō, adjutant to the Navy chief of staff, immediately made a secret fund of ¥200,000 available to support the operation.

All that remained was to name a leader for the unit and decide

on a place to serve as its headquarters and refuge. After discussing the matter, Admiral Tomioka and Prince Takamatsu settled on Genda Minoru,²⁷ an old classmate of the prince's from his naval academy days, for the leadership position. Commander Doi suggested the village of Gokanoshō in the mountains of Kyushu as an ideal spot to go into hiding. Captain Genda was immediately summoned to the capital from the air base at Omura in Kyushu, where he was serving as the commanding officer of the 343rd Naval Air Group.

Genda's elite squadron

The 343rd Naval Air Group was a fighter unit formed at the end of 1944 at Matsuyama in Shikoku, and charged with the mission of attempting to regain control of the air for the badly beaten Imperial Navy. Captain Genda, who was given responsibility for the formation of this new unit by Navy General Staff, was famous as the man who planned the attack on Pearl Harbor, and second only to Admiral Onishi Takijirō as a major figure in Japan's world of naval aviation.

Genda had volunteered for this post because he saw the end was near, and wanted to die the glorious death of a fighter pilot in the final apocalyptic battle for Japan. The group was equipped with the newest and best fighter plane Japan had produced, the modified Shiden (American codename: George), regarded as more than a match for the Grumman F6Fs of the US Navy. Genda then assembled the cream of the Navy's surviving air crews, and set them on a rigorous and exhaustive course of training and manoeuvres.

The group first saw action on 19 March 1945, when fifty-four of Genda's Shidens ambushed a large force of American carrier planes on their way to raid western Japan, and downed fifty-two of them, losing only sixteen of their own. The Commander in Chief of Combined Fleet, rejoicing in the first major success the Navy had enjoyed for some time, immediately dispatched a letter of commendation to the unit.

With the American landings on Okinawa the 343rd was restationed to Kyushu, first at Kanoya and then at Omura, where it formed the nucleus of Japan's remaining air defence forces. Though

it amassed an impressive record flying convoy operations for special attack units and battling American air units, the group also suffered heavy losses, and all three of its flight commanders died in combat. Morale remained high, but the decline in the unit's strength could not be concealed. At the beginning of August, even the group's operations officer, Lt. Commander Shiga Yoshio, began to fly practice missions at dawn and dusk. Normally, the operations officer was a ground position, but Shiga was keenly aware of the shortage of pilots and determined to join his men in the air when the time came.

On the evening of 14 August, a single MC transport landed at the Omura Air Base, and a middle-aged man in naval auxiliary uniform stepped down onto the runway. Challenged by Lieutenant Yamada Ryōichi, who was manning the flight control centre, the man responded haughtily, 'Kawanami, consultant to General Staff. Commander Genda around?' Yamada contacted the command post, located in a bunker half-way up the hills surrounding the base, and a car was sent to meet the visitor.

Kawanami Hosaku was a Nagasaki shipbuilding entrepreneur who had started from nothing and built himself a considerable empire around a system of rapid mass-production of wooden-hulled ships. As a consultant to Navy General Staff, he had come to know both Onishi and Genda well. He had more than a little of the arriviste and political schemer about him, but regarded himself as a true patriot and loyal follower of Onishi. Kawanami had come bearing the news of the Imperial Conference of that morning and the emperor's final decision to end the war. After giving a detailed account of the situation in Tokyo, he then asked probingly, 'So what do we do now, Genda?' Kawanami already seemed deeply preoccupied with how to restructure his business operations to meet the challenge of the post-war era.

But Genda merely shut his eyes. He was so moved by the sensation provoked by the shocking news of the surrender that all the blood in his body had suddenly lurched backwards along his veins. Kawanami waited expectantly, but when he saw the silent Genda had no intention of answering him, he rose to leave. At the door, he turned to remark mysteriously, 'If you should run into any trouble, please let me know,' and disappeared.

For the next three days, Genda struggled with the question of whether to surrender or to fight on. At noon on 15 August, the entire group lined up at attention before the control tower and listened to the imperial broadcast announcing the end of the war. When it was over, Genda addressed his men:

We of the 343rd Naval Air Group will not surrender. We are determined to fight to the last man. Ending the war is not the true will of His Majesty: I believe it is a fraud perpetrated by traitors surrounding the throne.

He then flew to Fifth Air Fleet headquarters in Oita, seeking further information regarding this most recent turn of events, but the air base had been thrown into total confusion by the departure of the fleet commander, Admiral Ugaki Matome, on the last suicide mission launched against the enemy. Unable to learn much of anything there, Genda returned to Omura.

While Genda sat lost in thought in a corner of the underground air-raid bunker, the men of his squadron boiled with a determination to fight on to the end. The hot-headed young pilots took to the air in thirty of the squadron's remaining Shidens in a demonstration of their will to continue the struggle. The mechanics were given orders to prepare all planes for suicide missions, while the ground troops attached to the base excitedly prepared bamboo spears for final hand-to-hand combat with the American invaders.

As if to pour oil on these flames of passion, a lone Zero from the 302nd Air Group based at Atsugi swooped in for a landing. The young pilot jumped down from his plane, began distributing leaflets, and yelled 'Captain Kozono and the men of the Atsugi Air Group have risen! The 343rd has go to join us!'

Captain Kozono Yasuna was famous in the Navy for his martial spirit, and his appeal to continue the fighting was tinged with a fanaticism bordering on madness:

The Emperor of Japan is an Absolute Being. There will be absolutely no surrender ... To follow such orders would be the gravest disloyalty, an act of treason and immorality.

Like many others, Kozono had willfully interpreted the imperial decision to end the war as the work of traitors surrounding the throne.

At first, the mutineers at Atsugi refused to be quelled by any attempts to talk them down, even when Prince Takamatsu was mobilized to reason with the rebellious flyers; midway through, however, Captain Kozono began to exhibit signs of dementia so severe that he had to be hospitalized, and within a few days order was restored without any blood being shed. Yet the Navy high command remained deeply concerned that this mutiny might spread to other air units – especially the 343rd, which was not only the Navy's strongest surviving group, but had in Commander Genda one of the Navy's best-known and most dynamic officers. In the final analysis, putting Genda in charge of the Navy scheme to protect the imperial line was a rather brilliant antidote for the poison of potential rebellion.

'The Commander intends to die ...'

On the afternoon of 17 August, two modified Shiden fighters dropped out of the sky from the direction of the bay and set down on the short runway at the Yokosuka Naval Air Station. As Flight Sergeant Ohara of the Yokosuka Fighter Squadron watched dully from the control tower, the lead plane slipped off the runway, spun around once, and came to an abrupt halt. Ohara thought to himself, 'those shitty Shidens,' but the plane itself appeared to have been barely scratched, and soon enough a small, sharp-eyed man entered the control room, accompanied by several officers.

The man was Captain Genda Minoru, who had flown in from Omura with Lieutenant Matsumura Shōji as his wingman. Commander Ibusuki Masanobu of the Yokosuka Squadron and his pilots, who remained on alert but without clear direction since the announcement of the surrender, crowded about the new arrivals. Finally, one of the pilots shouted, 'Commander, what should we do now? What will become of Japan?', and the atmosphere immediately grew tense.

Genda, without realizing it, had dropped into the middle of a group of men who were indignantly plotting to shoot down the two military transport planes bearing the Japanese truce mission to Manila for consultation on the procedures for surrender. As an acknowledged leader of the pro-war faction who was rumoured to

have joined the Atsugi flyers in their mutiny, Genda could easily have thrown fuel on the fire of their plot.

Instead, Genda quickly apprised himself of the situation, and raking his eyes over the men surrounding him, said:

I am as determined as you are that we should fight on to the finish. Yet I do know His Majesty's true feelings. [The surrender] seems likely to be a plot by traitors close to the throne, but I am going now to the capital to pay my respects to Prince Takamatsu and to find out what he thinks. Until I get back, wait patiently and don't do anything rash.

After this brief speech, Genda left the base to board the train to Tokyo and the Navy Ministry.

The red brick building in Kasumigaseki which had housed the Navy Ministry and the Navy General Staff had been completely burned out in the air raids of May, so their various departments were scattered among a number of surviving buildings in the area. However, the nerve centre of the Navy's war effort – the Operations Room of Navy General Staff – remained intact in its underground bunker beneath the gutted headquarters building.

In one corner of the bunker there was the aristocratic figure of Rear Admiral Tomioka, who had his hands full trying to talk a steady stream of warlike naval officers into submitting to the order of surrender. The air in the room was rank and muggy, and both Tomioka and his auditors were bathed in sweat. Tomioka insisted that the end of the war was not the result of some traitorous palace plot, and described in detail the Imperial Conference and the emperor's decision to surrender. When he came to the emperor's statement, 'No matter what happens to me personally, I wish to save my people', some of the officers collapsed in tears.

To these crestfallen, dejected men Tomioka addressed a few words of encouragement and hope:

With the Second World War at an end, America and the Soviet Union will certainly come into conflict. This rift will provide Japan with its opportunity to get back on its feet. Fortunately, our people have survived. Let's work together to set our country on the road to recovery.

Among those listening to Tomioka were Rear Admiral Yokoi Toshiyuki, chief of staff of the Fifth Air Fleet, and Captain

Okamura Motoharu of the Navy's Jinrai (American code name: Baka bomb) unit.²⁸ Genda was there too. A little later, when he was taken aside by Tomioka to a private conference room and given the secret directive to lead the mission to protect the imperial line, it came to him as a kind of revelation.

The vague outlines of a notion which had occurred to him as he wrestled painfully with himself in the air-raid bunker at Omura, torn between the dictates of reason and his own powerful emotions, were now given clarity and definition by the plan Tomioka outlined for him. Genda was deeply moved, and said simply, 'It is an honour for me to undertake this mission.' With a look of relief, Tomioka continued:

This job will require more than courage. Your role will be like that of the leader of the forty-seven rōnin, Oishi Kuranosuke. We'll discuss the details with Vice Minister of the Imperial Household Ogane once things have firmed up on your end.

We don't know for certain when the Allied occupation force will arrive, but you should hurry to get things underway before they do. I've requested Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Yokoi to give you any assistance you may require. But remember that this plan will not be implemented unless it is absolutely necessary. We will not even decide which member of the imperial house it will be until the time comes. It may even be one of the princesses.

How long a period of operations are we talking about? Well, I should say two years, more or less.

I would think about three, but I want the members of the team to commit themselves to this project indefinitely.

The following afternoon, when he returned to Yokosuka, Genda said to Lt. Commander Ibusuki and the other officers of the squadron who rushed out to meet him, 'There will be no uprising. I want you all to restrain yourselves.' Genda then flew to Matsuyama on the island of Shikoku.

Matsuyama was still the home base of the 343rd Naval Air Group. After giving instructions to his second-in-command for the demobilization of the squadron, Genda spent the night at the base. He flew back to Omura at nine o'clock the next morning. Operations Officer Shiga Yoshio and Maintenance Chief Koga Ryōichi had been left in charge of the group with strict instructions

not to do anything rash during Genda's absence. Along with the other officers, they now came running out to greet their commander.

They remained silent, but Genda knew very well what they wanted to ask him. Still in his flight uniform, he surveyed the airfield. Restored to the clarity and sharpness of perception that he had had in the days when he was formulating the attack on Pearl Harbor, Genda immediately sensed that the passion and excitement that had seized his men three days before was degenerating into disillusionment and despair.

In fact, quick action by Koga had just prevented a suicide attempt by Lieutenant Narimatsu Takao, chief of one of the maintenance crews, who had set fire to the Shiden fighter he was working on, intending to blow himself up with his plane. Only the day before, a fist fight had broken out between mechanics of the 343rd and men from the Omura Naval Air Arsenal who had come to the base demanding that the squadron return its aeroplanes.

Genda ordered his adjutant, Ensign Watanabe Takashi, to assemble the men of the squadron, and nodded to Shiga and Koga. When Watanabe returned, he found the three men deep in a whispered conversation. He could catch only bits of what was being said – 'I want to leave the youngsters out of this', 'This may go on for ten or twenty years', 'Leave it to me', – but he knew immediately that something very important was going on.

Yet when Genda stepped out of the command post to address the nearly one thousand men of the group, he gave no hint of what had been discussed:

Our loyalty and sincerity have proven inadequate, and as a result we have come to the present sad state of affairs. As you know, His Majesty has issued an Imperial Rescript accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. At first, I, too, did not think this represented the true will of the emperor, but now that I have been to the capital to see for myself, I am better able to understand the realities of the situation.

The termination of hostilities is the result of a personal and deeply felt decision by His Majesty the Emperor. To continue the fighting now would make us all disloyal subjects. Therefore, we must swallow our tears and end the battle, and I relieve you all of your duties. Return to your homes with the precious experience you have

gained, and devote yourselves to the reconstruction of our motherland.

The men of the squadron hung on Genda's every word, and when he was done, a kind of wordless rumble spread through the ranks. Twenty-four-year-old Flight Sergeant Hori Mitsuo looked on as a group of middle-aged draftees spoke softly and anxiously with one another. No doubt they were filled with relief at the news that they would be returning home alive to their wives and children. Yet when Hori heard Genda's parting words – 'I shall probably never see you again in this world. Please take care of yourselves.' – he thought to himself, 'The Commander intends to die ...'

Operations Officer Shiga dismissed the men, but requested that all flight crews and officers remain in formation.

'This must be kept absolutely secret!'

With Shiga's order, the assembly shrank immediately to less than two hundred. As they waited, filled with both anxiety and curiosity, Genda reemerged from the command post and began to speak:

As you may realize from what I have just said, I cannot bear to see the soil of our motherland trampled by the boots of the enemy. At eight o'clock this evening I intend to take my own life. If any among you wish to accompany me in death, make your preparations and assemble at the People's Gymnasium at 8.00 p.m.

As he listened, Sergeant Hori suddenly felt dizzy and lightheaded, and the Commander's voice was masked by the throb of his own pulse in his ears. Shards of memories of countless air battles since Rabaul spun through his mind. When he came to again, Operations Officer Shiga was speaking:

What the Commander has just said is a personal decision on his part. It is not an order. Don't be carried away by an excess of youthful spirit and follow him blindly: this would only wound the Commander and place a heavy burden on his conscience. You must think this through for yourselves carefully, and come to your own decisions.

The midday sun burned down out of the centre of the sky, but this one corner of the airfield was wrapped in a cool silence as if suddenly doused with water.

The barracks for the flight crews was located at the top of a bluff about five minutes walk from the airfield. As he wound his way up the path to the barracks, Hori's heart was in turmoil. It had been seven long years since he had first volunteered as a cadet. His views on life and death had been forged in the carnage of the aerial combat he had survived since his first battle in the skies over Rabaul; he thought he knew where he stood, but the idea of dying now the war was over was a different matter. And he was confident that he had fought as well and as hard as he could in service to his country.

He went to the mess hall, where he found his fellow officers lost in thought, barely aware of the chopsticks they held or the food before them, and where he met the imploring gaze of his subordinates. Unable to choke down his rice, Hori went to his quarters, where he slowly and abstractedly began gathering together his personal effects. The faces of his girlfriend and his mother floated into his head, as did the fearless gaze of his comrade Lieutenant Kanno Naoshi, who had been lost in action on 1 August.

That day, they had set out to intercept a flight of American B-24 bombers, with Hori flying as Kanno's wingman, the second plane in the group commanded by his friend. Over the island of Yaku, Hori suddenly received a radio message from the lead plane: 'This is Kanno One. I have a machine-gun barrel explosion.' Pulling up alongside Kanno's plane, Hori saw a gaping hole in the centre of the port wing. Barrel explosions of this sort were frequently enough to bring a plane down, but Kanno was managing to stay in the air, and Hori positioned himself to escort the damaged craft back to base. Kanno waved him off, and glaring at him through the canopy of his plane, gestured to Hori to return to the pursuit of the American bombers. Hori hesitated, but Kanno repeated his gesture, and Hori sped away to the attack. When he returned, Kanno's plane had disappeared. Now, as he stood in the barracks, the remorse he had felt at this failure even to witness the death of his brave fellow officer welled up once again in Hori's heart, and made his decision for him.

'I should have died then. What am I waiting for now? Let's go.'

His spirits lightened, and he began to gather up his things. He tied a snow-white piece of cotton cloth about his sword, slung a

pistol by its lanyard around his neck, and set off for the People's Gymnasium. When he arrived there, about twenty of his fellows were already assembled, sitting on the bare wood floor of the entrance. Some wore swords, others cleaned their pistols, still others laughed and chatted with one another as they waited. Looking around the room, Hori saw that nearly all the squad leaders, mostly graduates of the Naval Academy or the Engineering Academy, were there, along with Honda, Muranaka, and other former cadets, and a scattering of reserve officers who had been drafted out of university. Nearly all of them were young men in their early twenties. And all of them must have gone through a fierce internal struggle to bring themselves to this place, but no sign of this pain now clouded their faces.

At last, Genda entered the hall, smartly dressed in a fresh set of khaki fatigues, and accompanied by Operations Officer Shiga and the adjutant, Ensign Watanabe.

'Think this over once more. Those of you who wish to leave are free to do so.'

Having said this, the handsome Shiga glanced apologetically about the assembly. One of the non-commissioned officers rose unsteadily to his feet and disappeared out the door.

'OK. That makes twenty-three men all together, all present and accounted for. Seat yourselves here around the Commander. After you have written and signed your last testaments, we will talk together for a while. The Commander will be the first to die. Don't jump the gun.'

Genda sat silently, at attention while Shiga spoke.

After the men had finished writing and quiet conversation had gone on for a time, Watanabe brought out some saké and a final toast was drunk. The men then arranged themselves in formal seated posture, and the room filled with tension as Shiga signalled the Commander. Genda began to speak, slowly and deliberately:

Men, I feel I now know you to the bottom of your hearts. I am sorry to have put you through this kind of a test, but I needed to make sure I had comrades with the kind of quiet courage that values neither fame nor life itself. For we are now about to embark upon a mission more important than death.

Genda paused for a moment, raked the assembly with his hawklike eyes, and then proceeded to divulge to them the secret directive to protect the imperial line that he had borne with him on his return from Tokyo.

Motionless, intent, the men listened, and a wave of emotion shot through the room like a flash of lightning. Hori, who sat near the back, could not stop his tears as he mumbled to himself, 'So this is it. So this is what they were whispering about.'

Men, this will not be easy duty. It may take years; it may take decades. Operations will commence tonight. I warn you that we may be branded as deserters. And I want to emphasize: you may say nothing of this to anyone. Until the order to disband is given, you must keep this absolutely secret. Do I make myself clear?

A roar of affirmation welled up from the assembly, and what had a few moments before been preparations for mass suicide now became a strategic planning session. By the time Shiga had sorted out the various proposals and drawn up a provisional plan of action to read to the group, it was nearing daybreak:

We will disperse immediately to establish our bases of operation. The Yamaguchi team of Shiga, Isozaki, and Nakajima Daijirō will set up at Shiga's home in Yamaguchi. Mitsumoto and Oseko are assigned to their homes in Hiroshima and Kagoshima to await further orders and to investigate the situations there. Tsuzurahara, Koga, and Nakanishi will go to Tokyo. The remainder will make up the Kumamoto team. The lead elements will leave tonight, and the main group tomorrow morning at 10:00, bound for Tomochi in the foothills above Gokanoshō. Shinagawa will go to Kumamoto City to commandeer some supply trucks. For the time being, our communications will be in care of Narimatsu Sukeaki, Moritomi-mura, Shimomashiki-gun, Kumamoto Prefecture.

OK, let's get the trucks loaded. Yamada and Muranaka will fly to Tokyo tomorrow to deliver our pledge of service and the names of our members to Admiral Tomioka.

When Shiga had finished speaking the men began hasty preparations for departure. Hori, who had been assigned to the lead team, went to the supply warehouse and began the sweaty work of loading jerrycans of gasoline, blankets, crates of ammunition, sacks

of rice, canned goods and containers of dehydrated soy sauce and bean paste onto the bed of a waiting truck.

As dawn began to break, the three members of the lead team, with Honda, who was born and raised in Kumamoto serving as their guide, pulled out of the air base at Omura. They intended to stop off at Honda's home in the village of Kawachi on the outskirts of Kumamoto City, conceal their supplies in a nearby cave, and head on to Tomochi where they would join up with the rest of the Kumamoto team.

Operations commence at Gokanoshō

On 26 August 1945, eight figures struggled towards the top of the Nihonsugi Pass, located at the top of a 1018-metre ridge to the north of the isolated mountain resort of Gokanoshō. All were muscular men, clad in light green summer uniform, legs wrapped in puttees, and shod in the peculiar split-toed workboots that are the trademark of the Japanese labourer. Towels tucked into the backs of their forage caps served as makeshift screens against the blazing summer sun. Their appearance was not particularly conspicuous that summer, when hundreds of thousands of identically dressed demobilized soldiers roamed the length and breadth of Japan, but Kusumoto Kenzo, the owner of the tea-house near the top of the pass where they had stopped for the night, pondered what eight such men might be doing so far up in the remote mountains of Kyushu at that time of year.

The tea-house is now a bed-and-breakfast managed by a younger generation, but the vista from the pass remains unchanged, offering on clear days a panoramic view of miles of virgin woodlands with the Kumamoto Plain spreading out far below until it meets the Sea of Amakusa.

Gokanoshō, literally 'Five Estates', is the name given to a cluster of five villages – Kureko, Momiki, Nitao, Hagi and Shiibara – scattered deep in the mountains of the Kyushu Range along the border between Kumamoto and Miyazaki Prefectures. The inhabitants are said to be the descendants of members of the defeated Heike clan who fled into the mountains almost a thousand years ago, but an even older legend has it that they are the heirs of

the aboriginal mountain peoples vanquished by the descendants of the Sun Goddess well before the dawn of recorded history.

When the author first visited Gokanoshō in 1980, tracing the footsteps of Genda's unit into this lonely region, it was already late autumn, and the blaze of colour on the wooded mountainsides brought to mind a passage from an old text:

The tall peaks rise towards heaven, the steep ridges are shrouded in white clouds; manifold, endless, they admit no passage; between them lie profound vales, and at their feet sharp cliffs and precipices which even the deer cannot master; snow falls here often, and the clouds and mist are deep ...

Yet Gokanoshō is not really as isolated as it first appears. Across the valley and over another ridge, a road has been opened into what seems like trackless wilderness, and if you follow it even further into the mountains of Hyūga you will soon come to the villages of Takachiho, Shiiba, and Mera. Even on a fairly rough map, you can pick it out – if your eyes are good – as a thin and twisting thread snaking its way amid the peaks.

Legend has it that southern Kyushu is the point of origin of Japan's imperial house. Here, Genda's unit must have hoped to find local supporters imbued with a spirit of imperial loyalism similar to the rustic warriors of Yoshino and Totsugawa who defended the Southern Court from the pursuing warriors of Ashikaga Takauji in the fourteenth century.

Genda's main force arrived in Tomochi in two trucks on 22 August, and spent a day or two settling into quarters at the People's Gymnasium there, provided to them through the auspices of the town mayor, Shingai Shūzō, who was a friend of the father of one of the men in Genda's unit, Narimatsu Takao. The group posed as demobilized soldiers wanting to return to farming and looking for new land to cultivate – yet somehow Shingai sensed their real purpose.

The People's Gymnasium was actually a rather small and simple two-storey wooden building which had once housed the mayor's offices. Genda and his men converted the first floor into a workroom and makeshift kitchen; on the second floor, Genda occupied a private eight-mat room while the rest of his team slept sprawled about in the large room which adjoined it.

The day after they had arrived, Genda discussed with Shingai the best way to get to Gokanoshō. Long ago, a trail had been cut so that the villagers of the northern part of Gokanoshō could reach Tomochi with packhorses laden with charcoal, boar meat, trout and other products of the deep mountains, exchanging them in the town for other necessities of daily life. Shingai knew the route fairly well and outlined it for Genda. Then he said:

Gokanoshō is pretty isolated, as you know, but the most isolated part of it is the hamlet of Momiki. It's in a kind of box canyon, but there are trails leading off from there over the mountains in all four directions.

When you get there, the man to see is Kubo Yoshimi, a big man in the community. He was a student of mine when I taught at the Tomochi Elementary School. I hear he's got kin over by Shiiba. My son Chikayuki's just got back from Tokyo. Why don't I have him show you the way over there?

Genda gave a slight bow and said, 'I have already met your son. Thank you very much for your kindness.'

The mayor's eldest son Chikayuki, after graduating from Kumamoto Normal School and working for a while as an elementary school teacher, had gone on for further training at the Tokyo School of Physical Education, and was in the capital when the war ended. Since returning home after the surrender, he was at somewhat of a loss as to what to do with himself. Since he was about the same age as the young members of Genda's team, he had quickly made friends with them, and was delighted to take on the role of their guide to the mountain trails.

So it was that on 26 August, Genda and seven others were crossing the Nihonsugi Pass into Gokanoshō, searching out a refuge for a young imperial prince or princess they had yet to lay eyes on. The only one having an easy time of it was young Chikayuki, who was used to rambling in the mountains; Genda and the other ex-airmen, with little experience on the march, puffed and panted as they dragged their way up the surprisingly steep trail.

When they arrived at points which Genda had previously marked after careful study of the map, he swept the area with his binoculars, dispatched squads to survey the terrain, took photos and

prepared sketches. Any onlooker would have regarded this activity with suspicion, but in this desolate neck of the woods they did not run across another soul during half a day's march. Moreover, with the war just ended, visitors from the outside world were few. The register of the tea-house at Nihonsugi, which has survived to this day, shows that at the time only one or two groups of hikers a month put up there for the night.

After a night's rest at the tea-house, Genda's team left early the next morning to descend the pass and pick up the trail into Momiki. This area was one of deeply cloven ravines, dotted here and there by with thatch-roofed houses at the foot of the hillsides.

When they reached the tiny hamlet of Shimoyashiki, they stopped at the home of the Ogata family to rest and eat the rice balls they had brought along for lunch. The Ogatas were descendants of the stewards who had ruled Gokanoshō in medieval days, but the head of the family had died, and his widow anxiously awaited the return of their son, who had not yet been demobilized from the Army.

When the group at last arrived at their destination after a final difficult traverse of the mountain flanks along a path called Tsuzuraori – 'The 99 Folds' – the sun had already dropped suddenly behind the hills. The eighty or so houses which made up the hamlet of Momiki were scattered along either side of the deep gorge cut by a tributary of the Itsuki River, and clung to the steep slope as if they had been nailed in place. Across the narrow gorge swung a slender suspension bridge woven of sturdy vines and wooden planks.

It was a world cut off from civilization: no electricity, no phones, no radios; newspapers a week late; the staple food a choice between two local varieties of millet. The Kubo family had the largest house in the hamlet, but it was thatched like all the rest, and with level ground at a premium, it consisted of only three rooms, with an attached horse-stable. Part of Genda's team had to put up at the nearest neighbour's house, whose eaves practically brushed the Kubos'. The next morning, Watanabe got up before the others and had a private *tour d'horizon* wondering all the while how this would stack up as an imperial place of refuge. A city boy from Hiroshima, he was somewhat taken aback. 'What a ghastly place. The ladies-in-waiting and what not wouldn't last a day here', he thought to

himself as he made his way back, when he suddenly caught sight of Genda, standing at the foot of the hanging bridge and staring off at the ridgeline to the east.

‘Commander, what’s on the day’s agenda,’ he called out, and Genda answered, ‘The main group will check out the path to Shiiba, and one squad each will go and inspect Kunimigaoka and the Mizukami pass. I guess we’ll leave Shiibara and so on for tomorrow.’ He then dropped his voice and asked, ‘So what do you think?’ In a group composed entirely of career military men, Genda looked upon his adjutant Watanabe, who had been a member of the swimming team at Waseda University and had worked for a time in his family’s cleaning business, as someone who could be depended upon for common sense in more worldly matters and in dealing with civilians.

‘Well, at a pinch we’ve got escape routes running out of here in four directions, so it’s good ground strategically, but there’s very little usable land and we couldn’t be self-sufficient as far as food goes. And then there’s the question of who’s in charge here ...’

At this, Genda nodded vigorously.

The man they had pinned their hopes on was Kubo Yoshimi, who had amassed a bit of wealth dealing in timber and wooden sandals, and was the sole man of means in the village. But he did not have the pedigree as local notables that the Ogata family possessed, and after a night’s conversation he also proved to be ill-informed and not terribly concerned about national issues: he seemed little more than what he was, a simple mountain trader.

Inspection of the area proceeded as planned that day and the next, but Genda had already half given up on Gokanoshō.

Genda’s team infiltrates the Imperial Household Ministry

Three weeks later, a man and a woman hurried along a ridgeline trail running between Mamihara and Takachiho in the Kyushu Mountains, a great plume of volcanic smoke from Mt Aso smudging the sky behind them.

As they stopped at a cross trail, the young woman pointed out over the densely wooded hills and said, as she mopped her face with a handkerchief, ‘Muranaka-san, over there the path branches in two.

The right fork leads to Shiiba, the left to Takachiho. If we hurry, we can reach there by dark, I think.'

Squinting, the young man replied, 'Thank you. Etō-san, now that we've come this far I think I can find the rest of the way on my own.'

Setting her pale face in a determined expression, Etō Chiyoko insisted on accompanying Muranaka. Looking up at him challengingly, she said, 'Actually, I've heard from Chief of Staff Yokoi what you are up to. I may be only a woman, but I want to do anything I can to help you in your work.'

Twenty-six-year-old Muranaka Kazuo had rejoined the other members of Genda's unit at Tomochi after his flight to Tokyo in a Zero fighter to deliver the organization's roster to Admiral Tomioka. Under orders from Genda, he had then gone to Oita to meet with Chief of Staff Yokoi, and he was now in the process of investigating Takachiho as an alternative site to Gokanoshō for the unit's operations.

Chiyoko was a maid at an inn in Beppu, the Hakuuikan, where Yokoi was lodging, but her family lived in Mamihara, so she had been asked to accompany Muranaka to the area and help him get his bearings. At some point she must have discovered the secret of Muranaka's mission. Suddenly aware of this for the first time, Muranaka was upset.

As he stood there pondering what to do, a group of travelling performers appeared on the trail and stared suspiciously at the young couple as they began to pass. Not wanting to cause a scene, Muranaka silently set off with Chiyoko along the path to Takachiho, which led down in to the deep gorge of the Gokase River.

Based on information given him by Chiyoko, Muranaka met the next day with Kai Tokujirō, mayor of the village of Iwato in Takachiho. Iwato was the site of the famous cave, Ama no Iwato, where ancient Japanese legend says that the Sun Goddess Amaterasu once concealed herself, and the area abounded in other such lore of the age of the gods. Mayor Kai was an enthusiastic student of National Learning, and thus inclined to take these stories as more than merely mythical. When Muranaka sounded him out, with a story about a group of veterans who wished to return to the

land, Kai responded warmly, promising he would do what he could to aid Muranaka and his friends in relocating in the village.

Relieved, Muranaka rose early the next morning and followed the Iwato River up into the foothills of Sobosan to get a better view of the area. A plan had been discussed in which the secret imperial bodyguard would establish itself in this community, and then support itself by raising shiitake mushrooms, a valuable commodity, but Chiyoko, who knew about such things, had expressed quiet reservations about the idea, saying that amateurs would have a tough time making a go of shiitake and that the set-up costs would be sizeable. Still, Muranaka was impressed with Takachiho on the whole, and after promising Mayor Kai that he would bring Genda to meet with him, he returned to Tomochi.

While Muranaka had been inspecting Takachiho, the other members of the unit had made similar trips to a number of other possible sites throughout southern Kyushu.

In the meantime, their leader Genda had travelled to Tokyo to meet with Rear Admiral Tomioka and Vice Minister of the Imperial Household Ogane. When he returned, he ordered Koga and Nakanishi Kenzō to depart at once for the capital and apply for service with the Imperial Household Ministry, and informed them that Tsuzurahara Kō, a member of the group who was a graduate of the Imperial University of Tokyo, had been placed with the Dōmei Tsūshin Press service, where he would serve as their intelligence contact.

Koga was an ideal candidate for the task Genda had assigned him, for his family lived in Tokyo and his late father had been a cavalry officer in the Army who had worked for the Imperial Household Ministry in managing the imperial stables.

Koga and Nakanishi moved into the Koga family house in the Setagaya section of Tokyo, and in October they were assigned desks in the general affairs office of the Imperial Household Ministry. They had been given the official title of consultants to the ministry by Vice Minister Ogane, but there was really no work for them to do.

The ministry was still in a state of confusion from the scaling down of its operations and the personnel cuts which had followed the end of the war. Since almost every day veteran employees of the

ministry were resigning and going about the offices bidding their farewells, the two newly hired and idle recruits felt rather insignificant.

At the end of October, Nakajima Daijirō came up to Tokyo. Since the ranking officers of Genda's air group had disappeared into thin air shortly after the surrender, the American forces which had occupied the airbase at Omura were now displaying some interest in their whereabouts, and had issued a summons. Shiga and Nakajima had responded to this, and presented themselves at the base, where they were now busy with the bureaucratic clean-up attendant upon the demise of Japan's armed forces. When he learned that an American major was looking for Genda, Shiga asked the officer directly why he wanted to find him. The major replied that they wanted to ask him a few things about the attack on Pearl Harbor, for which Genda was known to be the chief planner. Shiga then said, 'The Commander is missing and presumed to have committed suicide, but I was one of the flight leaders of the fighter wing at Pearl Harbor, so I know a fair bit about it.' The major, a jovial sort, said 'OK, you'll do', and spent the next three days grilling Shiga on the details of the attack.

Nakajima was in Tokyo to deliver a finalized set of the battle reports of the 343rd Naval Air Group to the Navy Ministry. As he passed Hibiya Park in central Tokyo on his way back from the ministry, he saw a large crowd gathered there for a 'People's Assembly to Combat Starvation', and heard the speakers demanding immediate implementation of a one pint a day rice ration.

Shortly afterwards, he was also enraged by the sight of American soldiers with their arms around Japanese girls in front of a military monument near the city centre. When he returned that evening to Koga's house, where he was spending the night, he said, 'I had a look at a Communist Party rally today. What's the world coming to?' But when he glanced through the newspaper he had brought home with him, he was startled to find that the sponsor of the rally had been none other than the Japan National Party, a right-wing organization headed by Kodama Yoshio.

Nakajima's mistake was not that surprising. Since their liberation from prison on 10 October by order of GHQ, the leaders of the Japanese Communist Party had rapidly rebuilt their

organization, and had fanned a wave of rallies and demonstrations under the slogans 'Overthrow the Emperor System!' 'Establish a People's Government!' and 'Prosecute War Criminals!'

Nakajima, Koga, and Nakanishi exchanged information and discussed the current situation until well into the night, but none of them knew much more than what they read in the newspapers, and the overall direction of Occupation policy remained unclear. Moreover, a fierce debate was taking place domestically regarding the future of the imperial system, and if the forces calling for its abolition, represented by the Communist Party, picked up enough support, then the time might be near for the implementation of their strategy to defend the imperial line.

When Koga asked if preparations for a place of refuge 'were going OK', Nakajima responded, a bit defensively:

We're still looking. It's tough to find a suitable place. Not only that, the police in Tomochi seem to have got wind that something was up, so the group had to split up for safety's sake and now we're scattered in four or five different locations. But we're hanging in there, so give us a little while longer.

When he was making ready to leave, Nakanishi asked somewhat sheepishly, 'Would you do me the favour of stopping by to see my family in Shiga on your way back?' Nakajima agreed, but seemed to want to know more.

Embarrassed, in a low voice, Nakanishi explained, 'There's a girl I want to marry. Please tell that to my old man.' Nakajima, realizing that this was also Nakanishi's way of breaking the news to his comrades, slipped a broad grin onto his normally severe features and said:

Understood. The Commander has instructed us to prepare for a protracted struggle, even to the point of taking wives in the areas to which we've been assigned. You'll be the first. Congratulations.

He thumped his friend's back heartily.

Imperial refuges at Sugiyasu and Mt Ichifusa

Nakajima also stopped briefly at his own home in Kōchi, where he contacted Captain Okamura, formerly of the Navy's Jinrai unit, and by the time he headed for Saganoseki in Oita Prefecture under fresh orders from Genda at the end of November, there were a number of new developments in the group's efforts to locate a place of refuge for their prospective imperial guest.

Takachiho had replaced Gokanoshō as the most likely prospect, and negotiations to buy a house and land there had just fallen through one step short of success, when word came from Watanabe Takashi, who was secretly inspecting the southern part of Miyazaki Prefecture, that he had found another promising place. Back in September, Yamada Ryoichi had taken a look at the village of Mera, deep in the mountains of Miyazaki southeast of Gokanoshō, and reported it to be worth considering. Mera, too, had a legend behind it, which said that it was settled by the remnants of the loyalist Kikuchi clan after their defeat by the Ashikaga armies.

Upon hearing this story, Watanabe remembered that an old classmate from Waseda lived nearby in the small town of Sugiyasu. He decided to pay a call on his friend, who welcomed him and also introduced him to the Ushiroguchi brothers, who were prominent figures in the town.

Generations ago, the Ushiroguchi family had moved to Sugiyasu from Wakayama prefecture, establishing an unobtrusive but substantial position for themselves as the biggest forestry magnates in southern Kyushu, with a string of lumbering operations and other related businesses. The eldest son Shigeru had inherited the headship of the house, while his brother-in-law Ryūji held office as the mayor of Sugiyasu. Ushiroguchi Shigeru was also chairman of the prefectural Charcoal Control Board, and though he was still a youngish forty or so, he seemed upon first meeting to be a steady, solid man of good character and more than a little wisdom. Moreover, he kept the rude woodsmen who worked for him in line with a firm and effective hand. Watanabe was much impressed, and deciding that both the area of Sugiyasu and the Ushiroguchis were ideal for the purposes of the group, he summoned Genda to come have a look. Since things had just fallen through in Takachiho, Sugiyasu was beginning to appear to be the group's last resort. And

when the Ushiroguchi brothers were briefed on the plan, they responded with much emotion, pledging to aid in the undertaking 'with all our heart and soul'.

Securing the backing of the Ushiroguchis and their forestry operations was an enormous boon to the group, and from this point onwards, their plans took shape rapidly. Genda sent a four-man team comprised of Watanabe, Katō Taneo, Omura Tetsuya, and Hori ahead to Sugiyasu to make preparations, assembling the remaining members of the group at Saganoseki. Commander Nakajima Tadashi, Genda's second-in-command at the old 343rd, joined them there, bringing the number of this band of stalwarts to twenty-four men.

Saganoseki occupies a strategic point along the shipping lanes linking Kyushu with the Inland Sea. Their imperial charge was to be sent to them by ship from Tokyo, via Osaka and Matsuyama. Once ashore at Saganoseki, the whole contingent would then proceed to Sugiyasu, either by rail along the Nippo and Tsuma Branch lines, or by coastal freighter, landing at the small port of Mimitsu close by. Initially, it was hoped that Captain Fuchida Mitsuo,²⁹ leader of the airstrike against Pearl Harbor, and a resident of Osaka, would handle the middle leg of the journey, but these arrangements did not materialize, and Genda took it upon himself to go to Osaka when the time came.

The plan was for the Saganoseki group to remain in readiness there, providing a cover for their activities by purchasing boats and engaging themselves in the local fishing industry, while the advance team in Sugiyasu would buy up an appropriate parcel of land in the neighbourhood, see to it that the necessary accommodations were built, and search the remote areas further inland for a second and more secret refuge which could be used if that became necessary. After looking over several properties in the area, the team settled on a wooded site overlooking the Hitotsuse River, owned by the Ushiroguchi family, for the principal refuge. The land was quickly cleared and construction of a modest four-room wooden cottage began.

According to Ushiroguchi Shigeru, still living and now chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in Saito City, the search for a second and more secret refuge took the team to a site on the

eastern slopes of Mt Ichifusa (1722 metres), on the east bank of the upper reaches of the Hitotsuse River between the villages of Kami-Mera and Shiiba. The Ushiroguchis owned nearly two million square metres of cedar forest in the vicinity, and some fifty charcoal burners' huts were scattered here and there along the hillsides. A road, just barely passable by truck, led into this area from Sugiyasu, following the course of the Hitotsuse River.

One winter's day, Ushiroguchi and Watanabe, with Ushiroguchi's agent Sakaguchi Shigekazu as a guide, crossed the river from the direction of Kami-Mera and toiled up the slope on the other side. Watanabe had just returned from an inspection of the hamlet of Shiromi, where the rebel forces under Saigo Takamori had encamped after their defeat in the battle of Enadake during the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877. But he was quite taken with the magnificence of the scenery here, with Mt Ichifusa bathed in the warm sunlight. The area seemed bright and cheerful, in contrast with the dusky gloom they had found at Gokanoshō, though it may have been a trick of the lovely weather, unusual for winter in these parts. After Watanabe had a good look around, Ushiroguchi said to him:

Watanabe-san, after a great deal of thought, this is what I hit upon as a final refuge.

Beautiful, isn't it? What would we do for food?

Sweet potatoes, buckwheat, and millet could all be grown here. There are rabbits, wild boar and fish from the river. You could be pretty self-sufficient up here, and whatever else you needed could be brought in from Sugiyasu.

But the road is close by, and there doesn't seem to be any escape route. It's kind of a cul-de-sac, isn't it?

Yes, that's true, but the charcoal burners around here are employees of mine. I was thinking we could fix up one of their huts for His Highness. If he wouldn't be safe here, then I don't think there is anywhere in all of Japan where he would be.

If it comes down to it, I may have to piggyback the prince up here myself.'

Is the situation as bad as that?

Well, its not just the Americans we have to worry about – we have to watch out for what the Soviets are doing, too.

Ushiroguchi glanced again at the stoic expression on Watanabe's face and shook his head. Watanabe was from Hiroshima, and had lost his home and family to the atomic bomb. He had sold his small bit of remaining property and devoted the proceeds to the cause he now served. For him, there was no turning back; and nowhere to return to.

Meanwhile, the main elements of the group were still at Saganoseki, where they had failed in their attempts to buy fishing boats and were rapidly running out of funds. They now discussed the possibility of renting the small and bankrupt restaurant owned by one of Honda's relatives, and eking out a meagre living by hauling loads of yellowtail from the fishing villages at the shore into the city of Oita.

Rear Admiral Yokoi, who had started a company called Taiyo Industries in the nearby city of Saeki, invited the group to move there, but at the end of the year Genda appealed for aid to Kawanami Hosaku, who had re-established a shipping firm operating out of Kayaki Island in Nagasaki Prefecture. Kawanami immediately agreed, and in late January and early February, the main element of Genda's group left Saganoseki for Kayaki Island.

Kawanami had promised the group the use of one of his fleet of fishing boats as emergency transport when and if the need arose. The emergency for which they were preparing had seemed imminent in December, when Prince Nashimoto, Privy Seal Kido, and Prince Konoe were ordered to be arrested for investigation for possible indictment as war criminals³⁰ but since then the situation had gradually improved with the emperor's formal renunciation of his divinity on New Year's Day 1946 and the publication in March of a draft for a new constitution in which the emperor was to be retained as a symbol of the unity of the Japanese people.

Genda judged that the emperor system had weathered its first and most threatening post-war crisis. The emperor was not going to be tried as a War Criminal, and he was to continue on the throne. The base established at Sugiyasu was retained and a small group of men remained with Kawanami at Kayaki Island, but operations were pared down drastically and the bulk of the group members ordered to return to civilian life, making their way as best they could, and remain in readiness for further developments.

The Occupation purge directive of 4 January, coupled with the reevaluation of the yen and the attendant inflation, made it essential for the group members to look to their individual livelihoods. Some returned to their home towns and villages to take up their family businesses; others resumed the educations which the war had interrupted, and still others became involved in the trucking and lumber industries. Genda left the choice up to the individuals. The one thing he strictly forbade was involvement in the burgeoning black market, for he feared that this would attract the attention of the police and risk exposure of his secret organization.

At the end of March, Koga and Nakanishi, who had spent half a year in the Imperial Household Ministry twiddling their thumbs, took their designation in the Occupation purge as an opportunity to resign their posts. Koga found employment in an insurance company, while Nakanishi returned to his home town to become the young proprietor of a flour mill.

At about the same time, Watanabe came up to Tokyo from Sugiyasu. Vice Admiral Onishi had died childless, and thinking it a shame to see his line die out with him, Rear Admiral Tomioka had been searching for a young man to be adopted into the family. He persuaded Watanabe to assume this position, and Watanabe took Onishi's widow Yoshie with him back to Sugiyasu.

Fate thus had its little joke with Watanabe. Instead of playing host to an imperial prince, he now found himself bound by unexpected filial obligations to an adoptive mother who was the widow of one of the heroes of the now-vanished Imperial Navy. It would be two more years before he would finally abandon his lonely outpost at Sugiyasu.

The last reveille

On 7 January 1981, thirty-six years after the end of the war, seventeen aging comrades gathered from across Japan at the Tōgō Shrine in the Harajuku district of Tokyo and were finally issued formal orders by Genda Minoru, now a member of the House of Councillors, to disband their project to defend the imperial line.

Rear Admiral Tomioka Sadatoshi (now deceased) told the author

in 1968 that 'About two years after the war I decided things were safe, and dissolved that operation.' But according to Genda, though he relayed this message to several of his subordinates, the message never got through, and the pledge undertaken by the members of the group remained in force.

Three or four years later, when the comrades assembled at the Suginoi Hotel in Beppu hot springs, Genda and Watanabe Takashi had agreed that it was probably time to announce the end of this group, but somehow they hesitated to do it.

Quite often there are undertakings which, begun by planners and commanders, become all-consuming quests for those at lower levels. This was one such. But gradually, the majority of those involved in the plan had, one way or another, made their accommodations to the radically changed values and realities of the post-war era.

Tomioka spent the early post-war years as a spokesman and caretaker for the veterans of the old Imperial Navy, before creating a second career for himself late in life as a futurologist. Genda entered the Air Self-Defence forces and rose to the post of chief of staff, the service's highest ranking uniformed officer, before launching himself into a spectacular career as a politician.

Yamada Ryōichi also served a tour of duty as Air Defence Chief of Staff, and Matsumura Shōji advanced to the post of commanding general. Hori Mitsuo, his name changed by adoption to Mikami, became a flight captain for All Nippon Airways, ranking number two in Japan for the number of flight hours logged.

Yet there were also members of the group who never forgot their mission, and who spent the post-war years quietly biding their time in more humble positions in society, waiting patiently to render their services if needed. All of them adhered strictly to their orders not to tell another soul of their mission, and the secret activities of the Genda group were never revealed to the public while these orders remained in force. Such was their dedication that it may have taken the passage of more than thirty years before all of the members of the organization were finally persuaded of the wisdom of disbanding.

After he had read the order to disband, Genda brought the ceremony to a close by saying:

The fact that our plan never had to be implemented was its biggest success. We have accomplished our goal, and fulfilled our mission. Our activities were not in vain.

This disbanding of the Genda group thirty-six years after the war, like the return of Lt. Onoda from his solitary vigil in the Philippines, may strike some readers as bordering on the delusional. Yet would they deny that history, after all, is shaped by the accumulation of acts of such apparently meaningless human passion and sentiment?

Notes

¹ First passed in 1925, and revised in 1928 and 1941.

² Text of official English translation taken from Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 244.

³ Text from Butow, p. 245.

⁴ *Ida chūsa shuki*.

⁵ A phrase denoting 'decisive battle': Tennōzan is a mountain outside Kyoto that was the site of the battle against Akechi Mitsuhide in 1582 with which Hideyoshi launched his drive for national hegemony.

⁶ i.e. a suicidal last stand by the entire population of Japan.

⁷ *Hosokawa nikki* (Tokyo: Chū kōron, 1978) p. 341.

⁸ Now housed at Kyoto University.

⁹ A group several thousand strong, intended as the nucleus of resistance forces after the main Japanese army had been destroyed. See below for further details.

¹⁰ Former Prime Minister Admiral Okada Keisuke and former Navy Minister and Prime Minister Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa.

¹¹ An alternative reading for the two Chinese characters of Hirohito's name.

¹² The mirror, sword and jewel that served as the symbolic embodiments of imperial sovereignty.

¹³ *Kido nikki*, Vol. II, p. 1221.

¹⁴ *Senryōgun kanshi chikasoshiki keikakusbo*.

¹⁵ A wild idea today, but seriously suggested by Owen Lattimore in *Solution in Asia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co.), 1945, p. 189; '[the Emperor] ... and all males eligible for the throne by Japanese rules of succession and adoption should be interned, preferably in China but under the supervision of a United Nations commission ...'.

¹⁶ Which would not have made much difference, for the hotel was soon commandeered to become an officers' billet for Occupation forces.

¹⁷ Onoda emerged from the jungle in the 1970s after decades of solitary resistance. By that time he was more oddity than hero. His account has been translated as *No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1974). Reprinted in 1999 by US Naval Institute Press.

¹⁸ This was made available to the author by Inomata himself. At the time of writing he was alive and well in his home city of Aizu-Wakamatsu, where he was chairman of the city's Young People's Sports League.

¹⁹ Interview with Hirose.

²⁰ Interview with Abe.

²¹ Bose (1897–1945), an Indian nationalist who saw the Second World War as an opportunity to advance the cause of a free India, made his way through Afghanistan to Berlin, and thence to Tokyo, becoming head of the Indian Nationalist Army and an absentee government. Defeat at Imphal doomed the movement, see Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan and the Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (1982) and Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army* (1971).

²² Ba Maw prefers a different story, and writes that the 'emptiness and monotony of my existence in hiding was nearly driving me mad, and I finally made up my mind to put an end to it somehow. It was in the last week of December that Kai, from the Foreign Office, came to see me. After talking the matter over for a whole night we agreed that the best course in the circumstances was to surrender myself to the British section of the Occupation Authorities in Tokyo.' *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution 1939–1946* (Yale University Press, 1968), p. 413.

²³ *Breakthrough in Burma*, pp. 411–412. Ba Maw also notes of the young officers that 'Now that their lives had been emptied of almost everything, this small matter of protecting me seemed to fill that emptiness a good deal and give them something to work for; moreover, it was one way of beating the Americans.'

²⁴ Kodama illustrates the trajectory from political hoodlum to godfather possible in wartime Japan. Born in 1911, he was active from youth on in ultranationalist organizations and imprisoned three times for acts ranging from scattering pamphlets in the House of Representatives to threatening the lives and torching the residences of senior statesmen and bombing power stations. In the late 1930s he went to China at the request of the General Staff, forming a 'Kodama Agency' that acquired or seized materials critical to war needs, materials that also became the basis for a large personal fortune. He emerged as 'Adviser' to the Prince Higashikuni cabinet established after the surrender, was detained as a suspected War Criminal, and then returned to fund conservative organizations with lofty

names (e.g. 'Research Organization for Young Men's Thought'), operate as a deal-maker in politics, and helped mastermind the conservative union that became the Liberal Democratic Party. Implicated in the 1975 Lockheed scandal, he became a target for right-wing indignation and attack before his death in 1984. See *Kokusbi Jiten* (Yoshikawa, 1985), Vol. 5, 870–871.

²⁵ *Tomioka memo* in Shiryō hensankai hen, *Taipei-yō sensō to Tomioka Sadatoshi* (Gunji kenkyūsha, 1971).

²⁶ Hiraizumi. Higeiki jūshō. p. 631.

²⁷ Genda (1904-89) showed a remarkable resilience in a military and political career. As a young navy commander he was chosen by Admiral Onishi Takijirō to work out the tactical details of the strike on Pearl Harbor with which Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku opened the war with America. After the establishment of the Self Defence Forces in the 1950s he was commissioned an air force general. In 1962, he was elected to the House of Councillors; until his retirement in 1986 he served as chairman of the National Defence Committee of the Liberal Democratic Party. He was recipient of the highest United States honour given to foreigners, the Legion of Merit, for his role in rebuilding the Japanese air force and cooperating with the United States.

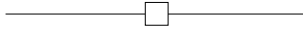
²⁸ A man-piloted bomb carried by a two-engine bomber.

²⁹ Author of several works, among them *Midway* (with Masatake Okumiya; English edition from US Naval Institute; New York: Ballantine Books, 1955)

³⁰ Prince Konoe committed suicide on the eve of his arrest.

CHAPTER 4

One Thousand Letters that Saved the Emperor



‘We implore you not to put the emperor on trial.’

The emperor endures in silence

At the annual New Year’s poetry reading held within the precincts of the Imperial Palace on 22 January 1946, the Emperor Hirohito composed and recited the following poem:

How brave the pine
Undaunted by the gathering snow
Take heed, my people

The poem was printed in a small box in the corner of the next day’s newspapers, but it is questionable how many of the emperor’s people did take heed of the depth of sentiment he had invested in these three simple lines.

The pines on the palace grounds may have been undaunted, but the emperor was a lonely man, cut off from the support and counsel of his chief advisers and the elder statesmen by the walls of Sugamo Prison, where most of them now awaited trial as war criminals. There were also loud voices at home and abroad calling for the arrest of the emperor himself and the abolition of the imperial system. Nevertheless the emperor did not shrink from his fate. To quietly endure – this was the stern task he had set for himself, and no doubt tried to convey to his people in his New Year’s poem.

The emperor was then forty-four years old. By the time of his death in 1989, more than forty years went by, and he had succeeded in outliving all the other leaders of the Second World War era. As even David Bergamini, one of Hirohito’s most passionate critics, admitted, in the end it was the emperor who emerged ‘victorious’.¹

The survival of Hirohito and of the imperial system was not simply fortuitous. A series of wars and revolutions had swept numerous monarchies from the face of the earth, and shortly after the Second World War it seemed as if the old joke that 'soon the only kings that will be left are the King of England and the King of Spades' would become a reality. Yet Japan's emperor system survived. What allowed it to weather the gravest crisis it had faced in its long and eventful history? Japanese popular opinion played a role. In this chapter I examine that role.

Vox populi

In the recently declassified papers of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in the National Archives in Washington, there is a file labelled 'Emperor Hirohito' (IPS, Box 679, Case 254).

The contents of the file are a thick bundle of letters and postcards sent during December 1945 and January 1946 to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur, from people in every part of Japan. The cheap stationery and 5-sen postcards have now badly yellowed with age, and a combination of poor handwriting and smudged and faded ink has left many of them almost indecipherable; but to each one of them a summary translation was attached, addressed to the Supreme Commander by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS).

Among them are mingled private communications between Japanese citizens which were opened and confiscated by SCAP censors, never reaching their intended destinations. There are no high officials or famous figures represented among the letters in this file. From their style and contents, it is reasonable to assume that nearly all of them were sent by ordinary middle-class and working-class Japanese of all ages and both sexes.

When the author visited the National Archives in the summer of 1978 and spent two full days ploughing through this mountain of correspondence, much of it still had a passionate appeal despite the passage of thirty years.

Though the authors of these letters were living through the period of confusion and want which immediately followed the war, a period in which even a day's food was by no means a certain thing, most of them signed their names and addresses clearly, and

addressed their new ruler, General MacArthur, straightforwardly and with simple grace.

The majority of the letters are appeals to the Supreme Commander not to put the emperor on trial as a war criminal. The following are a few representative examples:

‘You should not try the emperor.’ (Hasebe Haruko, Yamagata prefecture)

‘We implore you not to put the emperor on trial.’ (Fukada Sueko, Oita prefecture)

‘I humbly beg you to give special consideration to His Majesty the Emperor and pardon him of any war crimes.’ (Ono Tarō, Oita prefecture)

‘There is a lot of fuss about the emperor system, but it is a mistake to say that there can be no democracy if it is not abolished ... It is the privileged classes which stand between the people and the emperor who have kept the people down and lorded it over them.’ (Yamamoto Toshiaki, Hiroshima prefecture)

‘His Majesty the Emperor of Japan is absolutely not a war criminal. The real war criminals are: (A) the elder statesmen, (B) the cabinet ministers, (C) the militarists, (D) the big businessmen and financiers, and (E) the bureaucrats and others who hid behind the lovely word patriotism while reducing the people to the condition of slavery ...’ (Tsuchiya Hageshi, Nagano prefecture)

‘I have suffered a great deal since I was demobilized, but I intend to live on in order to defend the emperor from being labelled a war criminal.’ (A letter from Tsurumi Minoru, address unknown, to Amagasaki Taiichirō, a former Army comrade still in Shanghai)

‘If anything should happen to his Majesty the Emperor, I would not be able to go on living.’ (Matsunami Shizuka, Shibuya ward, Tokyo)

There are letters in the collection which suggest that they represent the collective opinion of a family, an extended family, or perhaps even a neighbourhood, but I have never heard of anything like an organized petition movement taking place at the time, so there is every reason to believe that the majority of this correspondence was spontaneous and unsolicited.

'... the greatest tragedy in human history.'

A small number of the letters actually demanded that the emperor *should* be regarded as a war criminal.

'The emperor is the worst of the war criminals.' (Anonymous)

'I write to you as an ordinary Japanese citizen, without education or social rank ... The Emperor of Japan is a war criminal who invited and then prosecuted the war between Japan and the United States. Arrest him quickly and put him on trial. If you leave him in place, the militarists will plot a war of revenge against you! (Amano Tadashi, Kawasaki city)

'We find it difficult to understand why you have not yet designated the emperor as a war criminal ... Please do us the favour of throwing him into Sugamo Prison as quickly as possible.' (Signed by 250 members of the Nagano City War Victims Fraternal Association)

This minority of letters stressing the emperor's war guilt should not come as a great surprise: public opinion polls conducted at the time indicate that while more than ninety per cent of the Japanese people supported the emperor system, slightly less than ten per cent recorded their opposition to it.

One unusual piece of correspondence in the file is a lengthy essay written in traditional style with brush and ink on scrolled paper, dated 16 December 1945. The author was an elementary school teacher in Shizuoka prefecture named Totsuka Shūji. After a review of the history of Japanese-American relations since the time of the Meiji Restoration, his text continues with a line of argument that at first glance seems to be an affirmation of the 'Greater East Asian War':

Before the war, as I am sure the Supreme Commander is aware, a pro-American sentiment prevailed in Japan. Even during the war, a fierce sense of hostility towards America did not well up within the Japanese people. Yet despite this fact, and though I was not called into military service, if I had been, I would have volunteered to serve in the front lines, and if permitted would have become one of the members of the Special Attack Forces. It would have been my honour and my duty as a citizen of Japan.

But after this passage, the tone of the letter changes to one of support for the Occupation reforms:

I believe that it is precisely because an army of occupation is presently stationed in Japan that makes the realization of such great reforms possible. This is a direct result of the power wielded by the Occupation forces.

Yet the author then warns MacArthur that 'This power also contains the danger of excesses or mistakes in its use', and asserts that the arrest of Prince Nashimoto on 2 December 1945 was a grave error. Addressing the issue of the emperor system, he defends it staunchly, writing:

The Imperial house is another matter entirely. To the Japanese, the Imperial house is above criticism. This is a sentiment naturally arising out of the three-thousand-year history of the Japanese people ...

Do you have any idea of what would happen if there were any harm done to the imperial system or to the emperor himself? It is obvious that this could only give rise to the greatest tragedy in human history. For such action could only succeed after the complete extermination of the eighty million members of the Yamato race.

Totsuka concludes by stating that such an outcome would be disastrous to the interests of the United States, and would merely play into the hands of the Soviet Union, ending with a heartfelt plea for 'eternal reconciliation between Japan and America'.

There is certainly room for disagreement with various points that Totsuka makes, but overall his essay is impressive: realistic, logical, and imbued with a power to seize the attention of the reader.

I will discuss the impact of these letters and other correspondence upon Occupation policy later in this chapter; for the time being I will simply say that I was moved by the frank and honest expression of feeling achieved by these ordinary Japanese, who neither toadied to the victorious Allies nor fell into the posture of self-pity or self-contempt that often comes to a defeated people. I emphasize this because it presents such a marked contrast to the disorientation, confusion and moral weakness which the shock of the defeat seems to have engendered in Japan's ruling class and among certain elements of the country's journalists and intellectuals.

These letters were written at the end of 1945, only four months after the surrender. Former Prime Minister Tōjō and the other

prominent members of Japan's wartime leadership had just been arrested, to be tried for 'crimes against peace'; the International Military Tribunal for the Far East was about to commence its proceedings.

The attention of the world was focused on the question of whether or not the last remaining major figure – the emperor himself – would be arrested and brought to trial. If the emperor were declared a war criminal, it was widely believed, both at home and abroad, that that would mean the collapse of Japan's imperial system.

Although the tribunal was international in character – eleven Allied nations were represented on its staff – the United States had the decisive voice, and in practice this meant that the man who would ultimately determine the fate of the emperor was General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

There is a Latin phrase which has become part of the Western political tradition: *Vox populi vox dei* 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.' How much of an impact did this 'voice of the people' have upon MacArthur as he faced this critically important decision? In order to pursue this question, we must first go back to the time of the imperial decision to end the war.

Division within the US government concerning the emperor

It will be recalled that the emperor's decision to bring an end to the Pacific War by accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration was made about midnight on 9 August 1945 during the Imperial Conference held in an air-raid bunker beneath the palace grounds. The Soviet Union had just entered the war against Japan, and the second atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki that morning.

The conference had dragged on for some ten hours, and in the end, with the conference deadlocked three to three over whether to surrender or fight to the finish, Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō avoided casting the deciding vote himself. Instead, he rose from his chair, bowed before the emperor, who had watched the proceedings in silence to this point, and requested that the emperor himself decide the issue. This was an unprecedented act: the first time such an Imperial Decision had been called for since the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889.

In the end, the emperor decided to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, with 'preservation of the national polity' as the sole condition, and this information was conveyed to the US government through the ambassador of neutral Switzerland.

President Truman immediately convened an emergency session of his cabinet, and heard the opinions of his advisers and staff as to whether or not the Japanese response, with its proviso, constituted an acceptance of the demand for unconditional surrender contained in the Potsdam Declaration. Secretary of War Stimson stated that he was impressed by the fact that 'even in such extreme circumstances [Japan] is still seeking a guarantee of the imperial system', but others felt there was no need to make concessions to the Japanese at this point.

The result of this debate was the Byrnes Note, which conveyed to the Japanese government the message that

The ultimate form of the government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people.

The subtle phrasing of the note was an attempt to resolve the dilemma presented by the desire not to sacrifice thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of American lives in an invasion of the Japanese home islands, while at the same time refusing to compromise the principles for which America had fought, as expressed in the Potsdam Declaration.

In reality, the note did represent a concession on the part of the United States. For one thing, it was unthinkable that the Japanese people would freely choose to abandon the emperor system. Stimson felt that the note had given tacit recognition to the imperial system, while Byrnes' reference to Prince Chichibu, noted above, showed that the discussion included at least some reference to retention of the emperor system without Hirohito. The system could, in other words, be retained for its utility in securing cooperation with United States policy objectives, while its incumbent – Hirohito – could be sacrificed to satisfy the Allied desire for revenge.

The hostility of American public opinion towards the emperor was reflected in a Gallup poll commissioned by the government

and conducted in June 1945, the results of which were not made public. In response to the question, 'What should be done with the emperor after the war,' the results were as follows:

- (1) Kill him. Torture him and let him starve. (36%)
- (2) Punish him or exile him. (24%)
- (3) Bring him to court, and if guilty, punish him. (10%)
- (4) Judge him as a war criminal. (7%)
- (5) Use him as a puppet. (3%)
- (6) Do nothing. (4%)
- (7) Other, don't know. (16%)

In other words, seventy-seven per cent of the American public wanted the emperor to be punished in some manner. This is a surprisingly large number, even if the overheated psychology of wartime is taken into consideration.

As one might expect, this extremity of opinion was not present among responsible government officials and specialists, but Owen Lattimore, one of President Roosevelt's advisers on Chinese affairs publicly called for the emperor's exile to China,² while Japan hands in the State Department drafted a position paper suggesting his retirement to the imperial villa at Hayama.

America is the homeland of public opinion. It makes some sense that Byrnes, out of consideration for the vehement hostility of the American people towards the emperor, should have thought in terms of treating the emperor system and Emperor Hirohito himself as separate issues. But this could also have paved the way for making the treatment of Emperor Hirohito as a war criminal part of official US policy.

Suicides by Japanese leaders: atonement or evasion

After receiving the the Byrnes Note Japan's civilian and military leaders had clashed, as has been shown, over the concept of 'the freely expressed will of the Japanese people'.

War Minister Anami, leader of the hardliners, argued that after the surrender popular opinion could easily be manipulated by the victors, and called for continued negotiation with the Allies. To this, Foreign Minister Tōgō responded, 'Asking a foreign power for

assurances as to the fate of the national polity reverses the logic of the situation', but the crucial problem seems to have been the lack of confidence Japan's leaders had in the will of their own people.

The issue was resolved at the second Imperial Conference of August 14, when the emperor made the final decision to approve the 'unconditional' surrender that maintained the national polity.

In doing so, he commented, 'I believe the enemy recognizes our national polity. I haven't the least bit of anxiety in this regard', and the final paragraph of the imperial broadcast that announced the surrender the following day began with gratification at 'Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the Imperial State (*kokutai*)'. The emperor's apparent confidence has led to speculation that he may have received some form of private assurances from the Allies through secret channels, but there is no evidence to support this notion. His statements seem to have been a simple expression of hope, designed in part to sooth the anxieties of the Japanese people. In fact, the emperor's true assessment of the situation appears to have been quite different.

On 12 August, he remarked to Privy Seal Kido:

If the sentiments of the people are alienated from the Imperial House, it scarcely matters what sort of assurances we have from the Americans, does it? I am satisfied with leaving things up to the free will of the people.

And at the Imperial Conference, he stated, 'No matter what becomes of me personally, I want to save the lives of my people.' In other words, the emperor was determined to end the war, even if that meant his own conviction as a war criminal or the demise of the imperial institution itself.

But there were of course Army staff officers who were vehemently critical of this position. We have noted that Lt. Colonel Takeshita charged that 'The present emperor has no right to determine whether or not the imperial system itself should continue to exist', and that Major Hatanaka argued that 'An emperor who does not act like an emperor has no right to the title of emperor.' Both men decided to rise in revolt in order to continue the prosecution of the war. Nor were these hot-blooded younger officers the only ones acting irresponsibly.

Before and immediately after the arrival of the Occupation forces, a series of suicides by Japan's wartime leaders took place: War Minister Anami, Generals Honjō and Tanaka and Field Marshal Sugiyama all took their own lives; former Prime Minister Tōjō tried and failed; and Prince Konoe poisoned himself on the eve of his arrest for suspicion of war crimes.

All of them left testaments speaking of the deep responsibility they felt for Japan's defeat, and of their determination not to bear the shame of living on as prisoners of the enemy. What they seem to have lost sight of, however, was the fact that their deaths, as the principal suspects of war crimes among the emperor's highest-ranking advisers, would only serve to make the position of the emperor himself more untenable. The leaders of militaristic Japan seem never have been able to see beyond their own vanity and personal interests.

Kido Kōichi counsels caution

On 13 August 1945, the Allied War Crimes Commission, meeting in London, called upon its member nations to submit lists of suspected Japanese war criminals. Submission was slowed by insufficient information, but it seemed clear that the emperor's name was destined to head the lists prepared in such nations as Australia, China and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, starting in mid-September, GHQ in Japan began the arrest of suspected Class A war criminals, beginning with former Prime Minister Tōjō.

The United States government had sternly cautioned General MacArthur against any independent action on his part with regard to the issue of the emperor or the imperial system, but it appears that MacArthur had never had much interest in the international tribunal to try Japan's wartime leadership for 'crimes against peace'. He preferred to handle things himself. On 7 November, he cabled Washington: 'I would like to place Tōjō and his staff before a military court as soon as possible as the persons responsible for the undeclared attack against Pearl Harbor.'³ Alarmed, Washington dispatched Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to Tokyo to reason with the General, telling him that the Pearl Harbor attack was not the only subject on the agenda, and moreover, the United

States had already committed itself to an *international* tribunal. In the end, McCloy was able to get assent from MacArthur, who was anxious to get on with trials of at least B-level criminals.⁴

Initially the Japanese, too, had planned to hold trials limited to perpetrators of atrocities and mistreatment of POWs,⁵ but when considerations began to extend to a major national tribunal that would keep punishment for violation of the laws of war under Japanese direction the idea was squashed by the strong opposition of the emperor himself. He explained his objections to the idea to Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi in the following terms:⁶

I cannot bear to see men who served me in the past with utmost loyalty punished in my name.

Kido viewed this resolute attitude on the part of the emperor with apprehension. When the emperor, in an audience for Kido on 29 August, had sought Kido's counsel on this issue, asking:⁷

It is unbearably painful to me to contemplate turning over those individuals responsible for the war to the Allied powers. I wonder if it would be possible to resolve the matter by taking sole responsibility myself and abdicating the throne?

Kido had responded:

I really don't believe that is likely to satisfy the Allies ... Moreover, something like an abdication on the part of Your Majesty runs the risk of calling forth sentiment in favour of a republic. I believe that you should exercise great caution in this matter, studying the Allied attitude very carefully.

Again, on 29 September, the emperor alluded to the denunciations directed at him in the foreign press, and asked Kido if it might not be a good idea to mount some form of defence, but Kido advised him 'I am fully aware of Your Majesty's displeasure, but I think in this case the best policy is to endure this in silence.' The clever Kido, most trusted of the emperor's advisers, realized that the almost naive purity of the emperor's sentiments might have the ironic effect of making his position more vulnerable. And in fact, schemes were afoot at this time in Washington to force Hirohito's abdication, try him as a war criminal and dismantle the emperor system.

The organization in Washington ultimately responsible for US

policy planning *vis-à-vis* Japan was the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), composed of the relevant officials from these three departments.⁸ With the resignations at the end of August of former ambassador to Japan Joseph C. Grew as Under Secretary of State and his special assistant Eugene Dooman, both relatively sympathetic to Japan, and their replacement by the team of Under Secretary Dean Acheson and his assistant, John Carter Vincent of the Far Eastern Affairs Bureau, the hardliners began to gain the upper hand, abetted by public opinion and the stance of the other Allies. From this point on the policy line on the emperor and the imperial institution began to stiffen.

Although it was not passed, a resolution was brought to Congress calling for the emperor's trial as a war criminal, and the American Bar Association widely distributed a petition of similar content. Opinion that the emperor system itself should be abolished was also running strong. When Secretary of State Byrnes spoke of America's 'pledged word' to control Japan through the emperor in a news conference on 10 October, the *New York Times* editorialized on 12 October that this seemed 'directly counter to the position defined in several of the President's own statements', and warned that:

If our 'pledged word' is involved in any way in upholding the authority of this emperor or of the institution of the emperorship as such, it is important to have the basis of this commitment clearly put on record. If our pledged word is not so involved, it is equally important to have all present doubts on that point removed at once, lest we be accused later of breaking our promises.⁹

In other words, the United States was faced with the dilemma that, once having promised that the ultimate form of the Japanese government would be left to the will of the Japanese people, it could hardly issue a public call for the abolition of the imperial system.

As a result, opponents of the emperor system tried to use the designation of the emperor himself as a war criminal as a roundabout way of achieving their ultimate objective.

From September into November, SWNCC wrangled incessantly over this issue. In the process a number of conflicting proposals and opinions were offered:¹⁰

The Occupation authorities should take no actions implying the overthrow of the imperial system. Yet neither should they take any actions which would inhibit spontaneous efforts on the part of the Japanese people aimed at the emperor's abdication or the overthrow of the system.

While he remains on the throne, the emperor should not be arrested as a war criminal.

Even if he does not pose an obstacle to the implementation of Occupation policy, if the emperor abdicates or is dethroned by the Japanese people, he should be arrested as a war criminal.

We should support those Japanese citizens aiming at the abolition of the emperor system.

We must not make a martyr out of the emperor.

However, the majority of opinion appeared to be firming up behind the idea of forcing the emperor's abdication and designating him a war criminal.

It was Secretary of War Stimson who intervened at this juncture. At his instigation, the SWNCC discussions were suspended, and a policy statement drafted which read:¹¹

Hirohito is subject to arrest, trial, and punishment as a war criminal ... Hirohito should be removed from office and tried as a war criminal when the US Government decides that he can be removed without substantial prejudice to the accomplishment of our general purposes in Japan.

On the basis of this document, General MacArthur was directed to assemble under strict security safeguards all available evidence concerning the emperor's guilt or innocence, and to transmit this evidence to the joint chiefs of staff together with his recommendation as to the initiation of proceedings against Hirohito. In other words, the final decision was being left up to Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur, the man on the scene who was to implement Occupation policy.

The thinking of Atcheson and MacArthur

MacArthur, ensconced in the Daiichi Seimei Building across the moat from the Imperial Palace, maintained a cryptic silence

concerning the emperor. But as the winter winds whipped Tokyo and the month of December rolled around, a new round of arrests of major figures began.

On 2 December, orders for the arrest of fifty-nine people were issued, with Prince Nashimoto Morimasa at the head of the list. Although the prince held the rank of Field Marshal, he had long ago withdrawn from an active role in military affairs, concentrating instead on serving as the chief priest of the Ise Shrine. He was an elderly man of seventy-one.

Then, on 6 December, former Privy Seal Kido Kōichi and Prince Konoe Fumimaro were both issued subpoenas.¹² On the same day, Joseph B. Keenan, Chief Prosecutor for the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) arrived at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. With the arrest of a member of the imperial family and the emperor's closest advisers, could the emperor himself be far behind?

For those concerned about the fate of the emperor, the sense of crisis quietly deepened. And, each in his own way and from his own particular point of view, these men began a variety of activities intended to protect their sovereign.

In public opinion polls taken in late 1945 and early 1946, supporters of the emperor system held an overwhelming majority of ninety-one to ninety-five per cent. This despite the fact that the members of the Japanese Communist Party, recently liberated from prison, were clamouring for the overthrow of the emperor system and declaring the emperor to be 'the biggest war criminal of them all'; despite the fact that exaggerated exposés of scandalous behaviour by previous occupants of the throne were selling like hot cakes in the popular press; and despite the fact that a group of progressive Japanese scholars had just published a new draft constitution calling for the implementation of a republican system of government in Japan.

Public Opinion Surveys on the Emperor System

<i>Conducted by:</i>	<i>Date/Affirmative Responses/Negative</i>
Tokyo University Faculty of Social Research ¹³	1945.12/1,131/75%/6%
Yomiuri-Hōchi Shimbun (3 survey teams)	1945.12.9/3,348/95%/5%

Hirohito: The Shōwa Emperor in War and Peace

Asahi Shimbun (Public Opinion Survey Centre)	1946.1.23/2,224/92%/18%
Mainichi Shimbun (Public Opinion Survey Centre)	1946.2.3/2,400/91% ¹⁴
Mainichi Shimbun	1946.5.27/NA/85%/13%

This high level of support was probably a surprise even to Japan's leaders, for they had feared that the popular resentment and discontent accompanying Japan's defeat would find its focus in the imperial house. What is scarcely surprising at all is that these leaders, long the parasitic beneficiaries of the emperor system as it stood, were so clearly out of touch with and unable to understand the sentiments of the people. Basically, the common people of Japan were unused to distinguishing between systems and individuals. They had a certain naiveté about them which led them to support a system headed by a ruler they were convinced was enlightened, but they would turn their backs on a system represented by a tyrant. Their mood was changeable, but their sense of practical matters was keen.

In this sense, the author would like to think that the ninety per cent rate of support for the imperial system seen in the polls was not so much a belief in the system itself, as an expression of trust and confidence in the Emperor Hirohito as an individual. Put in other terms, this was supported by the sense the Japanese masses had that the emperor had rescued them from the extinction that awaited them had the war been allowed to continue, with very little thought for his own personal welfare or position.¹⁵ It was this popular sentiment that led to a widespread feeling that the emperor's clear judgement and selfless leadership were indispensable to the reconstruction of Japan.

As might be expected, General MacArthur and his political adviser George Atcheson,¹⁶ on the scene in Tokyo, were better able to grasp the nuances of this popular sentiment than the theoreticians in Washington.

On 4 January 1946, Atcheson prefaced a cable to President Truman by stating 'my opinion that the emperor system must be abolished in order to truly democratize Japan remains unchanged,' but he went on to offer the following remarks and analysis.

Atcheson interpreted the overwhelming level of popular support for the emperor as stemming from 'their sense of gratitude to him as the man who brought them peace', and went on to remark that if this emperor were brought before a tribunal 'probably no type of government would be capable of surviving'. In order to 'implement the Occupation and achieve its reforms' Atcheson advised that 'the next best policy' would be to retain the present emperor, at least until the constitution had been rewritten.

On 25 January 1946, General MacArthur sent a much more vehemently worded cable to Washington expressing essentially the same conclusion.¹⁷ In it, he reported that he had not found sufficient evidence to warrant designating the emperor as a war criminal, and went on to describe his vision of the reaction that could be expected if such a designation were made:¹⁸

If he is to be tried great changes must be made in occupational plans and due preparation thereof should be accomplished in preparedness before actual action is initiated. His indictment will unquestionably cause a great convulsion among the Japanese people, the repercussions of which cannot be overestimated

The whole of Japan can be expected, in my opinion, to resist the action either by passive or semi-active means. They are disarmed and therefore will represent no special menace to trained and equipped troops; but it is not inconceivable that all government agencies will break down, that civilized practices will largely cease, and a condition of underground chaos and disorder amounting to guerilla warfare in the mountainous and outlying regions result. I believe all hope of introducing modern democratic methods would disappear and that when military control finally ceased some form of intense regimentation probably along communistic lines would arise from the mutilated masses. This would present an entirely different problem of occupation from the one now prevalent. It is quite possible that a minimum of a million troops would be required which would have to be maintained for an indefinite number of years ...

Saved by a miracle

When MacArthur's cable arrived in Washington, the Australian government was in the process of formally appealing to the War

Crimes Commission in London for the indictment of the emperor. Washington immediately cabled the British government requesting that Australia be persuaded to withdraw the request for indictment, and the Australians reluctantly backed down. A series of rapid developments followed.

On 1 January 1946, the emperor renounced claims of divinity in a New Year's Rescript which asserted that:

The ties between us and our people ... do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.

On 6 March 1946, a new draft constitution limiting the emperor to a purely symbolic role in the affairs of state was made public; it differed only slightly from the draft proposed by GHQ and naturally had its approval. And on 19 March, the US joint chiefs of staff issued a directive to MacArthur that certified that the maintenance of a constitutional monarchy was indeed in accordance with the 'objectives of the Occupation'. Now that the emperor had renounced his divinity, it went on, the Supreme Commander should promote a system through which the emperor would be placed in 'intimate contact with both foreigners and the Japanese people'.¹⁹ MacArthur responded with a terse 'Your cable acknowledged.'

The Far Eastern Commission, composed of representatives of the eleven Allied nations, made a secret decision not to prosecute the emperor on 3 April 1946. At about the same time, the emperor began a series of goodwill tours of the Japanese countryside, with security provided by American MPs. In retrospect, it remains little short of miraculous that both the imperial system and Hirohito survived intact, even with the shift in status from sovereign ruler to symbolic monarch.

This acceptance of a purely formal retention of the imperial system instead of forcing Hirohito's abdication and trying him as a war criminal represented the absolute limit of the concessions the United States was willing to make. Even within Japan's ruling class many felt that a change in the occupant of the throne might still be unavoidable. In short, the position held by Secretary of State Byrnes

and the position of the Japanese power-holders were tacitly coming into alignment with one another.

The Japanese people altered the course of events

It was MacArthur and the influence exerted upon him by the anonymous masses of the Japanese people that reversed this trend in the direction of an abdication. To the general, Emperor Hirohito represented his most powerful potential ally in achieving the democratization that was one of the principal objectives of the Occupation; to the Japanese people, he was the preeminent leader in promoting the reconstruction of their country and handling the delicate balance of relations with the Occupation forces: both sides saw him as indispensable.

It was the charismatic power that the emperor had demonstrated in his decision to end the war that served as the point of departure for this common assessment of his value. In this, the aims and perceptions of the real ruler of Japan – MacArthur – and those of the ruled were unusually unanimous. Yet at the same time, after reading MacArthur's emotionally charged cable of 25 January it is difficult to believe that MacArthur's decision to retain the imperial system arose out of simple expediency. Was not the deciding factor a fear that the Japanese masses would rise up to defend the emperor if he were threatened? Or, in typical MacArthurian prose, fear of 'a great convulsion among the Japanese people, the repercussions of which cannot be overestimated'?

Through its excellent intelligence network, GHQ was aware of the activities of anti-Occupation organizations lurking in various places throughout Japan. The machinations of the Nakano network, the restless activity of civilian right-wing elements, and even the efforts of the Daian group, headed by mob boss Andō Akira, to subvert high-ranking GHQ staffers with the lure of wine, women and song had all been leaked to Occupation intelligence. The preponderance of force in the hands of the Occupation could easily contain the activities of these organizations. But what concerned MacArthur most deeply was the hearts and minds of the unorganized masses of the Japanese people, and that was where the greatest potential danger lay. MacArthur realized that the best

source for insight into the movements of this popular psychology was to be found in the bales of correspondence he had received from Japanese citizens, and in December 1945, he ordered the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) to report to him directly on the content of all such correspondence which addressed the issue of the emperor.

It is not difficult to imagine that the experience of reviewing more than a thousand of such manifestations of the *vox populi* over the course of two months had a marked impact on MacArthur. And it is the author's hypothesis that the main argument of the essay addressed to MacArthur by Totsuka Shūji is possibly reflected in the General's 25 January cable to Washington.

Totsuka Shūji was still alive and well in 1980²⁰ at the age of sixty-six, still a resident of the city of Kakegawa in Shizuoka prefecture. A graduate of Shizuoka Normal School, Totsuka had retired eight years earlier from his career as an elementary and middle school teacher in the prefectural public school system, and since that time had devoted himself to researching the Hōtoku Movement created by the Tokugawa period philosopher and moralist Ninomiya Sontoku.²¹ In his younger days Totsuka was greatly influenced by the thought and activities of figures such as Nishida Tenkō, Kagawa Toyohiko and Deguchi Wanisaburō,²² though there was little in his gentle and scholarly demeanour to suggest a passionate activist modelled on those examples:

It must have taken some courage to write a letter to MacArthur in those days.

Yes, I figured it was likely that at the least I would be picked up by the MPs. But there was no response at all. I was disappointed, and went ahead and sent several more letters.

Mr Totsuka responded readily to the author's questions in 1980, and was kind enough to bring out a pamphlet he had privately printed more than a decade earlier. It contained more than ten letters he had sent to the Supreme Commander, unbeknownst even to his wife and colleagues, and the title page was inscribed 'Respectfully dedicated to the memory of General Douglas MacArthur'. The latter half of this little volume was made up of a number of letters addressed to Ho Chi Minh – a practice Totsuka

had given up with the advent of peace in Vietnam, and the feeling that 'the task I had set for myself was now accomplished'.

Mr Totsuka, I think your opinions may have had a rather considerable impact on MacArthur.

At this he paused for a moment, as if recalling times past, and said:

At the time, all I thought of was preserving the emperor as a sovereign ruler, just as he had been before the war, but I have gradually come to believe that things are better as they are now, with the emperor purely a symbol.

This seems a clear reaffirmation of the idea that in the four decades which have passed since the end of the war the idea of a purely symbolic emperor system has become firmly rooted in the consciousness of Japanese.

Notes

¹ David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York: 1972), charged Hirohito with personal responsibility for Japan's policies in pre-war and war years.

² Lattimore. *Solution in Asia*. Boston: 1945, p. 189.

³ Dean Rusk memorandum, dated 11 November, State Department Papers [National Archives] OPD/2971.

⁴ Class A criminals were leaders in crimes against peace; Class B criminals ordered massacres or, in other ways, broke International Law; Class C criminals carried out the orders of those Class B criminals. The Tokyo Tribunal dealt with Class A suspects.

⁵ Article 10 of the Potsdam Declaration specified that 'stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners'.

⁶ *Kido nikki* 12 September 1945.

⁷ *loc. cit.*

⁸ See Robert Ward, 'Presurrender Planning: Treatment of the Emperor and Constitutional Changes', in Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu, eds. *Democratizing Japan The Allied Occupation* (University of Hawaii: 1987) for a detailed account of the evolution of Washington's position on the fate of the emperor and the imperial institution.

⁹ The Byrnes Note, the *Times* editorial continued, constituted no promise

to keep the emperor on the throne, or to do anything but use him effectively to accomplish the surrender.

¹⁰ SWNCC 55 Series, collectively entitled 'Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: Treatment of the Emperor of Japan,' and initiated in March 1945, see Ward, p. 9ff.

¹¹ SWNCC-55/3 of 6 October 1945: 'Treatment of the Person of Hirohito, Emperor of Japan', as quoted in Ward, p. 11.

¹² The office of Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal had been abolished on 24 November 1945. Konoe had served as Minister of State in the Higashikuni cabinet (17 August– 5 October). He had maintained a rather high profile that attracted press criticism. See Dale N. Hellegers, 'The Konoe Affair', pp. 164–175, in L. H. Redford, ed., *The Occupation of Japan Impact of Legal Reform* (Norfolk VA., MacArthur Memorial, 1977.)

¹³ Subjects were students at University of Tokyo.

¹⁴ 'As it presently exists' 16%; 'Depoliticized' 45%, 'As a constitutional monarchy' 28%.

¹⁵ To which must be added, of course, the impact of indoctrination during the years of ultranationalist direction and its continuation in the immediate post-surrender period, when government directed the Japanese media to join in contrition to the emperor for having failed to win the war. -Ed.

¹⁶ George Atcheson, Jr., a China specialist, had been selected by Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who did not want a 'Japan hand' to head the Tokyo office as political adviser to General MacArthur. Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur Yoshida and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 38.

¹⁷ Douglas MacArthur to General Eisenhower, 25 January 1946 in *FRUS* 1946, v. IV, pp. 395–397. Lengthy portions of this cable are quoted in Ward, 'Treatment of the Emperor', p. 16.

¹⁸ Text here is taken from Ward and Sakamoto, *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation* p. 16, rather than from the author's paraphrase.

¹⁹ JCS 1544/4. 17 March 1946.

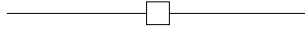
²⁰ When this chapter was first published as a magazine essay.

²¹ Japan's pre-surrender government praised Ninomiya (1787–1856) as an ideal example because of his stress on frugality, diligence and community and placed statues of him in front of many public schools. His Hōtoku ('return of virtue') associations were forerunners of rural cooperatives.

²² Respectively, a Utopian community founder, Christian social worker, and leader of the Omoto religious community.

CHAPTER 5

Emperor Hirohito is Not to Abdicate



‘... no one can predict what the consequences would be’

Confrontation with MacArthur

The City of Norfolk, Virginia, is four hours south of Washington DC by car, just beyond the colonial town of Williamsburg. In downtown Norfolk there is a Memorial Library dedicated to General Douglas MacArthur, former Supreme Commander for the Allied Occupation of Japan.

After you pass the weathered bronze statue of the General standing in the courtyard and enter the white-domed memorial itself, rows of glass cases meet the eye. There, amid the medals, uniforms and photographs, are an elegant lacquer table and writing set given to MacArthur by the emperor and empress, a set of finely crafted dolls and other memorabilia of his sojourn in Japan. At the gift shop in the back you can purchase a replica of one of MacArthur's trademark corncob pipes for \$2.50.

The author was visting the MacArthur Memorial one day late in the spring of 1978 and looking over some documents marked ‘Supreme Commander's File’ when the curator, Mr Boone, came up and said, ‘Mrs MacArthur has just arrived. Would you like me to introduce you?’

Mrs MacArthur was on the petite side for an American woman, and nearing eighty years of age, but her trim and erect carriage gave her a much more youthful appearance.

‘Mr Hata is a visitor from Japan who says he is writing a biography of the General.’ At this, Mrs MacArthur gave a sunny smile and held out her hand. ‘Is that so?’ she said, ‘If the General could hear that, he would be delighted, I'm sure.’

After speaking with Mrs MacArthur for a moment or two, and watching her receding figure as she departed, I thought of an episode that took place during Emperor Hirohito's visit to the United States three years earlier. The details remain unclear, but it seems that on hearing that the emperor was scheduled to spend a day relaxing at Williamsburg, the Board of Directors of the MacArthur Memorial made a formal request that the emperor come to nearby Norfolk and pay a personal visit to MacArthur's gravesite.

When the Japanese government displayed reluctance in responding to this request, several American newspapers ran rather emotional editorials suggesting that it was thanks to MacArthur that Japan still *had* an emperor. Discomfited by this, the Japanese Foreign Ministry dispatched a special emissary from the emperor's entourage to Norfolk to lay a wreath on the General's grave, and decided to insert a private meeting with Mrs MacArthur into the emperor's itinerary.

General MacArthur's loyal retainers from the old days were now mostly dead and gone, but it seems that the major initiator of this campaign was Colonel (retired) Laurence Bunker, a former aide to the General and a leader of the John Birch Society, who died later that same spring of 1978. It is unlikely that Mrs MacArthur herself was completely uninvolved in this episode. Still, seeing Mrs MacArthur in person and hearing her refer to her late husband as 'the General' in her elegant but steely manner, I could not help but think that the battle of wills between the emperor and MacArthur had still not really come to an end.

After Mrs MacArthur had left, I went back into the building and returned to my perusal of the documents contained in the bulky 'Supreme Commander's File'. As I turned the pages, a piece of correspondence typed on a single sheet of formal stationery caught my eye.

In the upper left-hand corner, in French, were the words 'Ministère de la Maison Impériale du Japon'. The sender was Tajima Michiji, Steward of the Imperial Household; the recipient, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers; the date, 12 November 1948.

When my eyes caught the first sentence of the letter, I almost trembled with excitement. It read: 'By Imperial command I have

the honour to transmit to Your Excellency a message from His Majesty as follows ...' It was signed by the Imperial Household Steward, but I was certain that what I had stumbled across was a personal message from the emperor to MacArthur expressing his decision not to abdicate the throne of Japan. In fact, since it is customary in post-war Japan, as it was before, that correspondence of the emperor related to matters of state be affixed with the imperial signature and seal, this was about the only form that such a private communication on the part of Hirohito could take.

This one-page letter sent me on a search operation that lasted several months for other documents and materials concerning the possibility of abdication by the emperor. In the National Archives in Washington and in the Federal Records Centre in Suitland, Maryland, I was able to find fragmentary documentation. Armed with this, I flew to Florida, where the sole surviving high-level source on the American side, former chief of GHQ's Diplomatic Section William Sebald,¹ was living quietly in retirement. As a result, previously unknown details of the emperor's reversal of an earlier decision to abdicate began to come to light.

Crossed swords in Washington

Right after the surrender, speculation about the possibility of an imperial decision began to enliven the press at home and abroad. None other than Prince Konoe told an audience of foreign correspondents, 'I think it would be good if the emperor abdicated and retired to Kyoto.'² All his life, Konoe had never quite shed the air of a child of privilege; he seemed in all simplicity to think that abdication would merely free the emperor to lead a more relaxed and comfortable life. He blithely failed to recognize the fact that abdication was inextricably linked to the issue of the emperor's possible indictment as a war criminal and to the issue of the continued existence of the imperial system itself. But at that time abdication was not a personal matter for the emperor as an individual. It was a public, indeed a global, affair that would deeply influence the fate of his defeated nation.

During that period of October and November 1945, the members of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee

(SWNCC) were meeting almost daily for heated debates over the question of whether to bring the emperor to trial as a war criminal or not. What prevented these from also becoming debates over the future of the imperial institution was the policy line distilled from the Byrnes Note of 12 August 1945, which specified, it will be recalled, that the retention of the imperial system was up to the Japanese themselves. Misgivings about the significance of this for the retention of the imperial institution and the *kokutai* had resulted in the tangled arguments in Tokyo that were finally resolved by the emperor's decision to risk the dangers of surrender. In Washington old Japan hands like Joseph Grew had interpreted this as favourable to retention of the imperial system. Secretary of War Henry Stimson had shared that view, but the Japanese elite were not nearly as certain of the prospects.

According to Fukai Eigo,³ not a few of the those present at the Privy Council meeting that was convened the afternoon of the day of the surrender announcement feared that if the matter was left to the free disposal of the Japanese their accumulated grievances against the hardships they had suffered would focus on the imperial house, and leave little room for optimism. The victorious allied powers, too, were fully aware of this possibility.

In SWNCC meetings that preceded its Resolution 55 the discussion swirled around statements that the occupying powers should not work towards the abdication of Hirohito or abandonment of the imperial system, but neither should they obstruct a clearly Japanese initiative to that effect if it should come; the emperor could be prosecuted as a war criminal if he abdicated, but that should not be permitted to harm the objectives of the Occupation, and the like. But what it came down to was that an Emperor Hirohito who had abdicated would have no further utility for Occupation policies, and that therefore it was best not to indict him as a war criminal.

One might say that the hard-liners within the American government, while hampered by the promise of the Byrnes Note that things would be left to the Japanese, drew support from arguments for abolishing the imperial institution and instituting a republican form of government in Japan that came from some members of Congress and journalists as well as from international

opinion, and that the Japan hands who wanted to preserve the imperial institution found themselves more and more hard pressed. At any rate, by late November 1945, SWNCC began to give way and ruled that the Supreme Commander should be asked to assemble evidence for possible prosecution on the premise that Hirohito should not be exempt from treatment as a war criminal suspect and investigation for possible prosecution. This became the burden of a top secret instruction sent to MacArthur.

Put simply, final determination was left to the man who carried the responsibility for Occupation policies on the ground in Japan.

'I do not intend to evade my responsibilities'

At his headquarters in the Dai Ichi Insurance Company Building General MacArthur preserved an uncharacteristic silence with regard to the issue of the emperor system. His headquarters (GHQ), respecting the principle of indirect administration which, unlike the direct administration utilized in Germany, was central to the Occupation in Japan, took a wait-and-see policy for the first month or so. But when it became apparent that the Japanese government was making no moves whatsoever to carry out the type of reforms desired by the Allies, GHQ took matters into its own hands. Beginning with the 4 October directive to the newly-formed Shidehara cabinet calling for the guarantee of fundamental civil liberties, GHQ issued a series of sweeping directives aimed at the implementation of major political, social and economic reform.

Almost all of the key Occupation reform directives were issued over the course of the next few months, but the direction of policy with regard to the emperor and the imperial system remained unclear. This was because the Supreme Commander had issued a strict gag order to all members of the Occupation forces with respect to this issue.

Naturally enough, this produced anxiety on the Japanese side. High Japanese officials with connections to important Occupation personnel paid courtesy calls, threw parties, and did whatever else they could in a vain attempt to gain some kind of information, but they secured little of real value.

A crucial development during this period was the first meeting

between the Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur, which took place on 27 September 1945. The content of their conversation was recorded in notes made by the interpreter, Okumura Katsuzō, and later discovered by the historian Kojima Noboru.⁴ But, as Kojima himself grants, there are unresolved questions concerning his source, for there are indications that Okumura may have intentionally omitted the most sensitive passages from his text of the meeting.

The principal question which concerns us here is whether or not the emperor expressed to MacArthur his resolution to accept responsibility for the war. A different document makes it clear that he did. In a top secret cable from George Atcheson to the State Department sent a month after the meeting, Atcheson reported that MacArthur said this to him on 27 October:

After we shook hands, the emperor told me that the attack on Pearl Harbor prior to a declaration of war had been entirely contrary to his wishes, and that he had been tricked by Tōjō. However, he said that he did not intend to use this to evade his responsibilities in the matter. The emperor stated that as the leader of the Japanese people he felt that he was responsible for all actions taken by his subjects.

This is consistent with the emperor's query to Privy Seal Kido on 29 August noted earlier; he thought it 'unbearably painful' to hand those responsible for the war over to the Allied Powers, and wondered whether he 'could resolve the situation by assuming personal responsibility and abdicating the throne'.⁵ It also tallies with his rejection of the plan brought before him by Prime Minister Prince Higashikuni on 12 September calling for Japan itself to undertake the punishment of its war criminals.

Actually, the emperor was mistaken in assuming that the attack on Pearl Harbor prior to a formal declaration of war was a trick of Tōjō's.⁶ What he did not realize was that *technical* requirements on the part of the Imperial Navy had led to the rescheduling of the declaration until half an hour before the attack, and that the inexperience of Okumura Katsuzō as a typist in the Washington Embassy used up that half hour and more, and thus delayed its delivery to the American government.⁷ Moreover, since the duty officer at the Army General Staff in Tokyo had succeeded in holding up President Roosevelt's personal telegram to the emperor on the

eve of the outbreak of hostilities, it is hardly surprising that the emperor believed he had been duped by the Imperial Army.

The 'symbolic emperor' and the renunciation of war

It is clear from MacArthur's memoirs that his meeting with the emperor left a distinctly favourable impression, but this did not become public knowledge until much later. At the time, what the people of Japan saw was the famous photograph taken at the meeting, with a tieless, relaxed and casually uniformed MacArthur towering over a stiff, frail-looking, bespectacled emperor clad in starched shirt, black tie, cutaway and striped pants – an image which must have renewed their feelings of shame at the defeat and their pessimism with regard to the future.⁸ The fact that the Japanese government attempted to ban newspaper publication of this photograph, only to have the ban reversed by GHQ, testifies to its symbolic power.

Nevertheless it is by no means certain that the sight of this photograph of the towering general with a slight and nervous Japanese, as some have written, served to down-grade the emperor among ordinary Japanese. That may have been SCAP's intention in releasing the photograph, but it may in fact have served the opposite function of stimulating more traditional sentiments of sympathy for the emperor.⁹

At any rate, the Japanese people, while mercurial, are also realistic. Equipped with a keen eye for penetrating sham and waffling, they are rarely so blinded by logical abstractions as to lose sight of their real interests. They were not likely to base their choice of 'the ultimate form of the Japanese government' alluded to in the Byrnes Note on vague feelings of sympathy and affection. People inevitably had to give critical thought to the role the emperor had played in the past. But just as Washington studied the utility of the emperor and the imperial system in thinking about the implementation of Occupation policy, the Japanese people can be said to have groped towards their own assessment of how the emperor and the institution he represented might help them emerge from their shameful status as an occupied country. Thus even after MacArthur and his staff received the directive from

Washington telling them to investigate the role and make a recommendation as to the possible indictment of Hirohito, they were paying close attention to this climate of popular opinion, and moved slowly.

It was in this context that the recommendations of George Atcheson, referred to in Chapter 4, were soon followed by the much longer and strongly worded cable of General MacArthur which argued that, not only had he found no evidence supporting indictment of the emperor, but doing so would invite prolonged disorder that would threaten the goals and raise the cost and lengthen the period of Occupation. On receipt of this Washington authorities prevailed upon Prime Minister Attlee of England to restrain the hard-line advocacy of the Australian government, and on 3 April 1946 the Far Eastern Commission concluded that the emperor's name should be removed from the list of suspected war criminals.

MacArthur, who had been biding his time until about the end of January, then swung into action. Even before he sent his long cable of 25 January he had met with Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō to indicate his desire for the insertion of a renunciation of war clause in the new Japanese constitution. Then, on 3 February, he summoned his trusted adviser and chief of SCAP's Government Section, Brigadier General Courtney Whitney, and ordered him and his staff to prepare a draft for the new constitution.

The Government Section draft, produced in a week of round-the-clock labour, had two outstanding features: the restriction of the imperial system to a purely symbolic role, and the renunciation of war clause. It is the author's hypothesis, based on a variety of circumstantial evidence, that Article 9 (the renunciation of war) was a *quid pro quo* for the retention of the imperial institution, but I will not go into the details of that argument here.¹⁰

'An almost godlike discernment'

With the retention of the imperial system assured, the virtual omnipotence possessed by the Supreme Commander began to show signs of weakness, for the emperor had now become an indispensable element in ensuring the success of the Occupation.

As will be discussed below, the Americans had already begun to study the problem of who might be selected to serve as regent in the event that Hirohito abdicated in favour of young Crown Prince Akihito while the war was still going on. Ironically, the advent of the purely symbolic emperor system made the selection of an appropriate regent in the event of abdication more difficult in certain respects. With the imperial system stripped of its political and legal authority, a regent had to be more than a simple administrator. He had to have the sort of personality that could successfully shoulder the burden of symbolically uniting the Japanese people. Faced with this problem and the shortage of candidates of charismatic calibre, the Occupation found itself forced into the position of having to stand behind the current emperor, Hirohito.

Particularly as the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union began to deepen in 1947, SCAP began to find it necessary to support the emperor as an individual as a hedge against the revolutionary forces in Japan, especially against the Communist Party, which was using the overthrow of the imperial system as a primary slogan. Emperor Hirohito was a seasoned statesman, having survived nearly thirty tumultuous years, first as regent for his ailing father, the Taishō Emperor, and then as emperor in his own right, and it must have been easy for him to sense this change in the political climate.

One thing that strikes any student of the Shōwa era is the fact that the emperor stood out among the members of Japan's ruling stratum for his depth of information and powers of judgement. This is only natural, for under the Meiji Constitution, in which politics and the military (civil affairs of state and the right of supreme command) were parallel and independent lines, the emperor was the only one in the position to have access to all intelligence from both sides of the fence. Moreover, in a system in which the average tenure in office was five years at the most for both civilian and military leaders, he was the sole figure with tenure for life and no real freedom to resign.

The emperor's extraordinarily accurate appraisal of the information presented to him, something that led one of his close advisers to praise him for 'an almost godlike discernment', was not simply a product of his mature intelligence. It also stemmed from

his ability to see through the prejudices of his aides and ministers, whose judgement was apt to be clouded by personal considerations. Yet he had now lost most of his oldest and most trusted advisers to the vast changes attendant upon Japan's surrender, and he must have been deeply confused as to what role he should play in the context of the complex strictures imposed by the Occupation and the new constitution.

The course, he finally chose – in full knowledge of his importance to the Occupation – was to restrict himself to top-level negotiation with MacArthur himself, employing to the full all political skills he had accumulated in the course of nearly thirty years of experience as the ruler of Japan. And the arena for this confrontation was the series of eleven private meetings between the emperor and the Supreme Commander which took place at almost six-month intervals throughout the course of the Occupation.

For his meetings with MacArthur the emperor was accompanied by a Foreign Ministry interpreter selected by the Imperial Household Ministry,¹¹ a position held in turn by three men: Okumura Katsuzō, Terasaki Hidenari and Matsui Akira. MacArthur was unaccompanied, and the Americans apparently kept no record of these conversations. On the Japanese side, a summary of their contents was compiled by the interpreters and preserved at the Imperial Household Agency and the Foreign Ministry. These summaries have never been made public because of the refusal of the Imperial Household Agency, however, no doubt because they contain what could still be considered highly sensitive political discussion.

For example, in the fourth meeting, which took place on 6 May 1947, the emperor touched on the subject of an early conclusion of the peace treaty and an end to the Occupation, things that then seemed close at hand. 'But', he supposedly asked MacArthur, 'If the American forces leave, who will protect Japan?' MacArthur responded, 'We will defend Japan just as we would defend California.'¹² When Okumura, the interpreter, leaked this exchange to the press, he was dismissed from his job immediately.

One might protest that this kind of political intervention by the emperor was in violation of his status under the new constitution, but since MacArthur by his very presence was in a sense above the

constitution, it is hard to judge; in a sense the constitution itself was in a state of suspension until the Occupation came to an end, and the Americans themselves placed a premium on mutual understanding with the emperor.

A look at the Supreme Commander's appointment book, preserved at the MacArthur Memorial, shows that the only Japanese politician who was freely allowed to break MacArthur's splendid isolation and schedule meetings with the General was Yoshida Shigeru.¹³ Katayama Tetsu and Ashida Hiroshi, prime ministers during the brief period of Socialist/Democratic coalition government from May 1946 to October 1948, were almost never granted access, and had to make do with meetings with Chief of Government Section General Courtney Whitney or 8th Army Commander General Robert Eichelberger. It is not clear whether this was out of distaste on MacArthur's part or reserve on the part of Katayama and Ashida, but whatever the case the paucity of top-level contacts needed to be filled out by the emperor. The fact that initiatives taken by the emperor seem to have been most marked during the early period of the Occupation seems logical and not accidental.

Meetings with MacArthur came on the following dates:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Interpreter</i>	<i>Subject</i>
1	27 Sept. 1945	Okumura Katsuzō	War responsibility
2	31 May 1946	Terasaki Hidenari	Food
3	16 Oct. 1946	Terasaki	Food, Article 9, Tours
4	6 May 1947	Okumura	Defense of Japan
5	14 Nov. 1947	Terasaki	Lease of Okinawa
6	6 May 1948	GHQ	
7	10 Jan. 1949	GHQ	
8	8 July 1949	Matsui Akira	Domestic Security
9	26 Nov. 1949	Matsui	Peace Treaty
10	18 Apr. 1950	Matsui	Threat of USSR
11	15 Apr. 1951	Matsui	Farewell

(In addition there were six meetings with General Matthew Ridgway on 2 May and 27 August 1951, 18 September 1951 and 27 March, 26 April and 10 May 1952.)

Official talks convey the emperor's discontent

Besides his personal meetings with McArthur, the emperor used several other routes to convey his ideas and feelings to the General. In addition to official channels like the prime minister and other cabinet members, there were indirect channels as well: contact between high officials of the Imperial Household Agency and high-ranking SCAP officers, intelligence officers, and members of the press; even foreign missionaries could serve this purpose at one time or another. After Okumura's dismissal as the emperor's interpreter his successor, Terasaki Hidenari, met frequently with Colonel Bonner Fellers, MacArthur's military secretary, and with Political Adviser William Sebald, head of SCAP's Diplomatic Section.

Terasaki was the Foreign Ministry's leading specialist on the United States and a subtle, skilled and highly-motivated career diplomat who had been serving as secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Washington when the war broke out.¹⁴ His wife Gwen, a native of Tennessee who became famous for her book *Bridge to the Sun*, was a cousin of Bonner Fellers, and was regarded with high favour in GHQ circles. The content of MacArthur's crucial 25 January cable to Washington, for instance, was conveyed by Fellers to the Terasakis soon after it was sent.¹⁵

The 'Supreme Commander's File' at the MacArthur Memorial contains a document that allows us a glimpse of some of the emperor's concerns at a relatively early period of the Occupation. It is a four-page text of which, unfortunately, the first page is missing, making it impossible to identify the date or author. But from internal evidence it seems to date from late 1946, and informed sources judge it to be the record of a conversation between a Japanese official close to the emperor and a high-ranking SCAP official, possible Whitney or Atcheson.

In it the Japanese official speaks of the emperor's admiration for General MacArthur's character and work. He speaks of the danger of a revival among Shintoists and the extreme right wing, and fears that the directive concerning freedom of religion may have made it more difficult to carry out surveillance. He gives as the emperor's opinion that the character of the Japanese people, although it has many fine aspects, also has its flaws, and expresses his hope that the Occupation will continue for some time.

The American official responds with full agreement that the General is one of the finest of Americans, and expresses American hopes for the growth of democratic institutions and economic development in Japan so that it may once again be welcomed into international society.

These bases having been touched, the Japanese official asks about the outlook on the issue of reparations. He is assured that General MacArthur is extremely concerned about this, and anxious for a speedy resolution so that Japanese industrialists can feel secure in their operations and produce the goods necessary for the import of food and other requirements.

The Japanese official then goes on to discuss the coal strike in the United States and reports the emperor's hope that this will be settled soon, as Japanese workers may otherwise follow the example of their American counterparts in selfish pursuit of their rights to the neglect of their duties.

Finally, after some additional assurances that the emperor hopes to devote the rest of his reign to the advancement of peace, thus justifying the era name Shōwa ['Enlightened Peace', the official translation], he quickly goes on to lament that Admiral Suzuki, prime minister at the time of surrender, who fell victim to the blanket purge of former military officers, has lost his civilian pension (as Grand Chamberlain) as well, and expresses the fear that such unjust treatment, difficult for Japanese people to understand, may create anti-American sentiment.

The fact that this anonymous Japanese official spoke at such length in the emperor's name indicates that it is probably appropriate to see him as a messenger sent for that purpose.

If we are correct in assuming that this conversation dates from the end of 1946, then this was a period in which the labour offensive was heating up and building toward the anticipated general strike that had been called for 1 February, the period in which Prime Minister Yoshida caused a controversy by labelling the labour leaders 'a pack of scoundrels'. In these tense and unsettled times, the emperor was probably the only one who could have presented the Occupation forces with such bold and frank requests.

The Emperor's Message about Okinawa

A year and a half later, the domestic and international situations in which Japan found itself had altered considerably. Confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union had deepened, and there began to be talk of a Third World War.

On 11 March 1948, a cable from General Lucius Clay, Commander-in-Chief of the US Occupation forces in Germany, arrived in Washington and caused great consternation. It contained a warning that a Soviet invasion of Western Europe was imminent. The Air Force adopted a state of war alert, and fighter groups were scrambled from bases in Alaska to meet the possibility of a Soviet bomber attack on the American mainland. General Clay's warning was finally judged to be an overreaction, and within a few days American forces stood down from alert status, but with this incident American concentration on the defence of Europe received an ever higher priority, and Asia was placed on the strategic back burner.

In April the National Security Council adopted the (General Albert C.) Wedemeyer Report that had been submitted the previous year, and decided on a withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. The move was to be accomplished by June 1949. Developments in mainland China worked against American interests. Although two billion dollars of American military assistance had been poured into it since the end of the war in the Pacific, the Nationalist Army, low in morale, was being overwhelmed by the Communist forces, and the loss of Manchuria seemed certain. It was to survey those options that General Wedemeyer had been asked by President Truman to survey American options. After the Nationalist loss of Mukden the head of the US Army Advisory Group in China, General David Barr, wrote home that the only choice America had remaining to it was to extend unlimited assistance, up to and including the participation of American troops, but that he doubted that even that would succeed. Despite the bleakness of the outlook, however, elements of America's China Lobby continued to call for intervention.

In Japan, however, the majority of the people slumbered peacefully, though in poverty – under the protection of the US Army, and remained almost totally unconcerned with this rapid

shift in the situation in Asia. Not so the emperor and the Japanese government, however, who were growing increasingly alarmed at the prospect of an early peace treaty between Japan and the US that might leave a disarmed Japan undefended. The rosy expectations directed towards the United States when Article 9 of the new constitution had been debated in the Diet were losing their bloom as the Cold War grew frigid.

In September 1947, Foreign Minister Ashida Hitoshi of the Katayama cabinet produced a rough draft of a special agreement with the United States that was rather similar to the Mutual Security Treaty signed four years later. Japan would depend upon America for guarantee of its security, and in exchange it would furnish military bases for US forces stationed in Japan and increase the strength of its own domestic forces. Ashida realized that this idea was not likely to get very far with MacArthur, who considered himself the sponsor of Article 9, and so he entrusted his memorandum to 8th Army Commander Robert Eichelberger, who was on his way back to the United States for a brief visit. Eichelberger was staunchly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist, and he seemed an appropriate medium for relaying Ashida's message to Washington.¹⁶

About that same time, Imperial Household Agency interpreter Terasaki Hidenari visited the SCAP Diplomatic Section to 'convey the emperor's thoughts' with regard to the future of Okinawa to Section Chief William Sebald. As Sebald reported the conversation to Washington:

The emperor hopes that the United States will continue its military occupation of Okinawa and the other islands of the Ryukyus. In the emperor's opinion, this occupation will serve the interests of the United States, and will also serve to protect Japan.

Terasaki went on to outline the specific form the emperor thought this Occupation should take, by suggesting a legal fiction that would formally preserve Japan's sovereignty over Okinawa, in the shape of a long-term lease of twenty-five to fifty years. That, he explained, would absolve the United States of charges of territorial ambitions in the Ryukyu Archipelago. The agreement could be drawn up in the form of a bilateral agreement between Japan¹⁷ and

the United States. Sebald immediately reported this conversation to MacArthur and also informed Washington in a message to Secretary of State Marshall dated 22 September.

Were the Ashida and the Terasaki/court proposals related, and if so, how? Both dealt with the issue of making military bases available to American forces, but Ashida's encompassed all of Japan, while the emperor's limited things to Okinawa, though in the form of a long-term lease. The two proposals should probably be seen as fundamentally different. If one recalls that a Socialist coalition cabinet happened to be in power at the time, it is likely that the emperor was dissatisfied with the ideas contained in the Ashida memo and sought to communicate a proposal of his own through separate channels.

Which proposal appealed more to the Americans? At first glance it would seem that the Ashida memo provided the US with more advantageous conditions, but as Shindō Eiichi has pointed out, the emperor's message was 'much more on the wavelength of the Americans'.¹⁸ At this time, US diplomatic and military authorities were in the process of re-evaluating Japan from the viewpoint of strategy towards the Soviet Union, and they were leaning in the direction of establishing a strategic protectorate over Okinawa that would place administrative power over the islands in the hands of the Americans.

In comparison with the Ashida memorandum, which made no mention of Okinawa, the emperor's proposal met the requirements of American planners directly. Moreover, the concept of a long-term lease which would leave residual sovereignty with Japan was even more advantageous than the idea of an administrative protectorate.

In addition, the emperor's proposal was more likely to gain the support of MacArthur, precisely because it did not mention military bases on the main Japanese islands, for at this point MacArthur still embraced the concept of unarmed neutrality for Japan. In fact, when George F. Kennan, Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, visited Japan in March 1948, MacArthur spoke to him of developing bases in Okinawa, permanently stationing a powerful air force there, and using this umbrella to defend Japan – a concept the General would repeat on a number of occasions right down to the outbreak of the Korean War.

In October 1948, the National Security Council (NSC) adopted a document, NSC-13/2, which set out a wholesale reorientation of American policy towards Japan. This in turn was based on a Policy Planning Staff report that Kennan had written on his return from Japan, and it called for indefinite postponement of a peace treaty with Japan, with American forces to remain stationed in the country until such time as a treaty could be concluded.¹⁹ Section 5 of that document provided for the long-term retention of Okinawa and the development of military bases there. A small contingent of US Army troops had been stationed on Okinawa since the end of the war, apparently all but forgotten, but NSC-13/2 breathed new life into the American presence in Okinawa. The following year a programme of base expansion was begun, backed by a gargantuan construction budget, and before long Okinawa attained the status it continues to hold today as America's largest military base in Asia.

The emperor's proposal cannot escape criticism for being, in a sense, a sacrifice of Okinawa in the interests of the main islands of Japan.²⁰ A little over twenty years later Okinawa was completely restored to Japanese sovereignty, with bases there – although much larger – maintained under the same conditions that applied to US bases elsewhere in Japan.

Terasaki next visited Sebald on 27 February 1948, six months after his initial call. This time his subject was the recent developments in Asia, particularly China. 'I was once stationed in China myself', he explained.

Sebald's report to the Secretary of State indicates the nature and frankness of Terasaki's talk:²¹

... in his opinion it would be a mistake for the United States to attempt to rehabilitate China by pouring unlimited quantities of money and material into China... Japan had already made a colossal blunder by attempting to bring about a stabilized China, admittedly by military means, and such attempt had ruined both Japan and China. He felt that China may be likened to a swamp into which unlimited resources may be poured without any visible result, and that even the United States is not wealthy enough to bring about concrete improvement in China ... for political reasons it is obvious to him that the United States must continue to support the existing Chinese Government but that, if realistic, such support will be limited in amount and yet sufficient to demonstrate the desire of the United States to assist China ...

Sebald was an Annapolis graduate, a man who had risen from naval officer to lawyer to diplomat by dint of hard work and persistence. He was married to a Japanese, and he had the reputation of being a good listener. He was rewarded by Terasaki's explanation of what he meant by 'realistic' in the form of the recommendation he had come to give:

His idea of a realistic policy would be one which adopts, as an American perimeter, South Korea, Japan, Ryukyus, the Philippines, and if possible, Formosa. He felt that the American position in the Orient would be unassailable if a clear-cut line of demarcation of an American security zone were established with the areas mentioned as the outer perimeter.

Mr Terasaki visualizes a strong American effort to hold these areas against possible Soviet aggression or even infiltration, to the exclusion of China proper, which he felt should largely be left to its own devices to work out its own salvation.

Sebald realized that these suggestions came from higher up. 'I have reason', he wrote, 'to believe that the above views are representative not only of Mr Terasaki's personal opinions, but result from his discussions with various influential members of the Imperial Household, including the Emperor.'

History would show that the United States did not adopt all of this defence perimeter strategy. Nearly two years later, on 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson made the address in which he did touch on the subject of a defence perimeter, and publicly stated that South Korea and Taiwan lay outside it. It is now widely accepted among diplomatic historians that this was misinterpreted by the communist camp, encouraging the outbreak of the Korean War less than half a year later. The author has been told that this case is cited in State Department training programmes as a classic example of the kind of mistake foreign service officers should avoid repeating.

The emperor should probably be credited with displaying great perspicacity and a keen grasp of the situation in assessing the trend of US-Asian policy as early as 1948; in a sense this was based on the lessons Japan had paid for in blood during the course of the China and Pacific Wars. Before long, however, Hirohito would need all his

experience and judgement once more as he faced his last great crisis of the Occupation years.

The issue of abdication flares up once again

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, convened on 3 May 1946, spent two full years hearing the prodigious body of evidence brought before it, and then went into recess for six months to prepare its verdicts.

The defendants were twenty-five Class A war criminals, headed by former Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki. On the eve of the Tribunal's final session, scheduled for 12 November, the foreign and domestic press was full of articles speculating as to the outcome of the proceedings.

No one, of course, predicted a mistrial declaring all defendants innocent, but there was much debate over what the scope and severity of the sentences was likely to be. And it was inevitable that the issue of the emperor's responsibility for the war would resurface, along with renewed speculation regarding the possibility of his abdication.

The abdication issue began to flare up again as soon as the Tribunal entered its recess at the end of May. A wire service dispatch out of London on 29 May reported 'there are rumours that an abdication will take place as of 25 August', accompanying this with a presentation of Matsumoto Jiichirō's call for the abolition of the emperor system.²²

Then, on 9 June, Sung Te-ho, Tokyo bureau chief of China's Central News Agency, filed a similar report, which was picked up by a number of papers. The report quoted Tokyo University President Nambara Shigeru to the effect that he favoured abdication, but felt it was a moral issue that should take place voluntarily. Upon seeing the report, Nambara immediately contacted the *Asahi Shimbun* with a disclaimer, saying that this had been his opinion immediately after the surrender, but that he had since changed his mind.

Nambara's earlier statement may no longer have accurately reflected his thinking, but his characterization of abdication as a moral issue sent complex shock waves through the hearts of the

Japanese people as they awaited the outcome of the Tokyo war crimes trials. Even those who thought that the emperor had no actual responsibility for the war were seized by conflicting impulses, for many of them felt that the emperor should assume moral responsibility in some manner.²³

Lt. General Robert Eichelberger, who resigned his post as commander of the 8th Army in Tokyo at the end of July and returned home to the United States, responded to questions from newspaper reporters by saying that since the emperor had been Japan's commander-in-chief, 'it would not be surprising if he did not wish to watch from the throne as his former ministers of state mounted the gallows'.²⁴ This was a perceptive reading of the subtle psychology surrounding the issue of abdication.

Still, as was pointed out earlier, for the emperor abdication could not be a purely personal matter; it was a public issue affecting the entire country, as well as an international issue poised at the delicate interface between an occupying army and the people of the nation under occupation.

Tōjō and his fellow Class A defendants had struggled throughout the two years of their trial to preserve a tacit agreement not to do or say anything which would drag the emperor into the proceedings. But more than anything else, the Occupation forces, and behind them, the government of the United States, had a clear set of intentions and interests impinging upon this issue.

On 10 September, United Press issued a wire written by its vice president, Miles Vaughn, which presented the following as the opinion of top Occupation staffers: (1) There was absolutely no consideration of an abdication by the emperor; (2) Rumours of an abdication were propaganda on the part of Communist Party members and ultranationalists, and (3) The emperor's continued presence on the throne was in the best interests of both the Allies and the Japanese people. In other words, SCAP had made it clear, though without great fanfare, that it would not brook the idea of an imperial abdication.

'Tommyrot!'

Despite this, in circles close to MacArthur the abdication issue was taking on a slightly more serious aspect. In the MacArthur

Memorial archives there is a memo to the Supreme Commander from his military adjutant, Colonel Bunker, dated 10 June 1948. Attached to it is a report from a Colonel Green, a duty officer with G-2, the intelligence division of GHQ. The report details the findings of a secret survey he had been ordered to undertake of sources close to the palace after the Sung Te-ho article came out.

Green's report begins straightforwardly with the observation that opinion among high Japanese government officials with regard to abdication seems to be split about 50-50:

(Former Prime Minister) Yoshida argues in favour of it. If a national referendum were held on the issue, about 50% would probably vote yes, but it is likely the level of support would be even higher if the emperor issued a statement that he was abdicating for personal reasons – in other words, to assume responsibility for the war. This is because the loyalty of the Japanese people is directed towards the imperial system, not the emperor as an individual.

After this fairly acute piece of analysis, the report went on to more strictly intelligence-related matters:

On 8 June, the emperor, speaking to a high-level official of the Imperial Household Department, made reference to a rumour he had heard that recent personnel changes within the Department²⁵ were related to the possibility of an abdication. The official took this opportunity to ask the emperor his personal feelings on the abdication issue. The emperor apparently said to him, 'If it were possible for me to abdicate, things would certainly be easier for me personally. Yet at the same time, I have a strong desire to see Japan through the process of achieving democracy.'

Green's report continued with a brief survey of the history of the abdication issue since the end of the war. It mentioned the fact that initially a number of members of the imperial family, including Prince Higashikuni, were in favour of abdication; that until recently opinion had become divided because the Crown Prince was thought to be too young, and the likely candidate for Regent, Prince Takamatsu, was not popular; and that at present opinion in palace circles had firmed up in opposition to the notion. After this discussion, the Green report advanced the following conclusions:

The emperor has expressed to one of the senior members of the imperial family and to others his desire to assume responsibility for

the war and to abdicate. If the war criminals are given harsh sentences, his own feelings of guilt are likely to increase. The verdict on former Privy Seal Kido, one of his closest advisers, will be particularly influential. It is believed that if the emperor should decide to abdicate, it will come at the time of the sentencing of the war criminals. However ...

And here the tone of the report is one of scarcely concealed dismay at the confusion an abdication would be likely to create,

... there is no provision for abdication contained within the present constitution, and any cabinet faced with this prospect would almost certainly resign in disarray.

The report ends by withholding any definitive judgement, concluding rather evasively that,

A variety of factors will probably influence the emperor's final decision, including domestic and foreign public opinion, the domestic political situation, communist propaganda, etc.

In other words, the gist of the report is that the emperor had not yet made up his mind. It is likely that the principal source consulted in preparation of the report was Central News Agency reporter Sung Te-ho, but SCAP staffers at the time felt it to be fairly accurate information. Except, apparently, General MacArthur himself. Pencilled into the margin of the report is a one-word comment in the General's handwriting: 'Tommyrot!' Colonel Green was a longtime associate of MacArthur's, one of the 'Bataan Boys'. What was there about his report that upset the General so greatly?

An anxious Ashida

The abdication question smouldered on for some time after this, and the Imperial Household Department was deluged with hundreds of thousands of messages from the Japanese people petitioning the emperor to remain on the throne. Then, at the end of October 1948, with the verdicts in the Tokyo war crimes trials just around the corner, the affair reached its climax.

On 18 October, Diplomatic Section Chief Sebald was invited to dinner by former prime minister Ashida Hitoshi, whose cabinet had just resigned in the wake of the Shōwa Denkō bribery scandal.²⁶

The two men enjoyed a multi-course French meal, and were relaxing over coffee and cigars, when Ashida, who looked as if he had something on his mind, suddenly turned to Sebald and spoke softly, choosing his words with care:

When I met with His Majesty to report the Cabinet's resignation, he told me that until he learned of the Tribunal's verdicts he intended to stay put in Tokyo. From His Majesty's tone and attitude, I sensed that His Majesty may have decided to abdicate.

The startled Sebald silently nodded, and waited for Ashida to continue.

I am relieved that I will not be sitting in the prime minister's chair when that decision is made public.

What will happen then?

That's hard to say. If His Majesty bows out, there will be the difficulty of selecting a suitable regent, and in my opinion, given their lack of popularity, neither Prince Chichibu nor Prince Takamatsu would be appropriate choices.

Sebald had long regarded Ashida, the model of a European gentleman and the most sophisticated English speaker among the Japanese elite at the time, as a very cool and logical customer, but perhaps because of the importance of the matter under discussion, Ashida was now stumbling over his words and practically swallowing his more crucial points. Still, as a trained diplomat, Sebald knew he should not interrupt Ashida for clarification. Better to replay the conversation in his own mind after he returned home, and extract the information from it at his leisure.

Sebald knew the emperor had recently suspended his goodwill tours of the country, but did his statement about not leaving Tokyo until after the verdicts were handed down in the trials really signify a decision of this magnitude? Did the fact that Ashida had discussed this privately with him mean that the former prime minister wanted SCAP to intervene and stop the emperor from abdicating? It was certainly a puzzle.

Sebald had already received a personal communication from his friend Emil Benninghoff, Under-Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, expressing the opinion that if the rumours concerning abdication were true, steps should be taken to prevent

it. Benninghoff, the son of a Protestant missionary, had been born and brought up in Japan, and he was equipped with a good understanding of delicacies of the Japanese scene. The two men communicated frequently in private concerning the various issues in US relations with Japan.

A few days later, Sebald wrote to Benninghoff, informing him of the conversation with Ashida, telling him of his intention to discuss the matter with MacArthur at the first opportunity, and promising to do what he could to carry out the State Department's policy in the matter.²⁷

'He might even be contemplating suicide ...'

With the exception of General Courtney Whitney, Chief of Government Section and MacArthur's right-hand man, even the highest-ranking SCAP officials had to apply in advance to the General's adjutant, Colonel Bunker, for an appointment to see MacArthur. Moreover, even this privilege was reserved for staffers of the rank of section chief or higher; the lower orders were almost never given the opportunity to lay eyes on the Supreme Commander. Even when they took up their posts or resigned from them, greetings and farewells were usually handled by an aide.

Because of this, Colonel Bunker was a very busy and a very powerful man. A look at his appointment book shows that in addition to handling some ten to twenty greetings and appointments a day, he also had to deal with the mountain of unsolicited gifts that piled up at GHQ: 'A present from M. Yamamoto of Yamanashi, grapes harvested from his own garden', 'A present from Ishikawa So-and-so', 'a rock in the shape of Mt Fuji', and so on. An entry in the book for 8 September records a telephone conversation with a certain Japanese sculptor who said he was working on a bust of General MacArthur, but felt he would not be visited with the inspiration to complete it unless he could actually meet the General, and could something possibly be done about this ...? The book also carefully records Bunker's decorous refusal of this request. Not even the newly appointed Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Department, Tajima Michiji, and the new Grand Chamberlain Mitani Takanobu, got past Bunker when they came to pay their respects at GHQ in June.

By the time Sebald was able to meet with MacArthur to discuss the abdication issue, it was already the end of October. As he recalled the conversation, MacArthur responded with alacrity when he brought the subject up. He, too, he said, had been wondering whether the emperor was contemplating abdication, and worried that with the immense strain he must be under with the trial verdicts coming up, he might even be contemplating suicide.²⁸ Sebald agreed, saying 'Yes, I feel the same way. After all, the emperor is not just an Oriental, he's a Japanese.'

MacArthur began pacing the floor, pointing out that the verdicts in the Tokyo trials could be like setting off a ton of dynamite. No one could predict what would follow. The shock might cause the emperor to lose his judgement. The political consequences could be disastrous, and steps had to be taken to counter this. He was planning to meet with the emperor immediately after the trials ended, and planned, he said, to persuade him that abdication would be an extremely foolish thing, and a distinct disservice to the Japanese people.

Sebald agreed, adding that he was certain that Washington would agree too. How could they not? MacArthur asked; if the emperor were to abdicate, Japan might fall into the hands of the communists and anarchy would result.

His meeting with MacArthur over, Sebald immediately informed Benninghoff of the results, and added a postscript saying he would get in touch again as soon as there were any further developments.²⁹ Yet for some reason, Sebald himself heard almost nothing further about the abdication issue from this point on.

Mr Sebald reminisces

Mr Sebald was seventy-seven and living in retirement in Florida in 1978. He was kind enough to provide the author with the following information, aided by reference to his diary from the period in question:

I'm probably the only one left on the American side who knows much of anything about all this. MacArthur was very sensitive with regard to the issue of the emperor, and he played things pretty close to the chest, not saying much to anyone else. He never let me know

anything about the contents of the meetings he had with the emperor. Once I started to ask him about them, but he just snapped at me, saying, 'That is none of your business!' and after that I decided never to bring it up again.³⁰

In addition, the relations between the State Department and SCAP were pretty bad ... I think I did better than most in this respect, but do you know, when I cabled the State Department I kept it a secret. I think State must have been vaguely aware of this.

As far as the abdication issue went, I brought it up, so I had to express an opinion about it, but I have no idea what MacArthur did about it after that. On 19 November Terasaki came to see me, and said that a week earlier the emperor had sent a letter to the Supreme Commander saying that he would not abdicate. When I heard this, it was a surprise to me, and I believe I reported it to the State Department.

The old gentleman leaned forward in his rocking chair, put on his reading glasses, and flipped through his diary, saying, 'I think there was something else here ...' After a moment or two of searching, he continued:

Yes, there's one more thing. Let's see here, yes, it was the first of November. I had 'Terry' Terasaki come to see me to clear up some things about an article which had run in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and been carried on the INS wire. The article reported that Prime Minister Yoshida had recently visited the emperor and Prince Chichibu on several occasions, and suggested that this might have direct bearing on a possible abdication. Terasaki appeared at my office the next day, 2 November, and reported that he had done some checking and found that while it was true that Yoshida had met with the emperor four times recently, these were all formal visits having to do with his appointment as prime minister and the formation of his cabinet. It was also a fact that he had visited Prince Chichibu, but Terasaki said that this was a strictly personal call and had nothing to do with abdication. At least that is the gist of what I have here in my diary.

Mr Sebald, did you believe Terasaki?

Well, yes, I suppose I did. At any rate, it wouldn't have done much good to press him on that. I was more concerned at the time with something I wanted to tell him, which was that my opinion [about abdication] was shared by MacArthur, and that Washington was of the same mind. I told him this quite clearly, and added that it would be fine if he wanted to share this with the emperor and his

advisers. Terry must have been a little over forty, but he was a young-looking man, almost boyish, very intelligent and appealing. I don't think I'd ever seen him look as tense as he did at that moment ...

The text of the emperor's personal message

The next time Terasaki came to see Sebald was more than two weeks later. However, on 12 November, the emperor sent the personal message to MacArthur with which this chapter began. There are no written documents to tell us what took place between Sebald's meeting with Terasaki and the emperor's message, so it becomes necessary to employ a little imagination, but the content of the message is beyond doubt. Here is the full text of the letter:

Ministère de la Maison Impériale
du Japon

Tokyo, 12 November 1948

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur,
Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers,
Tokyo.

Excellency,

By Imperial command I have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency a message from His Majesty as follows:

'I am most grateful for the kind and considerate message Your Excellency was good enough to send me by Prime Minister Yoshida the other day. It is my lifelong desire to serve the cause of world peace as well as to promote the welfare and happiness of my people. I am determined now more than ever to do my best in concert with the people to surmount all difficulties and speed the national reconstruction of Japan.'

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(signed)
Michiji Tajima,
Grand Steward of the
Imperial Household

In this manner, the emperor's decision not to abdicate the throne of Japan was dealt with as the highest of state secrets, hidden from the Japanese people until more than thirty years had passed. MacArthur did not mention this in the autobiography that was published soon after his death, nor did Yoshida Shigeru in the four volumes of his memoirs. So the two men who were probably best informed about this matter are gone, and the emperor himself died in January 1989. The best that can be done is to try to fill in the blanks from the documentation already presented in this chapter.

Three remaining questions

The problems remaining can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Was the message from MacArthur to the emperor conveyed through Yoshida verbal or written?
- (2) Did the emperor ever transmit to MacArthur a formal notice of his intention to abdicate? If he did, was there any *quid pro quo* attached, such as a plea for pardon for the war criminals, or amelioration of their sentencing?
- (3) Should we read any particular significance into the fact that the letter reproduced above was dated 12 November, the day the verdicts were to be handed down in the trials of the Class A war criminals?

Here I hope I may permitted some rather bold conjectures.

First of all, with regard to Question 1, I believe, as do most knowledgeable individuals who have had a look at the Tajima letter, that the message was most likely a verbal one. If we analyse the text carefully, the looseness of the reference 'the other day' to the time of Yoshida's delivery of the message would support this idea. If the message had taken the form of a letter or other written document, it would have been dated, and Western epistolary convention would have called for referring to it by that date, i.e. 'your letter of such-and-such a date'. This is, however, a relatively minor point.

With regard to Question 2, I would argue that it is almost certain that a declaration of intention to abdicate was transmitted from the emperor to MacArthur, once again verbally and through Prime Minister Yoshida, sometime in very early November.

If such a communication had been intended merely to quell the increasingly noisy rumour-mongering that was going on with regard to an abdication, a verbal message would have been sufficient. If it had been in the form of a letter, it would probably have made sense to send it somewhat earlier. Moreover, though we cannot be certain when the decision to abdicate became firm in the emperor's mind, we do know that the Americans were clearly and consistently opposed to the idea, and that if the emperor really wanted to go ahead with it, the message would have had to be transmitted immediately before the verdicts in the Tokyo trials.

When Sebald met with MacArthur on 28 October, the General told him that he would use his meeting with the emperor, scheduled to take place immediately after the conclusion of the trials, to try to persuade the emperor that abdication was unwise. That this attempt at persuasion was moved up [in the form of the message transmitted by Yoshida] can only signify some sudden change in the situation after 28 October – in other words, an intimation by the emperor of his intention to abdicate.

There is no way of knowing whether this message also contained a plea for the lives of the Class A war criminals, but even if we assume there was such a request, it would have been impossible for MacArthur to accept this readily.

I do not intend to raise here the issue of the fundamental nature and significance of the Tokyo War Crimes trials. But it was the established policy of the Occupation to retain the emperor and the imperial system, and to leave Tōjō and the other Class A war criminals holding the bag on the issue of responsibility for the war. It would have been nearly impossible at that late date to reverse this policy, and even MacArthur had no authority to interfere with the decisions of an international tribunal and its justices, although it may be that if he had strongly wanted to do so, he might possibly have exerted some influence on the severity of the punishment meted out to the twenty-five defendants.

Finally, Question 3, regarding the dating of the Tajima letter. According to his appointment book, MacArthur met with Prime Minister Yoshida on 5 November at 6.00 p.m., 11 November at 6.00 p.m., and 12 November at noon. Each meeting lasted half an hour. If we assume MacArthur asked Yoshida to persuade the

emperor to give up the idea of abdication during their meeting on 5 November, then that means that Yoshida's efforts to do so must have taken until almost the last day of the Tokyo trials, 12 November. It is conceivable that having succeeded at last, he reported this to MacArthur verbally at their meeting on the evening of 11 November.

We can extend this into the following scenario: an anxious and impatient MacArthur is temporarily relieved by this news, but wants no 'Pearl Harbor'-style surprises on the critical date of 12 November. He demands written confirmation. Yoshida races off, hurriedly has a 'personal message' from the emperor composed, and he delivers it to MacArthur at noon the following day. The English text is probably prepared by Terasaki.

If this scenario stands up, then the fact that this 'personal message' is dated 12 November suggests that the emperor battled to the very end to go through with the abdication once he had finally made up his mind to abandon the throne.

We can only guess at what arguments Yoshida may have employed to successfully bring the emperor around. But if we believe the intelligence report by Colonel Green, Yoshida himself was actually in favour of abdication as well.³¹ If this was the case, then it was the height of irony for Yoshida to have to be the one to talk the emperor out of it. Paradoxically, though, this may have added to his effectiveness.

I would like to think of the date of the emperor's message as symbolic of the painful trial these two men – the monarch and his minister – must have gone through in abandoning their personal sentiments and arriving at the decision to do what was best for their country.

A month after these events, on 23 December – it happened to be the Crown Prince's birthday – the emperor was informed by Chief Prosecutor Joseph B. Keenan through Master of Ceremonies Matsudaira that the execution of seven of the Class A war criminals had been scheduled for that day.

The emperor and his family gave up all thought of birthday celebration and spent the day in mourning.

Notes

¹ Sebald succeeded Atcheson, who was killed in an aeroplane crash off Hawaii, in August 1947. His memoirs were published as *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation* (N.Y.: Norton, 1965).

² Konoe's plan for Hirohito to become Abbot of the Ninnaji before the end of the war was described in Chapter 3.

³ *Sūmitsuin jūyō giji kakusbo* (Tokyo, Iwanami, 1953).

⁴ Discussed in 'Tennō, Amerika to Taiheiyo sensō', *Bungei Shunjū*, December 1975.

⁵ *Kido nikki* cited above.

⁶ Indeed, the attribution of that statement is not without problems, since Okumura was the only one present who understood both English and Japanese and the American report, repeatedly endorsed by MacArthur, who praised Hirohito as 'the first gentleman of Japan', is based on Okumura's interpretation. It is also at variance with Hirohito's high estimation of Tōjō shown in the 'monologue' discussed in the introduction. Further, a recent study of the emperor's statements before and after the meeting with MacArthur makes a cogent case for the probability that all Japanese accounts of that conversation have had to be tailored to make them fit with MacArthur's purposes of retention of Hirohito – which was of course congenial to the Imperial Palace, whatever its ambivalence about seeming to malign its former statesmen. See the editor's introduction and Toyoshita Narahiko, 'Tennō wa nani o katatta ka', *Sekai*, February 1990, pp. 232–249, and 'Kūhaku no sengoshi: Tennō-Makasaa kaiken no rekishiteki chii', *Sekai* March 1990, pp. 1–116.

⁷ These events were first discussed at length by Robert Butow in *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 381. The problem is not simply one of timing, however, for the note itself was by no means a 'declaration of war', but ended with the statement that Japan had concluded it was useless to continue further negotiations. This hardly indicated that hostilities were about to begin, and even if it had been delivered thirty minutes beforehand one doubts that American outrage would have been less. More recently, Professor Butow has uncovered an alternate note prepared by the Foreign Ministry that would at least have satisfied the technical requirements for a declaration of war. This was never sent to Washington, apparently to retain the element of surprise. 'Marching off to War on the Wrong Foot: The final Note Tokyo Did Not Send to Washington', *Pacific Historical Review* LXIII, 1 (February 1994).

⁸ There were also accounts of the emperor's hand shaking as he struggled

to light the cigarette he was offered to put him at ease. Since he did not smoke, this may in fact have increased his discomfort.

⁹ The author's point, clear to Japanese readers, is that the traditional image of the sovereign was less that of a heroic warrior than a retiring, almost maternal figure which aroused feelings of protective concern.

¹⁰ The argument is developed in Hata Ikuhiko, *Shiroku Nihon saigumbi* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1976), pp. 230.

¹¹ The Ministry was downgraded to Office (*fu*) in 1947 and Agency (*chō*) in 1949.

¹² Perhaps a favourite formulation. *Newsweek* on 1 August 1948, reported that Syngman Rhee, emerging from a visit with MacArthur, quoted him as having said, 'I will defend Korea as I would my own country – just as I would California.'

¹³ Yoshida (1878–1967) headed five cabinets and was the principal political figure during and immediately after the Occupation. A series of Liberal-Democratic leaders were products of what was known as the 'Yoshida academy'. See John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience 1878–1954* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), and Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Terasaki was transferred to the Imperial Household Ministry after surrender to facilitate contacts with the Americans. He was one of the officials who recorded Hirohito's Monologue, discussed in the introduction, the apologia prepared at a time when it still seemed possible the emperor might be indicted by the International Tribunal. It was his wife who preserved the copy later made public.

¹⁵ Takahashi Hiroshi and Suzuki Kunihiko, *Tennō-ke no misshitachi*.

¹⁶ Hata, *Shiroku Nihon saigumbi*.

¹⁷ Japan had not yet regained its own sovereignty.

¹⁸ 'Bunkatsu sareta ryōdo', *Sekai* (April 1979).

¹⁹ For a discussion of NSC-13/2, see Sakamoto Yoshikazu, 'The International Context of the Occupation of Japan', in Ward and Sakamoto, *Democratizing Japan*, pp. 61–64.

²⁰ This proposal, widely publicized and denounced on Okinawa, has been regarded there as further evidence of second-class citizenship for Okinawans, already the chief sufferers from ground fighting during the war. Okinawa was the only prefecture Hirohito never visited, and public opinion polls in Okinawa have consistently shown a much lower level of support for the retention of the imperial institution than those in any other area of Japan.

²¹ Records Center, Suitland, Maryland, Box 2287 (RCT84), Sebald to Secretary of State, dated February 27 1948.

²² Matsumoto (1887–1966) was a leader of the pre-war Suiheisha movement and post-war president of the Buraku Liberation League, formed in the struggle for civil rights for Japan's depressed communities.

²³ This seems to have been true even of Kido Kōichi, who sent a message in 1951 from prison to Matsudaira Yasumasa in the imperial household to the effect that abdication would in some sense atone to the families of the dead and wounded, those not repatriated, and the war criminals, and thereby 'make a very important contribution to national unity centred on the Imperial House'. Failure to do so, he feared, would mean that 'the imperial family alone will have failed to take responsibility and an unclear mood will remain which, I fear, might leave an eternal scar'. Herbert Bix, 'The Showa Emperor's "Monologue" and the Problem of War Responsibility', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18, 2 (Summer 1992), p. 316.

²⁴ Eichelberger Diary, Duke University.

²⁵ The personnel changes referred to here involved the dismissal in early June of two Imperial Household Department officials long regarded with disfavour by SCAP Government Section: Grand Steward Chief Matsudaira Yoshitami and Grand Chamberlain Ogane Masujirō, and their replacement by Tajima Michiji and Mitani Takanobu.

²⁶ One of the largest political scandals in post-war Japan, which resulted in the arrest of senior cabinet and Finance Ministry officials and brought down the Ashida Cabinet in 1948. Shōwa Denkō, Japan's largest fertilizer producer, had bribed officials to secure huge loans from the Reconstruction Finance Bank, established in 1946. Judgements were made final only in 1962, when two of the sixty-four indicted were found guilty. Almost none of the money allegedly used for bribes was traced or accounted for.

²⁷ Letter from Sebald to Benninghoff, 26 October 1948. Preserved in the the National Archives, Washington.

²⁸ Finn, *Winners in Peace*, has Sebald noting the possibility of suicide in his diary, and MacArthur agreeing that abdication or suicide would be 'politically disastrous'. p. 189.

²⁹ Sebald to Benninghoff, 29 October 1948. Marked 'Top Secret, Eyes Only'. Federal Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

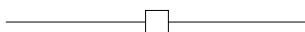
³⁰ Sir Alvary Gascoigne, Ambassador from the United Kingdom, put it more colourfully; MacArthur, he noted, 'does consider that the Emperor and the Court are entirely his own preserves – preserves which he will, apparently, not have infringed upon by any outsider whatsoever.' Finn, *Winners in Peace*, p. 190.

³¹ Though Green may well have been wrong. Watanabe Osamu, 'The Emperor as a "Symbol" in Postwar Japan' (*Acta Asiatica* 59, 1990), states

that Yoshida 'did all he could to quash proposals for the emperor to abdicate made in 1948 and 1952'. (p. 105) Yoshida also, however, did what he could to shorten and moderate the sentences of men condemned as war criminals. And after some of the ashes of the seven men executed on 23 December were surreptitiously removed to a shrine to Kannon in Atami, Yoshida provided the calligraphy for the stele, 'Monument to Seven Patriots'. Shiroyama Saburo, *War Criminal The Life and Death of Hirota Koki* (Kodansha, 1977), p. 2.

CHAPTER 6

The Emperor Hirohito in War and Peace – Confrontation with MacArthur



‘At this point there is nothing else to be done’

Article 1. The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power.

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

At nine o'clock in the evening of 5 March 1946, the cabinet meeting convened to discuss the draft of the new constitution was wrapped in an atmosphere of unusual tension. Seventy-three-year-old Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō had just requested the complete attention of his ministers, and was about to deliver a statement which would conclude the debate, which had dragged on since early that morning. He spoke slowly and deliberately, as if biting off each word:

Adopting a draft constitution of this nature is an extremely grave responsibility; a responsibility which will no doubt affect our children, and our children's children. When this draft is made public, some will applaud it, but others will meet it with silence.

Deep in their hearts the silent ones will harbour anger towards the position we have taken. At the present time, however, I believe that the broad scheme of things presents us with no other possible course to follow.

According to Welfare (and subsequently Foreign and Prime) Minister Ashida Hitoshi, who recorded Shidehara's speech in his

diary, 'some of the cabinet ministers wiped away tears' as Shidehara finished speaking.

It had been twenty days since the Japanese government's draft (produced by a committee headed by Matsumoto Jōji), in preparation since the previous autumn, had been summarily rejected by SCAP. The Japanese had then been handed an English-language draft cobbled together by GHQ Government Section in the course of a week of intensive effort. Forced into complete submission, faced with the necessity of presenting this document to the world as the official draft of the Japanese government, it is small wonder that the members of the cabinet were stricken with an almost dizzying feeling of humiliation.

They were after all elderly men who had been born and who had grown to maturity under the Meiji Constitution, and such newfangled ideas as a symbolic emperor, popular sovereignty, disarmament and the renunciation of war were almost completely beyond their ken.

Did MacArthur realize what a shock this would be to them? In a meeting with Prime Minister Shidehara on 21 February, he explained the philosophy behind Articles 1 and 9 in the following manner:

We want to preserve the emperor system, for Japan's sake as well, but the Soviet Union and Australia are concerned about the possibility that Japan might carry out a war of revenge, and are opposed to both the imperial system and to rearmament.

The reason that the [draft] constitution plainly states that sovereignty lies with the people ... is to indicate clearly and positively that the emperor occupies his position through the trust and confidence of his people, and we are convinced that by so doing, the authority of the emperor will actually be strengthened.

If we retained the sections [of the Meiji Constitution] dealing with the military, what would the other countries say? They would think that Japan was plotting to re-arm itself. Therefore, if you think of Japan's interests it would be best to make a clear renunciation of war, and allow Japan to seize a position of moral leadership.

At this point Shidehara interrupted to remark, 'You speak of leadership, but what country on earth would follow us?' MacArthur would have none of this, however, and cut him off, saying, 'If no one

follows you, Japan still loses nothing. If you are not supported in this, the onus falls on those who fail to support you.'

The preceding dialogue is taken from the notes Ashida made on Shidehara's report to the cabinet the following day. What is noteworthy here is the attitude of resistance Shidehara displays towards Article 9, the renunciation of war.

The authorship of Article 9 has long been a subject of controversy, with Shidehara and MacArthur as the two contenders for the honour. If we believe the account given in Ashida's diary, however, the basis for the argument in favour of Shidehara crumbles, and the prize goes to MacArthur.¹

How did the emperor respond to this epochal idea? According to the Ashida diary, when Shidehara interrupted the cabinet deliberations of 5 March to give an interim report to the emperor, the emperor simply said, 'At this point there is nothing else to be done.' There is, however, some reason to believe that the emperor was not quite so negative with regard to the provisions in the draft constitution dealing with the imperial system itself.

For instance, there is the recollection which Kanamori Tokujirō and Satō Tatsuo recalled eliciting from Yoshida Shigeru (who was foreign minister at the time) in session of the hearings devoted to the constitution held on 5 October 1955, soon after Yoshida had resigned as prime minister.² They reported that Yoshida said, 'I made a lot of noise at that time, arguing that popular sovereignty was a preposterous idea. But after hearing what the emperor had to say, I ended up rethinking the matter.'

MacArthur could speak so confidently because he was aware from public opinion polls that only a small minority of the people were in favour of leaving political power in the hands of the emperor, and he believed that if it came to a national referendum, the Japanese government would be defeated on this issue.

If the emperor had sided with the majority of the cabinet members [who were opposed to the idea of popular sovereignty contained in the SCAP draft], this would have forced a resignation by the cabinet, and the government would probably have passed to the Socialists or a coalition cabinet. However, the emperor was perceptive enough to see the writing on the wall, and chose instead to support the proposal, thus helping avoid a head-on collision between GHQ and the Shidehara cabinet.

The reason GHQ rushed ahead so precipitously towards the completion of a draft constitution was because they wanted to preempt intervention in the matter by the Far Eastern Commission,³ presenting it with a firmly established *fait accompli*. If this had touched off a cabinet crisis and a change of government, however, Washington would have stuck its oar in as well, and the 1947 Constitution might have been aborted at this stage.

In MacArthur's third meeting with the emperor on 16 October 1946, the General thanked him for the role he had played:⁴ 'It is thanks to Your Majesty that the Constitution has been completed. Without Your Majesty, there would probably be no Constitution.' This was not necessarily an overstatement.

Indeed, Emperor Hirohito had little reason for antipathy to the redefinition of the imperial system in purely symbolic terms: he had a fund of bitter experience with the traditional system, in which the emperor's sovereignty had been nominal at best, and real power had been successively wrested from the throne by the Meiji leaders, the political parties and the military.

Viewed from the perspective of the long history of the imperial house, the emperor system that had evolved after the Meiji Restoration was the exception rather than the rule; for centuries it had been divorced from any position of secular power and wealth. This was, in fact, the real secret of the survival of the imperial house and its ability to preserve, however precariously, 'a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal'.

The members of the imperial family were well aware of this historical legacy. It was this knowledge which permitted the Dowager Empress Sadako to say quite calmly to the court ladies distraught by the news of the surrender, 'All this means is that the imperial house will return to the way things were before the Meiji Restoration.'

The members of the Japanese Communist Party, freed from their long years in prison, initially greeted the Occupation forces as 'an army of liberation'. In much the same fashion, the defeat and the democratization dictated by the Occupation must have been a kind of 'liberation' for the emperor as an individual. Seizing the opportunities provided by this 'liberation', the emperor forged resolutely ahead, beginning to define an appropriate role for himself under the new constitutional order in the process.

The renunciation of divinity and the Charter Oath

The Emperor Hirohito's new departure began with his renunciation of his own divinity at the beginning of January 1946. This was accomplished in the form of an Imperial Rescript which was delivered to the Japanese people on New Year's Day, the key passage of which read:

The ties between us and our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.

A number of people participated in the drafting of this rescript – Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō; Education Minister Maeda Tamon; Yamanashi Katsunoshin, president of the Peers School; R. H. Blyth, an English instructor and tutor to the crown prince, Harold Henderson, of the Civil Information and Education Section in GHQ; and Kenneth Dyke, chief of that section. With this many cooks, many conflicting reports have arisen as to how the final broth was concocted, but according to a very closely documented study by Hirakawa Sukehiro,⁵ former admiral and head of the Peers School Yamanashi Katsunoshin played a key role.

Informed persons at home and abroad knew, of course, that the emperor did not correspond to a 'god' in the Western sense, and in fact Blyth pointed out the contradiction embodied in the emperor's 'renunciation of a divinity he never really possessed'. But the rescript did have the desired and immensely important psychological effect of repudiating the political myths surrounding the emperor, and blocking the possibility of their revival in the future. It was particularly effective in stilling the anxieties of the Western public, who may not have understood all the nuances involved, but did see it as a necessary and desirable demotion of the emperor's status.⁶

One crucial point regarding the New Year's rescript that should not be overlooked is the espousal of democracy added to the opening portion of the text at the initiative of the emperor himself.

The word 'democracy' itself was not actually employed; instead, the proclamation began by quoting the full text of the Charter Oath

issued by Hirohito's grandfather, the Meiji Emperor, at the time of the Restoration of 1868.⁷ As the emperor explained many years later at a press conference in 1977,⁸ 'The adoption of democracy was carried out at the behest of the Meiji Emperor ... It was extremely important to demonstrate that democracy was definitely not an imported concept.'

It takes a bit of forcing to interpret the Charter Oath, which was the key document of an imperial restoration, as a declaration of democratic principles – but GHQ was willing to close its eyes to this because they hoped it would show that the emperor was taking the lead in espousing the policy of democratization which was the highest goal of the Occupation.⁹

In any case, the renunciation of divinity and the embrace of democratic values was an early step along the path towards a symbolic emperorship. Realizing this, MacArthur then decided the time was ripe to present the Japanese government with a new constitution.

Having established this fundamental line for himself, the emperor now decided to undertake a series of goodwill tours of the Japanese countryside to cement his new relationship with the masses of the Japanese people.

The political science of the imperial tours

The imperial tours, beginning with a visit to Kanagawa Prefecture in February 1946, and ending with a trip through Hokkaidō in 1954, put the emperor on the road for a total of 165 days, in the course of which he travelled 33,000 kilometers and visited all of Japan's prefectures except Okinawa.

There was a precedent for this. In the early years of the Meiji era, the Meiji Emperor had undertaken a similarly ambitious series of regional tours to demonstrate publicly the transfer of political power in Japan from the Tokugawa shogunate to the new imperial government. But now the situation was quite different: Emperor Hirohito would be making his first tours into a nation devastated by war, in the delicate period immediately prior to the convening of the war crimes trials in Tokyo.

When the emperor first privately expressed his wish to

undertake these tours to the officials of the Imperial Household Ministry and the government,¹⁰ they were more than a little nonplussed, unable to gauge what the political repercussions might be. How would the masses of the Japanese people greet the newly humanized emperor? Would this not serve as a stimulus to the Communist Party and radical labour unionists who were calling for the abolition of the imperial system? Would it not ignite even more violent confrontation between left- and right-wing forces in Japan? And did it not run the risk of antagonizing the Allies and reawakening the issue of the emperor's war guilt?

The central problem was the attitude of GHQ. At the time, expenditures by the imperial household required special and specific clearance from GHQ. When imperial household officials privately sounded him out on the idea of the tours, General MacArthur responded favourably, but there was strongly-rooted opposition among a group of Government Section staffers, and in the Allied Council for Japan, the British and Soviet representatives were also against the plan.¹¹

Given this atmosphere, the government, and particularly the Foreign Ministry, were not enthusiastic. Even after the tours commenced, there were voices in these quarters calling for their suspension. A group of prominent intellectuals – Watsuji Tetsurō, Abe Yoshishige, Tanikawa Tetsuzō, and Tanaka Kōtarō – even met with the emperor and unanimously urged him to reconsider, saying, 'At present, would it not be wiser for Your Majesty to defer the tours and to remain here for the time being?'¹² This advice gave the emperor pause, and he sent Vice Steward of the Imperial Household Katō Susumu to visit former Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Makino Nobuaki and ask his opinion of the matter.

His refusal to simply give up on the idea indicates the extent of the emperor's enthusiasm for it. As a result of his direct orders to his staff not to worry about his health and to manage the expenses somehow, the tours frequently resembled a kind of forced march, with an impossibly overloaded itinerary. Factories, refugee barracks, farm villages, fishing ports, coal mines ... he stopped at hundreds of out-of-the-way places which in the past would never have dreamed of a visit from the emperor, and frequently bedded down for the night in a coach of his private train, pulled onto an unused siding.

At first, his contact with the people was awkward. The emperor was at a loss as to what to say to them; and for their part, the people found it difficult to shed completely their image of him as 'a living god'; unsure of how to respond, many simply prostrated themselves before him. The emperor's frequent, all-purpose use of the phrase 'Ah, so' became the target for irreverent satire. Mark Gayn, an American journalist with leftist sympathies who accompanied one of the early imperial tours, gave this unflattering portrait of a visit to a military hospital:¹³

At last, he settled on the simple, 'Where are you from?' He now walked from man to man, asked his question, and when the patient answered the emperor said, 'Ah, so!' His voice was high pitched, and as time passed it grew higher and higher ... The irreverent Americans were now all waiting for the inhuman sound of 'Ah, so', and when it came they nudged each other, and laughed, and mimicked the sound. But the joke wore out. We could now see the emperor for what he was: a tired, pathetic little man, compelled to do a job distasteful to him, and trying desperately to control his disobedient voice and face and body.

However, as the tours continued, both the emperor and his people lost their awkwardness as they grew used to the situation, and began to be able to speak with each other frankly and from the heart. The tours which were undertaken from late 1946 into the following year enjoyed an explosive popularity that surprised even their organizers, and on more than one occasion American Military Police responsible for security had to form a human wall to restrain the forward press of the enthusiastic crowds.

At about this time, a man named Kumazawa Hiromichi emerged into the public eye, claiming the right of imperial succession as the last surviving descendant of the Southern Court of the fourteenth century¹⁴ and styling himself 'Emperor Kumazawa'. Certain elements within GHQ gave him encouragement, and for a brief time he made headlines as he, too, conducted 'Imperial tours' of the countryside under the watchful eyes of the MPs. Unable to compete with the popularity of the 'Hirohito boom,' however, Kumazawa soon slipped back into obscurity.

As the emperor's regional tours garnered more success than anyone had expected, however, the negative as well as the positive

aspects of this began to surface. Like the rise to almost talismanic potency of the phrase 'national polity' in pre-war and wartime Japan, the ever-escalating scale of the turnout to welcome the emperor ran the risk of degenerating into a kind of carnival or circus parade.

There began to be criticism that the emperor was practically running an election campaign, and that the visits were placing an enormous financial strain on local governments so eager to give him a proper welcome that they were even resorting to the black market to secure the necessary provisions.

A tour of central Japan conducted in late November and December 1946 seems particularly to have annoyed GHQ. Paul J. Kent, who accompanied the tour as a Government Section observer, wrote disapprovingly in a report dated 16 December:¹⁵

Vice Steward Katō and eighty-seven other members of the entourage boarded the five-car private train that was to follow fifteen minutes behind the lead train ... Every night there was an elaborate party, and the food we were treated to was splendid in both quantity and quality, all purchased on the black market. ¥48,500 was spent on lunches and snacks alone.

Kent's antipathy, however, was focused on the Imperial Household Department officials. Towards the emperor himself, with his exhausting dawn to dusk schedule, Kent was sympathetic, writing 'The Emperor is a tool, a robot, whom the Household Department bureaucrats lead around as they please', and quoting a British reporter's remark that 'It's Katō who's really the emperor.' Despite all this, Kent was circumspect in his final assessment, saying 'The tour had its plus and minus sides, and it is too early to reach a conclusion.'

Far more harsh was a 'Report on the Imperial Tours' sent to GHQ by a Japanese newspaper reporter, Nakagawa Sakon of the *Mainichi Shimbun*. It is unclear whether this report was submitted to GHQ spontaneously or formally commissioned; in either case, its tone is caustic: 'The emperor's tours have had no effect whatsoever on increasing production.' 'We must not forget that this is a 'tour of apology' by the emperor, or that the emperor is 'War criminal Number 1.' 'I hope that you will do something about giving the emperor better training as a human being.'

The stance here is very similar to the line taken by the placards and leaflets distributed along the route of the tours by the Japan Communist Party, which labelled the emperor a war criminal and called for the tours' expenses to be devoted instead to the victims of the war. Taking this into consideration, it is not out of the question that this Japanese reporter was intentionally employed by GHQ's Government Section to produce a nitpicking critique of the tours.

A failed assassination attempt

In the course of this tour of central Japan, several unexpected incidents occurred which exacerbated the long-smouldering discord in the shaky triangle of relations between GHQ, the Japanese government and the palace. Along with the emergence of the abdication issue, these were to bring the imperial tours to a halt for more than a year.

The first of these incidents was the discovery of a plot to assassinate the emperor at Shimonoseki, the port town on the western tip of Honshu. According to a report by the Yamaguchi Regional Military Government Section dated 20 November, the plot was discovered thanks to an anonymous informant, who claimed that ten Korean members of the Communist Party led by a man named Yi and a teacher in a Korean school who used the Japanese name of Ishida Ichirō were planning to kill the emperor and then escape by boat to Korea. The Counter-Intelligence Corps moved swiftly to arrest the suspects, and the imperial tour continued under heavy police protection. The motive for the plot was believed to be retribution for the tightening of Japan's alien registration laws¹⁶ and opposition to what was perceived as a trend towards the strengthening of the emperor system.

A second event was the so-called 'Rising Sun Incident' which occurred when well-wishers in the area around the border between Hyōgo and Okayama prefectures greeted the imperial train by flying the national flag from their rooftops and waving tiny rising sun flags along the line of the emperor's route. At this time, display of the rising sun flag was forbidden without special permission from GHQ, and GHQ had stressed this point to the Imperial Household Department before the tours had begun. Because of this

incident Vice Steward Katō was immediately summoned to Government Section and given a stern reprimand for violation of a GHQ directive.

Katō countered by saying, 'Hyōgo Prefecture was not even a stop on the tour, and we were not prepared. Moreover, the Imperial Household Department has no authority to issue directives to local government bodies.' Kent, the SCAP official, was greatly peeved by this 'bureaucratic evasion' and threatened Katō, blustering 'I'll have you sent to Okinawa.'¹⁷

Behind Kent were Colonel Charles E. Kades, Deputy Chief of Government Section, and Justin Williams, head of the section's Legislative and Liaison Branch. These two men were considered prominent figures among the Occupation's 'New Dealers', anti-communist liberals who hoped to introduce the methods and substance of Roosevelt's era of reform into Japan, and they were committed to following the letter and spirit of the initial Occupation reform directive (SWNCC-150) in promoting the thoroughgoing democratization of Japanese society.

The imperial house was not to be exempt from this process. The reformers did not interfere with the traditional rites and rituals of the imperial court, but in almost every other area they carried out a sweeping campaign to 'democratize' the imperial institution: the Imperial Household Ministry was subjected to major personnel and organizational changes, and demoted to departmental status; the boundaries of the imperial house itself were redefined, with its more peripheral members forced to give up their royal status and become commoners; and the fortunes of the imperial family were subjected to taxation and partial nationalization.

Both the Yoshida cabinet and court officials resisted these processes overtly and covertly, thereby antagonizing the Government Section. At one point Section Chief General Courtney Whitney angrily vented his frustration, grumbling 'Here we have General MacArthur trying to save the emperor institution while Yoshida and his crowd are concerned only with saving the emperor's estates.'¹⁸

This was the climate in which the 'Rising Sun Incident' took place. Government Section, suspicious that the tours represented a campaign to revive the political fortunes of the emperor, moved to

apply the brakes. What channels were used remains unclear, but Government Section conducted a complex campaign to embarrass and discredit high palace officials. This included enlisting the support of the Foreign Ministry in casting aspersions upon the emperor's advisers, and leaking a comment made to Government Section by an official close to the throne to the effect that the emperor should serve as a kind of glorified Notary Public, which forced the Japanese government to issue a correction.

In the middle of March 1948, the newly appointed Prime Minister (and concurrently Foreign Minister) Ashida Hitoshi sent a letter to MacArthur which combined his greetings upon assuming his post with a passage touching on the democratization of the imperial court. The letter opened with a statement that the new cabinet would build upon the policies of the preceding Katayama cabinet in confronting the serious issues before it, and expressed hope that American aid and credit would be forthcoming in Japan's efforts at economic reconstruction.

The letter continued:¹⁹

It has recently come to my attention that there is widespread criticism of a certain group of Imperial Household Department officials for actions which they have taken that are contrary to the intentions of the emperor.

In accordance with the movement towards democratization of our country, we intend immediately to take the steps necessary to correct this situation. I would like to add that in my recent audience with the emperor, His Majesty expressed a similar opinion with regard to this problem.

This text, not exactly a model of clarity, requires some explication.

First of all, 'a certain group of officials' refers to the troika of Grand Steward Matsudaira Yoshitami, Vice Steward Katō Susumu and Grand Chamberlain Ogane Masujirō. Unlike Katō and Ogane, who came of commoner stock, Matsudaira was a descendant of the former feudal lord of Echizen, but together the three were the chief figures behind the use of the imperial tours to promote the emperor's popularity and position. Moreover, they were close to GHQ's conservative faction – principally MacArthur's adjutant Colonel Bunker and the staff of G-2 (Intelligence). Matsudaira had suffered some form of nervous breakdown since the beginning of

1948, and both Matsudaira and Katō indicated his intention to retire at the same time, but Ogane remained in his post. The 'steps necessary to correct this situation' involved the naming of successors to Matsudaira and Katō, and the replacement of Ogane. Candidates included Horinouchi Kensuke, a former ambassador, Koizumi Shinzō, former president of Keiō University and tutor to the Crown Prince, and Prince Takamatsu, but after careful consideration, at the recommendation of Abe Yoshishige, Ashida chose Tajima Michiji,²⁰ a banker and chairman of the Japan Scholarship Society, to replace Matsudaira. Then, at Tajima's request, Mitani Takanobu, a former diplomat and professor at the Peers School, was appointed to the post of Grand Chamberlain.

When Ashida privately informed the emperor of these personnel changes, the emperor expressed displeasure and would not immediately give his assent: 'Why is it necessary to replace two of my advisers at the same time? And why must a loyal servant such as Ogane be forced to resign ...?' Apparently beside himself with irritation, the emperor paced about the room, muttering under his breath.²¹

According to Katō's recollection, Ogane was initially determined not to resign, and was quietly supported by G-2 in this stance, but Prime Minister Ashida managed to overcome the emperor's objections, and in June the replacements for the Grand Steward and Grand Chamberlain were decided upon. Katō himself retired in August.

Given this series of events, it seems clear that the final portion of Ashida's April letter to MacArthur, which speaks of the emperor's agreement, is an untruth. Why did Ashida feel it necessary to oppose the emperor, distort the truth and force the departure from office of these men? We must assume that he had more than sufficient reasons impelling him to adopt this course, and to understand that an analysis of the political context in which Ashida found himself is essential.

The Katayama cabinet, a coalition of the Socialist, Democratic, and People's Cooperative parties, came to power in May 1947, replacing the first Yoshida cabinet. For the New Dealers in Government Section, who thought a centrist coalition government excluding only the Liberal Party on the right and the Communists

Party on the left offered the best hope of carrying out the Occupation-mandated reforms, the collapse of the Katayama cabinet in February 1948 was a disappointment. They gave great encouragement to Ashida, Democratic Party leader and Foreign Minister under Katayama, when he was given the nod to form a successor cabinet, telling him 'We support you all the way, so go to it!'²²

The SCAP New Dealers had not wanted to see the government return into the hands of Yoshida Shigeru and the Liberal Party, the largest opposition party, but Ashida's Democrats held less than a quarter of the seats in the House of Representatives, so another jury-rigged three-party coalition government was the result. Ashida had finally succeeded in pulling together a cabinet, but his political base was very unstable.

He faced a mountain of pressing issues: food shortages, high inflation and faltering industrial production. Given the tight spot in which he and his government found themselves the support of Government Section was of crucial importance.²³ Ashida could not summon the courage to reject its demands for reform and reorganization of the imperial household bureaucracy.

Exit the New Dealers

The trench warfare between Government Section and G-2 [Intelligence] within SCAP, which surfaced briefly during the flap over the personnel issue at the Imperial Household Department, reached a peak of intensity in the spring of 1948 with the Shōwa Denkō scandal and the bid of Yamazaki Takeshi for prime minister.

The Shōwa Denkō scandal was a bribery scandal involving alleged kick-backs by a huge chemical fertilizer company to a variety of government officials in return for facilitating its procurement of massive loans from the Reconstruction Finance Bank. Afraid that this scandal would bring down the centrist government they had such high hopes for, Government Section tried to put pressure on the Japanese police to break off their investigation into the incident, but G-2 foiled these plans. With the arrest of Economic Stabilization Board director Kurusu Takeo and Deputy Prime Minister Nishio Suehiro, the Ashida cabinet

collapsed on 7 October. Ashida himself was taken into custody shortly after his resignation.

It seemed that a successor cabinet would have to be formed by the Liberal Party, but Government Section was adamantly opposed to another government headed by Yoshida Shigeru. First, they tried to interest People's Cooperative Party president Miki Takeo in the post, and when he refused, they attempted to convince Liberal Party secretary Yamazaki Takeshi to bolt the party together, ally his faction with the three parties of the previous coalition government and assume the prime ministership.

In his memoirs, Justin Williams, head of Government Section's Legislative and Liaison Branch and the go-between in the scheme, says that both Ashida and Yamazaki had given their agreement to this. However, Yoshida conducted a forceful counter-attack, lodging a protest with MacArthur, and when Yamazaki learned of this, he suddenly resigned from the House of Representatives on the day he was to have been named prime minister, effectively scuttling that scenario.²⁴

With this, the second Yoshida cabinet was born, commencing forty years of uninterrupted conservative dominance of the Japanese government. But why was it that the New Dealers were so deeply hostile to Yoshida and the Liberal Party?

This question seems to have puzzled even the Liberal Party politicians, and in March 1948 two of the party elders, Hoshijima Jirō and Saitō Takao approached Government Section saying, 'We are aware that SCAP is not friendly to our party and would like to improve communications', and 'We would like to have Colonel Kades give us his frank and unspoken opinions with regard to our party.' To this, Justin Williams responded: 'The Liberal Party has failed to shed the old order. It is subconsciously trying to drag the emperor back into politics ...'²⁵

The nuances here are a bit muffled, but to the author it would seem that what Williams is really saying is that unlike the politicians of the centrist coalition who were quick to do the bidding of Government Section, both the emperor and Yoshida possessed the political clout to go over Government Section's head and speak directly to MacArthur, and that Government Section was discomfited by the possibility that they would use this clout to sabotage its reform programme.

This prediction was correct, but even before it was realized the hegemony within GHQ itself was shifting from the progressive New Dealers in Government Section to Major General Charles A. Willoughby and the conservative Cold Warriors in G-2. However, an interpretation which sees this as less the product of an internal struggle for power than as a midcourse correction attendant upon a change in policy emanating from Washington is probably correct.

It may be merely coincidental, but President Truman's abandonment of the initial reform directives embodied in SWNCC 150 and his adoption of a new policy which stressed the reconstruction of Japan as a bastion against communism in Asia, as outlined in NSC-13/2, happened to come in October 1948, the same month that Yoshida returned to power.

MacArthur offered some resistance to this policy shift at first, but with the exception of the pressure to rearm Japan, he gradually came to embrace it and set it into motion, while at the same time devoting considerable attention to concealing from both his own staff and the Japanese people the fact that it had its origins in Washington. He did not want to lose his image as an omnipotent Caesar.

Colonel Kades took on the mission of returning to Washington to try to talk the War Department into blocking the policy shift, but this mission was in vain, and he never returned to his post in Japan.

The Law for the Elimination of Excessive Concentrations of Economic Power which had been drafted to break up 325 of Japan's major corporations was reevaluated by a team of five economic experts brought in from the US, and in the end it was applied to only eighteen firms, including Japan Steel, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Oji Paper and Dai Nippon Beer. A reform of Japan's financial structure involving the splitting up of the five major banks was also abandoned, and war reparations payments were reduced to a fraction of those originally planned.²⁶ In place of these policies, the Detroit banker Joseph Dodge arrived in Japan in February 1949 to implement a battery of economic recovery policies intended to stop inflation and aid Japan's reintegration into the international economy.

The New Dealers, not without a bit of self-disparagement,

dubbed this new policy line 'the Reverse Course', but it was more than twenty years before they learned that it had been initiated by an NSC directive. This was because MacArthur had not shown the top secret directive to more than a handful of his closest staff and advisers. But it is likely that even MacArthur was not aware of the role played by the emperor and his advisers in bringing about this major shift in Washington's policies towards Japan.

Harry Kern and the Japan Lobby

'I believe in the United Nations, General MacArthur, and peace', remarked the emperor to Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, in May 1947, shortly after the promulgation of the new 'peace' constitution.

Baldwin then asked the emperor, 'What do you think of the direction of Occupation policy? If you have any criticisms, please let me hear them,' and the emperor responded, without the slightest hesitation, 'I have the highest respect and praise for the understanding and ability that General MacArthur has shown us. It is my hope that the Occupation forces will remain in Japan until they complete the work on which they are presently engaged.'²⁷ Formal words for a formal occasion, and yet they must have tickled MacArthur's preternaturally large ego when they were relayed to him.

Moreover, MacArthur had specific need of the emperor's praise, for the General was possessed by the ambition to use his brilliant successes as the Supreme Commander of the Occupation as a springboard to a campaign for the presidency of the United States at the end of the following year. Visitors from the United States raised their voices in a chorus of adulation for the almost magical skill MacArthur had displayed in transforming one of the most war-like peoples in the world, virtually overnight, into a peaceful and peace-loving nation. Yet in order to prove that this was the result, not of the use of force, but of the 'spiritual revolution' to which the General was fond of referring, there were those who hoped for stronger and more definitive evidence – such as the conversion of the emperor to Christianity.

William P. Woodward's study of the religious aspects of the

Occupation suggests that in one of their meetings, the emperor expressed to MacArthur the desire to make Christianity the national religion of Japan.²⁸ There is reason to doubt the authenticity of this, but it is a fact that Bible study classes were held in the palace and attended by the emperor, and that MacArthur was an enthusiastic promoter of Christian missionary work.²⁹ In the end, all of this came to naught; Christians in Japan never amounted to more than 0.5% of the total population, and MacArthur's dream of a Christian democratic kingdom in the Far East went the way of his presidential ambitions.

The Republican nomination went to Dewey, and the election to Truman. As a result, MacArthur who had had presidential ambitions of his own, wound up fulfilling the emperor's hopes that he would remain in Japan for some time to come. But well before the election an American journalist had begun to orchestrate a campaign against the Occupation's programme of economic deconcentration. This was Harry F. Kern, Foreign Affairs Editor of *Newsweek* magazine, who stepped from his plane onto the tarmac of Haneda Airport in June 1947.³⁰ Accompanied by Tokyo bureau chief Compton Pakenham, Kern had conducted an intensive two-week tour of occupied Japan, met with General MacArthur and returned to the US to write a major feature article that appeared later that month. He was scathingly critical of both GHQ and the policies of the Occupation. GHQ, totally unprepared for the idea that any American journalist would have the temerity to criticize the omnipotent Supreme Commander, was infuriated. When Pakenham returned to the US that summer for what he thought would be a brief stay, he found himself barred from returning to Japan for more than six months as someone detrimental to the policies of the Occupation.

Kern charged that Occupation policy viewed all presently existing political, economic and cultural institutions as manifestations of militarism and was promoting radical reforms with an excess of enthusiasm. Pakenham, who had good personal ties with many high-placed Japanese who had been 'purged', had introduced him in those circles and helped convince him that the United States was abandoning its real friends in Japan.³¹ Still, in approaching Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett to argue that

MacArthur himself bore responsibility for the confusion in Occupation policy ... and should be encouraged to step down in a manner that would not hurt his pride,³² Kern himself seems to have been exceeding the bounds appropriate to a magazine editor, causing one to question his motives.

MacArthur interpreted the anti-GHQ coverage on the part of *Newsweek* as a vicious nuisance campaign related to his presidential aspirations, directed against him by the Harriman family. Averell Harriman, then Secretary of Commerce, was heir to his father's railway empire, a famous figure in the world of American high finance, a pillar of the Eastern Democratic political establishment, and a founder, major shareholder and former board member of *Newsweek*.

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Best and the Brightest*,³³ David Halberstam depicts the role played by a small Eastern establishment elite and its fixers in dominating America's political and financial sectors from behind the scenes. When the foundations of American capitalism have been threatened by the flames of crisis, he suggests, these men have emerged time and again to put out the fire. According to Halberstam, it was they who, among other things, were responsible for engineering Nixon's resignation from office.

Harriman, who had served in a number of important posts, including US Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Secretary of Commerce, and had been sent many times as a special presidential envoy to the world's trouble spots, was, along with Robert Lovett, one of these firemen or fixers.

The author surmises that Harry Kern was one of the individuals serving as a kind of intelligence gatherer and operative at Harriman's behest. And the reason that Harriman and his cronies finally embarked upon efforts to alter the course of US policy towards Japan was fear that in the context of the Cold War, a continuation of the policies of democratization and unarmed neutrality for Japan being implemented by MacArthur and the Occupation would eventually push Japan into the Communist camp.³⁴

Yet breaking through the wall MacArthur had built around Japan in the course of the Occupation was no easy task. Because of

this, help was sought to undermine it from within by establishing secret channels to the emperor and the high-level bureaucrats and palace officials who surrounded him, and by encouraging the rehabilitation of a number of pre-war leaders who had been swept out of public life by the Occupation purges.

It is still not entirely clear who the personalities on the Japanese side were that responded to this, and used the Kern/Pakenham connection to make contact with the US–Japan Lobby over the head of the Occupation forces. Professor Howard Schonberger of the University of Maine, who made a detailed study of the ‘Japan Lobby’,³⁵ suggests that this activity began around the end of 1947 with the controversy over an important Far Eastern Commission policy document (FEC-230), and that it involved bureaucrats from the Imperial Household Department, the Foreign Ministry, the Finance Ministry and the National Regional Police Headquarters, as well as some mid-ranking staffers from MacArthur’s own GHQ.

One of those involved was Master of Protocol Matsudaira Yasumasa, the mastermind of the Palace’s public relations policies. Matsudaira’s diary from the period has yet to be made public, but a look at the list of his visitors from February 1946 to the end of the following year shows that the majority of them were important GHQ officials. Pakenham, however, led the list in terms of frequency with at least eight visits, followed by Chief Prosecutor Keenan with three or more. In other words, the emperor had secured a channel through which signs of change in Occupation policies could be speedily detected.

‘He should have been dismissed two years ago’

The ‘FEC-230 Incident’ involved the exposure by *Newsweek* magazine of the contents of Far Eastern Commission Document No.230, which contained planning for the dissolution of Japan’s *zaibatsu* and the break-up of its major industrial enterprises – news which shocked the American financial community.³⁶ At the time, GHQ was busy trying to pressure a reluctant Japanese government into passage of an economic deconcentration law based on the proposals contained in FEC-230.

As is true today, the top echelons of the US government at the time were filled with talent recruited from Wall Street and big business. From the economic and political standpoint of these men, what was going on in Japan was that a gang of fellow-travelling New Dealers who had failed in their own country were now attempting to dupe the economically naïve General MacArthur into turning this island nation in the Far East into a laboratory for socialism, and it was important that they be stopped immediately.

An order to suspend the implementation of the deconcentration legislation was cabled to Tokyo, but MacArthur, being the man he was, did not respond immediately. GHQ ended up pushing the bill through the Diet, and in February 1948, 325 corporations were slated for break-up under its provisions.

But the Japan Lobby did not resign itself to defeat. Organization of an opposition movement proceeded among officials in Washington, Congress, the financial community and the old Japan hands, and in the end, they succeeded in pulling the teeth of this legislation before its implementation could be completed.

In March, George F. Kennan, director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, began drafting the plans that would develop into NSC-13/2 with its reorientation of US policy towards Japan. Up to this point, the strategy of containment had been limited to the European front and Japan was left to MacArthur; now the policies for occupied Japan would be integrated into global cold war strategy as a kind of second front.

Emboldened, the Japan Lobby sought to strengthen its organization and activities with the founding in June 1948 of an organization called the American Council on Japan. Former Ambassadors to Japan Joseph Grew and William Castle were named honorary co-chairmen; James Kauffman, a prominent attorney in pre-war Tokyo, became chairman; Eugene Dooman, former secretary of the US Embassy in Tokyo, became Vice Chairman, and an organizing committee composed of Kauffman, Dooman, and Harry Kern and Compton Pakenham of *Newsweek* was formed, with Kern acting as its chairman.

Founding Members of the American Council on Japan

Joseph C. Grew/Honorary Co-Chairman/Ambassador to Japan 1932–41; former Under Secretary of State

William R. Castle/Honorary Co-Chairman/former Under Secretary of State and former Ambassador to Japan

James Lee Kauffman/Chairman/Attorney; former Lecturer in Law at Tokyo University

Eugene Dooman/Vice Chairman; Former Councillor of the US Embassy in Japan

Harry F. Kern/Organizing Committee Chairman/Foreign Affairs Editor, *Newsweek* 1945–54

Compton Pakenham/Organizing Committee Member/Tokyo Bureau Chief, *Newsweek*

Thomas C. Hart/Admiral, US Naval Reserves; former Commander-in-Chief of the US Asiatic Fleet

William V. Pratt/Admiral, US Naval Reserves; former Chief of Naval Operations; Special Editor for Naval Affairs, *Newsweek*

Kenneth S. Latourette/Professor, Yale University

John L. Curtis/Vice President, First National City Bank; pre-war head of First City's Japan operations

Langdon Warner/Professor of Japanese Art, Harvard University

Joseph W. Ballantine/Former head of Far Eastern Division, Department of State; Brookings Institute

The purpose of the organization was described as 'public education' and support of the Truman administration in the interest of 'the establishment of sound policies towards Japan', and it prepared a number of position papers which it presented to the government. In these it called for the abolition of GHQ, and especially its Government Section, a relaxation of the Occupation purge directives, an end to military interference in the civil affairs of

Japan, a return of the economy to Japanese hands, the speedy establishment of a fixed exchange rate and a reform of tax laws to make it easier for foreign capital to enter the country.

In addition, the American Council on Japan proposed that 'A well-equipped and well-trained police force of at least 150 thousand men should be created and charged with the defence of tunnels and bridges.' This rearmament plan had been a favourite theme of MacArthur's former subordinate, Lt. General Robert C. Eichelberger of the 8th Army. A vehement anti-Soviet and anti-communist, Eichelberger had been promised time and again by MacArthur that when he resigned as Supreme Commander, Eichelberger would succeed him in his post; when this showed no signs of materializing, Eichelberger retired, returned home and became one of the Japan Lobby's most outspoken critics of MacArthur.

Almost all of the Japan Lobby's recommendations were reflected in the text of NSC-13/2, which called for American aid for the reconstruction of the Japanese economy, reductions in GHQ's organization and a gradual transfer of powers to the Japanese government, the strengthening of the Japanese police force, relaxation of the purge and the termination of war reparations. At the beginning of 1949 a mission headed by the Detroit banker Joseph Dodge was sent to Japan, a fixed exchange rate of 360 yen to the dollar was established, and Japan was set firmly on the road to economic recovery.

The question was: would MacArthur fail to implement, or actively sabotage policies – such as the strengthening of the police and the relaxation of the purge directives – which flew in the face of his own convictions? Any ordinary general who pulled such tactics would of course have been fired, but there was no one in Washington who could dictate to MacArthur, a national hero of the Second World War, and a figure the writer John Gunther had termed 'Caesar of the Pacific'.³⁷

Later, when MacArthur was dismissed by Truman as a result of disagreements over Korean War strategy, Secretary of Defence George Marshall was reported to have said that he should probably have been dismissed two years earlier, no doubt a reference to MacArthur's virtual insubordination in response to the NSC directives.

Meanwhile, America was in retreat on the Asian battlefronts of the Cold War. Despite massive American military aid, the Nationalist Army suffered a succession of defeats at the hands of the Chinese communists beginning in the second half of 1948, and eventually had to retreat to Taiwan. In October 1949 the People's Republic of China was born, establishing unquestioned hegemony over the Chinese mainland. That same autumn, the Soviet Union successfully tested its first atomic weapon, and the US nuclear monopoly was shattered years ahead of expectations.

As 1950 began, the Cold War in Asia showed signs of turning hot in three key areas: the 38th parallel in Korea, the Taiwan Straits and Vietnam. But America's rollback strategy wavered, and even the US perspective on Japan was muddied by conflicts of opinion between State, Defence and General MacArthur.

Though the State Department and the Pentagon agreed on the premises of rearming Japan and the maintenance of American military bases there, State argued for a rapid conclusion of the peace treaty with Japan out of a concern for Japanese public opinion, while Defence argued that this might interfere with access to the bases, and proposed that the treaty be delayed until the Far Eastern situation stabilized.

In contrast to these two positions, MacArthur passionately believed in a peace treaty with Japan at the earliest opportunity, but he also remained a staunch proponent of unarmed neutrality for Japan and he was opposed to the maintenance of US military bases anywhere in Japan except Okinawa.

A bewildered President Truman sought to break this deadlock in April 1950, when he appointed the Republican Party stalwart John Foster Dulles as a special consultant to the State Department charged with working out the issues involved in a peace treaty with Japan.

The emperor's message to Dulles

One day in the spring of 1950, Harry Kern received an alarming message from Pakenham in Tokyo. According to a friend of Pakenham's, the Soviet Union was using the hope of a return of Japan's Northern Territories³⁸ as bait to stir up Japanese public

opinion in favour of a 'comprehensive' peace treaty, and there was a danger that public opinion would tilt suddenly in favour of the Russians.

In fact, the call for a comprehensive peace treaty had succeeded in mobilizing a rather broad segment of Japanese public opinion centring on the opposition parties, scholars and journalists. It had already provoked Prime Minister Yoshida to lash out at Tokyo University President Nambara Shigeru and other academics as 'intellectual prostitutes' (*kyogaku ase no yakara*) and together with the ban-the-bomb movement inspired by the Stockholm Appeal, contained the potential for developing into openly anti-American agitation. Kern worried that the initiative in framing a peace treaty with Japan might pass into the hands of the Soviet Union. At this point the elder statesmen types associated with the American Council on Japan were becoming less and less active, and the organization was turning into Kern's one-man show. Kern hurriedly wrote up a four-page memorandum calling on the US government to regain the initiative by deciding upon a generous peace settlement with Japan, received the Council's stamp of approval, and began the work of lobbying for it among government leaders in Washington. The main points in Kern's memo may be summarized as follows:

- (1) After the conclusion of a peace treaty between Japan and the Big Four, Japan should be integrated into a Pacific Treaty organization.
- (2) American troops should remain stationed in Japan.
- (3) Japan's military should be revived, and employed in any conflict between the US and the USSR.
- (4) Occupation policy should be reevaluated, and Japan's former leadership revived through a sweeping nullification of the purge directives.
- (5) In order to establish the Japanese economy on a firm and self-sufficient footing, it should be given access to markets (particularly in South East Asia) to make up for the loss of the China market.
- (6) A system should be set up to encourage the influx of American private capital into Japan.

We do not know how greatly these American Council on Japan proposals influenced Dulles. But in the middle of June, Dulles

brought Kern with him on his first fact-finding mission to Japan. In between his official talks, Dulles also found time to meet with a group of prominent Japanese assembled by Kern and Pakenham. This meeting took place on the evening of 22 June at Pakenham's home in Shibuya, with care taken that it remained private and discreet. There were four Japanese and four American participants: Matsudaira Yasumasa, Watanabe Takeshi (a Finance Ministry official), Sawada Renzō (former vice minister in the Foreign Ministry), and Kaihara Osamu (planning section chief at National Police Headquarters) on the Japanese side; and Dulles, John M. Allison (assistant chief of the State Department's Far Eastern Division and later Ambassador to Japan), Kern and Pakenham on the American.

The eight men sat on the tatami-matted floor of Pakenham's living room and carried on a three-hour conversation which is recorded in detail in Watanabe Takeshi's diary.³⁹ Matsudaira got the ball rolling by saying 'Many Japanese feel that they are not permitted a frank expression of their opinions by GHQ authorities,' and remarks by the Japanese participants followed this lead in criticizing various aspects of the Occupation. Dulles seems to have been particularly impressed by their assertions that the faith of the Japanese people in the emperor remained as strong as ever, and that the decentralization of the police had led to a marked deterioration in the Japanese authorities' ability to maintain public order.

Yet the steely Cold Warrior did not simply smile indulgently as these citizens of an occupied country paraded their list of grievances before him. Dulles informed them that if Japan resisted the continued stationing of American troops, 'It was possible that America could even go so far as to completely destroy Japan's industry before it pulled out ... It is up to Japan to decide whether it will side with Russia or with the United States.' Perhaps he was thinking of his talk that afternoon with Yoshida, when the prime minister presented him with a line borrowed from MacArthur to the effect that 'Even if it remains disarmed, Japan's security will be guaranteed by the power of world public opinion.'

In Dulles' judgement, and from the perspective of Cold War geopolitics, the debate over a comprehensive peace treaty vs. a limited peace treaty boiled down to a question of whether Japan

was going to choose to side with the Soviet Union or with the United States. He made no bones about presenting this as a black-and-white choice, with no other options.

The person who took this most seriously to heart was Matsudaira Yasumasa, the emperor's adviser. Four days after the Shibuya meeting, on 26 June, he paid a quiet visit to Pakenham and asked him to relay a message containing the following points from the emperor to Dulles:⁴⁰

It has always been His Majesty's hope that Americans in authority visiting Japan for inspection and survey purposes should be allowed to discuss matters openly and frankly with prominent Japanese on their own comparative level. He is most gratified that a precedent in this regard has been set on the initiative of Mr Dulles. As far as he knows this is a unique case.

He regrets that until this occasion irresponsible and unrepresentative advisers have generally been consulted. These usually give advice in accordance with what they consider Americans wish to hear. The reason for this is that these men have feared that they might be penalized for expressing opinions contrary to those held by Americans consulting them...

It may be said that in the past Japan has suffered at the hands of ill-intentioned Japanese no less than has America, and it is feared that Occupation authorities, particularly on middle and lower levels, have allowed themselves to accept the advice of such so that many misunderstandings have arisen.

In this regard he feels that the action which would have the most beneficial effect on the interests of both America and Japan and do most to foster goodwill would be the relaxation of the purge ... There are many people, now silent, whose opinions if openly expressed would have the profoundest effect upon the public mind.

It may be said that had such men been in a position to express their thoughts publicly, the recent mistaken controversy over the matter of bases could have been avoided through a voluntary offer on the part of Japan.⁴¹

Dulles received this message verbally from Kern just before leaving for the United States, and he was visibly impressed. As Kern wrote Admiral Pratt, 'I am told that Dulles regards this message as the most important development of his trip ... The mere fact that the palace would go so far as to bypass SCAP ... shows how serious the situation is.'

Kern wrote Dulles with pride, 'The Japanese seem to consider us [the American Council on Japan] a reliable and discreet channel.' It is not surprising that the emperor's principle themes happened to coincide with the policy issues of greatest concern to Dulles and the Japan lobby.⁴²

'The Japanese authorities heartily support America's actions ...'

What political significance did this message of the emperor's have? The author would first like to point out that 26 June 1950, the day that Matsudaira brought the message to Pakenham, was the day after the outbreak of the Korean War.

The meeting which Matsudaira and Dulles had attended took place on the evening of 22 June, so it is reasonable to assume that the message was stimulated by the sudden and unexpected news of the war and composed in great haste. It is likely that the following considerations went into that composition:

- (1) That Dulles held the key to the peace treaty issue.
- (2) That MacArthur and Dulles held different opinions on the issues of rearmament and the US bases in Japan.
- (3) That the talks between Prime Minister Yoshida and Dulles had not concluded harmoniously.
- (4) That Yoshida remained committed to preserving his close relationship with MacArthur.

It would seem that the emperor attached the greatest importance to the failure of the first talks between Yoshida and Dulles on the afternoon of 22 June. According to State Department adviser William Sebald, who was present at the meeting, when Dulles touched on the security issue, Yoshida gave a wry chuckle and dodged the matter, saying: 'Well, now that Japan has democratized and disarmed, and become a peace-loving nation that can rely upon the backing of world public opinion, I guess we can manage our security issues under our own power.'

This startled and angered the legalistic Dulles, who muttered 'I feel just like Alice in Wonderland,' and had to be soothed by Sebald. All developments up to that point had led Dulles to assume

that at the very least Yoshida would be the one to request the continued presence of American forces in Japan.

For Yoshida's part, he had just had the experience of winning the disfavour of GHQ and having to apologize to MacArthur for certain remarks that had been made when he sent Finance Minister Ikeda Hayato to the United States in June. GHQ had seen this as an attempt to go over its head and establish a direct channel to Washington. Still smarting from this experience, Yoshida probably thought it wisest to avoid saying anything to Dulles that would make it appear he was trying to do an end run around the Supreme Commander. Moreover, he was being careful not to make any statements that would feed journalistic and popular speculation as to whether the peace treaty everyone felt to be near at hand would be 'comprehensive' (including the USSR) or 'limited' (in the jargon employed by the press since about the end of the previous year).

Given these circumstances, it would seem that the emperor decided that a situation had arisen which simply could not be left up to MacArthur and Yoshida, and that he grew increasingly determined to do something to resolve it himself. As is clear from the contents of his message to Dulles, an important element in this was his deep-seated frustration with Occupation policies and the sycophancy displayed by Japanese leaders towards GHQ.

The emperor had been particularly troubled by two issues: the purges and the security question. The purge directive had not only struck at militarists and ultranationalists, but also swept away many of the 'liberal', 'moderate', and 'pro-Western' figures in whom the emperor had placed his greatest trust. The post-war leaders who had emerged to replace them were unknown and unfamiliar elements as far as the emperor was concerned. In this respect, the emperor shared some of the sentiments of the American political and economic establishment and had less in common with Yoshida Shigeru. Though Yoshida possessed fairly solid establishment credentials himself as the son-in-law of former Lord Privy Seal Makino Nobuaki, he had come to power as prime minister as the replacement for the purged Hatoyama Ichirō, and if the purge were lifted he might have to relinquish his hold on the prime ministership, returning it to Hatoyama and his faction.

As far as the security issue was concerned, the emperor had long

embraced doubts as to the wisdom of the policy of unarmed neutrality advocated by MacArthur. Moreover, the longer this idealistic position was followed, the longer the prospect of a peace treaty seemed to be delayed.

No doubt the emperor had concluded that in order to encourage Dulles (and the American government) to move quickly to grant Japan a generous peace treaty, it would behoove Japan to pledge its allegiance to the US and the other members of the Western camp and promise to provide military bases to the American forces. It might be argued that he could have waited a bit longer, tracking the development of the Korean conflict, but political timing was of the essence and it probably would have seemed a shame to miss this unlooked-for opportunity.

This assessment of the situation was astute. Dulles, who was returning home virtually empty-handed, seized joyfully on the emperor's message, considering it, in Kern's words, 'the most important result of his trip', and the fact that a written text of the message (which had to this point been only verbally transmitted) was prepared at the request of Harriman, a presidential adviser, underlines the importance it was accorded.

The Dulles Papers preserved at Princeton University show that the written version of the message was prepared in early August 1950, when Pakenham went to stay for several days at Matsudaira's summer home next door to the imperial villa at Hayama. There is reason to believe that in the process, the wording of some of the more sensitive points was toned down, and that one or more portions may have been dropped entirely. In addition to Pakenham and Matsudaira, several other close advisers to the emperor participated, and there were some rather frank exchanges of opinion. One of the Japanese present grumbled, 'The pre-war police would have been able to catch Tokuda in twenty-four hours', referring to the Japanese Communist Party leader who had recently gone underground,⁴³ while another remarked, 'If America loses in Korea, we will all be executed', and drew a hand suggestively across his throat.

On 13 October 1950, as the 'Red Purge' was taking its course, the first retraction of the initial Occupation purge directives was officially announced, restoring some 19,000 individuals, including a host of conservative politicians, to public life.

Meanwhile the emperor was taking pains to preserve relations with GHQ as well. On 6 July, Secretary of State Acheson sent a secret cable to America's overseas embassies which stated: 'The Japanese authorities heartily support America's actions in Korea.' It blithely went on to reveal that 'The US Political Adviser in Japan [Sebald] reports that he has also received secret messages from the emperor expressing his thanks.'⁴⁴

The channel and the contents of these messages remain unknown, but what is clear is that the emperor's support for the Korean War was communicated to the Americans via two separate routes: from Matsudaira to Pakenham and Kern and then to Dulles; and from an unknown messenger to Sebald and thence to MacArthur.

It was a bold and firm exercise in high-level diplomacy to play off both of these giants of American politics, Dulles and MacArthur, though the emphasis was obviously placed on reaching the former. Moreover, this decision to entrust America with Japan's future was also something of a gamble at the time, as the American forces in Korea were trapped in the narrowing perimeter around Pusan, and in danger of being thrown into the sea by the advancing North Koreans.

The emperor meets with Dulles

The tide of the Korean War soon turned, then turned again, and by the spring of 1951 had settled into a vicious state of siege along the 38th parallel where it had begun. The greatest crisis for the American forces (officially the United Nations forces, but dominated by the US) had come in late 1950. MacArthur's promise 'to have the boys home by Christmas' had evaporated into thin air. After his armies drove deep into North Korea they were caught off guard by a massive incursion of Chinese communist troops, broke, and were thrown into headlong retreat. In the process, relations grew increasingly strained between Washington, which wanted to limit the conflict to the Korean peninsula in order to avoid unduly antagonizing the Soviets, and MacArthur, the field commander, who argued for the bombing of targets in Manchuria, the introduction of Nationalist forces from Taiwan, and even the use of atomic weapons.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Dulles struggled manfully to harmonize the discordant interests of State and the Pentagon at home and those of the US, Great Britain, the Commonwealth nations of Australia and New Zealand, and the other countries of South East Asia on the diplomatic front, pushing towards the speedy signing of a peace treaty with Japan. The Japan Lobby and its network of sympathizers, spearheaded by Kern and Pakenham, pulled out all the stops in support of Dulles' efforts.

At the end of January 1951, Dulles made a second trip to Japan. In exchange for a generous peace treaty proposal, Dulles pressed the Japanese for participation in the formation of a Pacific Pact, conceived as an Asian-Pacific version of NATO, and a massive rearmament campaign organized around the creation of an army of at least 300,000 men. Prime Minister Yoshida stubbornly resisted this plan, and enlisted MacArthur's support.

Newsweek threw its support behind Dulles, running an editorial calling for revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, but in the end Kern had to work as a restraining influence on Dulles, arguing that even if Japanese forces were not sent to Korea, Japan would be doing more than enough by providing bases and staging areas.

A 'Police Reserve Force' (*Keisatsu Yobitai*) had been created in Japan in the summer of 1950, and, though still in training, it had been assigned the defence of the Japanese islands to replace the US forces which had been dispatched to the Korean conflict. If, in consonance with Dulles' requests, this force had suddenly been quadrupled, some of them might actually have wound up being sent to Korea. But in addition to the huge financial burden this would have entailed, a rather neutralist mood was spreading in Japan, where many people were far from eager to be dragged into a war in which victory was by no means assured. This mood was illustrated by a position paper that a young Diet member from the Democratic Party named Nakasone Yasuhiro sent to General MacArthur. In it he argued:⁴⁶

There is sentiment among the Japanese people that the United Nations forces have proven to be surprisingly weak in the course of the Korean Incident, having been defeated by a poorly equipped Chinese Communist force; and that even the atomic bomb is useless

against the human wave tactics they employ ... Depending on the attitude of the United States, it may be wisest for Japan to seek security through a declaration of its own neutrality.

MacArthur had read about half of Nakasone's treatise when he was seized by a sudden fit of irritation, it is said, crumpled it up, and tossed it into his wastebasket. Given the kind of domestic atmosphere suggested by this document, Prime Minister Yoshida was willing to propose the creation of a 50,000-man National Defence Force and the establishment of a Defence Ministry,⁴⁷ but he adamantly rejected the kind of large-scale rearmament desired by Dulles. MacArthur voiced agreement, saying: 'It would be fruitless given Japan's economic resources. Japan can make enough of a contribution through economic cooperation.' Rebuffed in this manner, Dulles sank into 'great pessimism,' according to Sebald.

Furthermore, Socialist Party representatives presented Dulles with a position paper demanding unarmed neutrality for Japan, and also walked out on a welcoming party given in his honour. Dulles, angered, even suspected that this might have been the result of collusion or a tacit agreement between the ruling and the opposition parties.⁴⁸

A meeting at the Imperial Palace just before he was to return to the US, arranged at the enthusiastic initiative of the emperor himself, may have done something to restore Dulles' spirits.

During the meeting, Dulles told the emperor of the difficulties he had experienced in the course of negotiations, and said: 'As an interim measure until Japan possesses the capacity for self-defence, we are currently discussing the possibility of a bilateral agreement at Japan's request which would provide for the continued stationing of American forces.' He then called on the emperor for cooperation, remarking that 'If Your Majesty would lend his support to the peace treaty under negotiation, I am sure that the Japanese people would place their confidence in it as well.'

The emperor responded to this by saying, 'I am in complete agreement with Mr Dulles' way of thinking.' He then touched briefly on Japan's war with the United States, offering what might be interpreted as an apology: 'I tried to prevent our entry into the war, but my efforts came to naught. I regret this very deeply.'

According to a State Department document,⁴⁹ the meeting ended with the following message by the emperor:

Please tell President Truman that it is my fervent wish that Japan and America join hands and move forwards in friendship with one another.

This may have been a simple expression of the emperor's judgement that if only a foundation were laid for friendly relations between the two countries, other points of discord could gradually be worked out. But it may also have been a team play worked out in advance with Prime Minister Yoshida.

'Arrange for the emperor to come to Haneda'

On 11 April 1951, the garden of the state guest house in Meguro was carpeted with the petals of the cherry trees, now in full bloom. There was a buzz of conversation as more than a thousand Japanese and foreign dignitaries assembled for a blossom-viewing party sponsored by Prime Minister Yoshida. But now strange rumours began to circulate through the crowd, garbled even further by the multilingual composition of the guests. 'Truman has shot MacArthur!' 'There's been a big fire!' 'No, no, he wasn't shot, he was fired!' Picking up on this commotion, *Newsweek* bureau chief Pakenham elbowed his way through the crowd towards a Foreign Ministry liaison officer and asked, 'Has the prime minister been informed?' The man timidly shook his head and said, 'If it turned out to be a false report, I'd lose my job.'

The news was finally relayed to Yoshida by an INS wire service reporter whose organization had already run a headline reading 'Truman Fires MacArthur'. By that time, GHQ officials were already hurriedly leaving the party, their faces pale and drawn.

The news of MacArthur's dismissal was a sensation that sent out shock waves on both sides of the Pacific, and Pakenham, skilled journalist that he was, fired off a report to Washington assessing the likely effects of that shock on the Japanese political situation: 'The dismissal will weaken the political credibility of Yoshida, who was extremely close to MacArthur. It will provide an excellent opportunity for the Hatoyama faction to move into action.'⁵⁰

According to the records kept by his adjutant, Colonel Bunker, MacArthur met personally with only sixteen Japanese during the nearly six years of his stay in Japan, and with very few of these more than two or three times. But he met with Yoshida a total of seventy-six times. MacArthur was also famous for having never budged from Tokyo, but in the summer of 1950 he accepted an invitation from Yoshida to visit the prime minister at his villa in Gotemba.⁵¹ It is not surprising that many people felt that MacArthur's fall would also bring Yoshida down.

However, Washington felt that at this delicate juncture, on the eve of a peace treaty with Japan, destabilization of the Japanese government would be most undesirable. President Truman summoned Dulles, and asked him to go to Japan to admonish Yoshida not to resign and to help smooth the transition to MacArthur's successor, General Matthew B. Ridgway. Things were going poorly in Korea, and the Joint Chiefs were studying the possibility of a withdrawal of UN troops. A CIA memorandum of 20 April warned that the risk of Soviet intervention had grown, and advised the organization of a 500,000-man Japanese army within the next six months to a year's time.⁵²

Dulles arrived in Tokyo at noon on 16 April. MacArthur had already made an impressive departure from Haneda Airport four hours earlier, seen off by a crowd of Japanese and foreign officials which included Prime Minister Yoshida and Grand Chamberlain Mitani, amid the thundering reports of a farewell cannonade. Whether or not the emperor should have joined the crowd of well-wishers became a very delicate issue of protocol, but there were certainly sufficient grounds for the imperial presence at the farewell to the American general who, in the words of an *Asahi Shimbun* editorial 'taught us the virtues of democracy and peace, and gently guided the Japanese people along this glorious path'.⁵³

However, the 'relationship of utmost trust' which had existed between the emperor and MacArthur had been shattered before MacArthur left Japan. That story begins three days prior to the General's departure.

Master of Protocol Matsudaira had gone to visit MacArthur's adjutant Colonel Bunker with an idea he had long entertained: a request that MacArthur come to the Imperial Palace and bid farewell to the emperor before he left the country.

Matsudaira had some bitter memories connected with this matter. Two weeks after the first meeting between the emperor and MacArthur in September 1945, Matsudaira had gone as an emissary of Privy Seal Kido to Political Adviser George Atcheson to request that the Supreme Commander pay a return call to the Palace 'so that the emperor would not lose face'. This was curtly rejected by Atcheson, who said simply, 'The loss of the war is a loss of face.'⁵⁴

After that, all ten of the meetings which followed took the form of visits by the emperor to MacArthur. But Matsudaira thought that now that MacArthur was no longer Supreme Commander, it might be easier to get him to come to the palace.

This made sense to Bunker, who agreed to speak to MacArthur about it, but the General's response was surprisingly cold: 'I will see no Japanese. No exceptions.' Matsudaira, however, would not take no for an answer. He made another stab at it, inquiring as to how MacArthur would feel if the invitation came informally, from the emperor as an individual. The response to this was even more humiliating. Matsudaira was summoned by a G-2 public relations officer by the name of Colonel Tate, and told to 'arrange for the emperor to come to Haneda on the morning of the 16th to see the General off.' Matsudaira naturally refused this request, and in the end it was arranged that a final meeting between the two men would take place, as in the past, with the emperor calling on MacArthur at the American Embassy.

On the morning of 18 April, two days after MacArthur's departure from Japan, Matsudaira visited Pakenham with Grand Steward Tajima in tow, and was practically in tears as he related this shabby treatment of the emperor to the American journalist.⁵⁵

Matsudaira's persistence as a 'loyal retainer' finally paid off six months later. The first two meetings between the emperor and MacArthur's successor as SCAP, General Ridgway, on 2 May and 27 August took place as usual at the US Embassy. Yet Ridgway's relaxed and open manner gave Matsudaira new hope, and during that summer he tried sounding out Diplomatic Section chief Sebald as to the possibility of Ridgway's paying a visit to the summer palace at Nasu, an overture that was politely and indirectly turned down.

On 18 September, however, General Ridgway and his wife came

to the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, and lunched with the emperor and empress. This was ten days after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the US–Japan Mutual Security Pact. Apparently Sebald, MacArthur's former subordinate, had decided that the time was finally right for such a step.

Yoshida's wily diplomacy

The San Francisco Peace Treaty, which terminated the Occupation and restored Japan's independence, has been called 'a joint production by Yoshida and Dulles', and presented as the product of harmonious cooperation between the two men. A look at US diplomatic documents, however, reveals a rather different story.

Dulles, sent by President Truman to Japan to smooth over the shock of MacArthur's dismissal, assured Prime Minister Yoshida that there would be no change in US policy towards Japan, and promised him that preparations for the peace treaty would go forward as anticipated. But from the very first time they had met with each other, the relationship between the two men was strained. Dulles, encouraged by the Japan Lobby, thought about bolstering the position of Hatoyama Ichirō, an enthusiastic proponent of rearmament, and on his January trip to Japan he had invited the still-purged Hatoyama for a private conversation. Dulles also met with opposition leaders from the Democratic and Socialist parties. Anti-Yoshida elements within the ruling party and opposition leaders were delighted by what they took to be signs that Yoshida was disliked by Washington; but Dulles seems to have swallowed his own dislike of Yoshida and realized that he would need the hand of the Yoshida government in successfully pulling together a peace treaty.

Yoshida sensed this general atmosphere, and the last set of talks between the two, which took place on 23 April, just before Dulles' departure, were hardly brimming with good fellowship. For example, when Dulles asked, 'Do you have any opinions as to where the peace conference should be held?', Yoshida replied, 'No, I haven't really thought about it.' Dulles pressed on, 'Do you have any objections to holding it in Tokyo?', and Yoshida again was almost flippant in his reply: 'No, not particularly. More important

is the question of who will be Japan's representative, and I don't know if I'll be doing that or not.'

Dulles would not be bested in this fashion. He snapped back, 'You misunderstand the position the Japanese government is in with regard to a peace treaty. The US government is pursuing this matter out of goodwill and friendship, not because it has any obligation to do so, and the Japanese government has no right to anything but consultation.'

When discussion turned to the question of South Korea's participation in the peace conference, Yoshida expressed his opposition. The Japanese government, he said, wanted to repatriate forcibly almost all the Korean nationals currently resident in Japan, but General MacArthur had been unwilling to go along with this. He then went on to offer a piece of completely spurious and irrelevant information, claiming 'A government investigation has determined that the assassins of National Railways President Shimoyama were Korean, and that the conspirators have already escaped to their homeland.'⁵⁶

The wily and evasive diplomatic skills Yoshida employed here were, in their fashion, a success, for six months later Yoshida grandly assumed the role of Japan's ambassador plenipotentiary to the San Francisco Peace Conference. But Dulles, disgruntled with the slippery Yoshida, seems to have felt the need to establish a relationship with the emperor as a counterweight. The meeting on the evening of 22 April at the Imperial Palace between Dulles and the emperor (with Sebald and Matsudaira also present) must have been important in this regard. Thanks to the release in 1974 of Dulles' personal notes on the meeting, it is possible, with some imagination, to reconstruct the conversation which took place.⁵⁷

Dulles began with assurances that the United States hoped for the early conclusion of a fair and non-partisan treaty of peace with Japan. The emperor asked Dulles about his impressions of his trip to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, to which Dulles responded by stressing the strength of anti-Japanese sentiment and the universal demand for reparations. Australia and New Zealand, he said, were particularly worried about a resurgence of Japanese aggression, and optimistic that the United States would guarantee their security. The emperor, after expressing his regret that Japanese

military actions had created this sentiment, asked what might be done to counter it. Dulles suggested that Japan might import raw materials from the Philippines, process them, and return them free of charge, something the emperor thought hopeful.

When the emperor asked about the circumstances of MacArthur's dismissal Dulles declined to discuss the details, but pointed out that at least civilian control had been reaffirmed, a point he thought important for Japan to absorb. He went on to speak highly of MacArthur's successor, General Matthew Ridgway, as a man of wisdom and leadership.

The emperor asked whether there was likely to be a change in America's policies of resisting Soviet-backed communism in Asia, and to this Dulles responded with a strong assurance that while methods might change, substance would not. Japan policy, in particular, would not be altered.

Towards a symbolic emperorship

The winds soften, winter recedes
Long awaited
Spring has come
With its double-blossomed cherries

So runs the commemorative poem composed by Emperor Hirohito on 28 April 1952, the day the San Francisco Treaty of Peace went into effect.

On that day, the Stars and Stripes that had flown over the Dai Ichi Building across the moat from the imperial palace were lowered, nearly seven years of occupation came to an end, and Japan regained its independence. When one recalls that the war between Japan and the United States had lasted four years, the six years and nine months of the subsequent occupation seems even longer. No matter how enlightened its policies, this had still been rule by an alien force, and as the Occupation dragged on, the hearts of the people had at last grown weary of it.

'Long awaited spring' – this phrase of the emperor's captured the mood of his patiently enduring people. Yet mixed with the emperor's feeling of fulfilment, there must have been a taste of sadness at the prospect of having to withdraw completely from politics to assume his prescribed role as a purely symbolic monarch.

Chapters 5 and 6 have explored the political footprints left by the Emperor in his passage through the unusual era that was occupied Japan. This exploration has been a limited one, and a fuller depiction must be left to future efforts. One thing is certain, however: no matter how much he was aided by his advisers and by the Japanese government, the emperor himself clearly exercised leadership as occupied Japan's most exalted political personage. At this juncture, the question arises: did this not serve to undermine the spirit of Article 1 of the Japanese constitution, which forbids imperial interference in politics, and fixes the locus of sovereignty in the Japanese people?⁵⁸ In answering this question, one must first acknowledge that the emperor's actions took place under the peculiar set of conditions presented by the Allied Occupation of Japan.

During the Occupation, of course, ultimate decision-making power lay in the hands of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Despite the talk of national and popular sovereignty, real sovereignty over Japanese affairs lay with the Americans, through the principal of 'indirect control' established by the Occupation. In this sense, true implementation of the constitution was suspended as long as the Occupation remained in force, because SCAP remained a supra-constitutional force, empowered to issue any orders he deemed 'necessary to achieve the goals of the Occupation'. The ban on the 2 February General Strike, the purges of specific political figures, the creation of the Police Reserve Force and other actions taken by SCAP were all carried out without reference to the constitution, and legitimized by reference to the necessities of Occupation objectives.

In order to respond to this supra-constitutional presence, defeated Japan set up Emperor Hirohito to take on the Occupation forces. With the exception of a group of Government Section staffers, GHQ did not protest this, for it realized that the emperor's authority and political power would be indispensable in achieving the Occupation's goals.

The emperor never spoke of the contents of his more than ten meetings with the Supreme Commander because of a 'gentlemen's agreement' with MacArthur, and the notes made by the Japanese interpreters who were the only other individuals present continue

to be protected as classified documents by the Imperial Household Agency and the Foreign Ministry.

From the extreme caution exercised before and after the talks, there is plenty of reason to suppose that they involved discussion of the highest level political issues faced at the time by both Japan and the United States. More than these meetings, however, the author would like to emphasize the flow of specific advice, proposals and requests that passed more informally from the Japanese to the Americans via the medium of various imperial advisers and emissaries.

These were not merely passive and defensive in nature: as we have seen in some detail, they sometimes took the form of positive, even aggressive efforts, based upon the emperor's assessment of the world situation, to influence the formation of American policy. Moreover, in this regard the emperor was a match for the finest statesmen and diplomats, both at home and abroad, in the richness of his accumulated political expertise. The emperor's bitter experience of the years of virtual military dictatorship in Japan must have been particularly useful in providing him with both the wisdom and precedents to chart his course through the different period of military dictatorship represented by the Occupation.

As has been mentioned before, what the people of Japan hoped for in the years immediately after the surrender was that the emperor who had prevented their annihilation in the war would go on in the peace to exercise his seasoned political abilities to their fullest extent in dealing with the Occupation forces. By and large Emperor Hirohito managed to fulfil that hope, and in the process he solidified the foundations of a symbolic imperial system.

Perhaps the greatest success of the emperor's 'personal diplomacy' was in sensing the signals coming out of Washington that a shift in Occupation policy was underway, and in finding the appropriate political responses to speed that change. It was for this purpose that the channel to the Japan Lobby via Kern and Pakenham was opened, and Dulles was directly approached with the promise that Japan would ally itself with the Western camp in exchange for the prompt conclusion of a peace treaty. The subsequent course of history confirms the accuracy and appropriateness of this judgement, but going over the head of

GHQ on this issue required more than the usual supply of courage and conviction.

Betrayed, MacArthur was taught a hard lesson about the essential nature of palace diplomacy: be friendly with everyone, but trust no one. Yet with the return of Japan's independence, neither Japan nor the United States had much further use for the emperor's political leadership. The signs of this were already becoming apparent at the time of the San Francisco Peace Conference.

On 27 August 1951, the Japanese delegation to the conference was given formal confirmation of its credentials by the emperor. Meeting with Ridgway that day, the emperor told him: 'I am deeply grateful to the United States for putting together the fairest and most generous treaty in the history of the world.' A delighted Ridgway asked the emperor if what he had just said could be transmitted to the US government and then made public. The emperor replied: 'I would be happy if you would do that.' But Diplomatic Section chief Sebald was violently opposed to the idea, and prevented the release of the emperor's remarks to the public. The reason: 'Political activity on the part of the emperor is forbidden by the constitution. It is undesirable, whatever the emperor's wishes may be.'⁵⁹

About a year and a half later, in the spring of 1953, the emperor granted an audience to Joseph Keenan, the former Chief Prosecutor for the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, who was visiting Japan again. Somewhat discomfited by Keenan's 'questioning', the emperor cut it short by saying, 'I no longer have anything at all to do with politics ...'

The emperor had realized that he was now, once again, purely a symbol.

Notes

¹ See Hata, *Shiroku Nihon saigunbi*.

² *Asahi Shimbun* evening edition, 18 April 1977. It will be noted from this and other citations that each such comment immediately became the basis for first page newspaper stories years after the event. At the time, of course, Occupation press censorship ruled this out. The context here is that a cabinet headed by Hatoyama Ichirō had replaced Yoshida's on 10

December 1954. After the conservative parties united to form the Liberal Democratic Party late in 1955, discussions began on the origins of Article 9. In 1956 the Diet established a commission of distinguished citizens to recommend possible changes. A report was filed in 1964, but no action was taken.

³ The Far Eastern Commission, which was made up of representatives of the victorious allies in the Pacific War, including the USSR, met in the former Japanese Embassy in Washington to discuss Occupation policy and consider Occupation accomplishments. The prospect of early Soviet participation in constitution revisions provided additional leverage for SCAP to use on the Japanese government.

⁴ Record of the Third Meeting, as reported in *Sankei Shimbun*, 15 August 1975.

⁵ *Heiwa no umi to tatakai no umi* (Tokyo, 1983), pp. 221f. Finn, *Winners in Peace*, however, basing himself on William P. Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945–52, and Japanese Religions* (Leiden, 1972), credits the wording to Henderson, and states that the original was burned in Blyth's presence at the request of the imperial household. Nakamura Masanori, *The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Making of the 'Symbol Emperor System', 1931–1991*, tr. Herbert Bix, Jonathan Baker-Bates, Derek Brown. Arinok (N.Y., 1992) there was also a proposal by Edwin O. Reischauer, then in the Department of State, that MacArthur 'persuade the emperor to participate in his own "debunking"', but there is no evidence that this reached MacArthur. p. 110. See also Bix, 'The Showa Emperor's "Monologue"', *Journal of Japanese Studies* p. 319–320.

⁶ The diary of Vice Grand Chamberlain Kinoshita Michio, published in 1990, however, indicates that while Hirohito and the court accepted language denying his own divinity ('the false conception that the emperor is divine') they succeeded in rejecting more sweeping language that denied descent from the gods altogether. Bix, 'The Showa Emperor's "Monologue"', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18, 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 320–321, and Irokawa, *Shōwaashi to Tennō* (Iwanami 1991), pp. 256–256; in press at Free Press, N.Y. translated by Mikiso Hane and John Urda, as *The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan* p. 123.

⁷ The pledge issued in the name of the Meiji Emperor promised that 'deliberative assemblies shall be established and all measures of government decided in accordance with public opinion,' and that 'the common people ... shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling', with 'evil customs of the past' broken off and 'knowledge ... sought throughout the world'. At the time it was it was designed in part to

reassure the feudality, but it came to be cited as a harbinger of the nineteenth-century modernization programme.

⁸ Takahashi Hiroshi and Suzuki Kunihiko, *Heika otazunemoshiagemasu*, p. 154.

⁹ Actually, the 'Charter Oath' took on new significance in changed circumstances on an earlier occasion. The Meiji leader Kido Takayayoshi, who had helped draft it, first realized its potential as authorization for a constitution during his visit to Washington, D.C. with the Iwakura embassy in 1872. See Marius B. Jansen, *Japan and its World Two Centuries of Change* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 63.

¹⁰ Finn, *Winners in Peace* p. 64, notes that 'General MacArthur urged him [the emperor] to travel around the country and be seen by the people', and the author points out in Chapter 4, above, that the US joint chiefs of staff, on 19 March 1946, suggested that the Supreme Commander promote a system through which the emperor would be placed in 'intimate contact with both foreigners and the Japanese people'.

¹¹ The Allied Council was made up of representatives of the US, Great Britain and the Commonwealth, China, and the Soviet Union. It was never an effective or useful body, as SCAP would brook no interference.

¹² Katō Susumu, 'Shūsen to kōshitsu,' *Seiseiren nyūsu*, September 1981.

¹³ Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary*.

¹⁴ From 1336 to 1392 there were rival 'Southern' and 'Northern' courts, each supported by feuding samurai. In the early twentieth century the issue of legitimacy became a contentious issue for nationalistic politics. It will be recalled that, for much of the same period, there were rival popes at Avignon and Rome.

¹⁵ Government Section documents, Box 2195, GS(B)-01787. National Archives, Suitland Maryland.

¹⁶ Relaxed, for third-generation Koreans, only in 1992.

¹⁷ Interview with Katō Susumu, October 12, 1983.

¹⁸ Justin Williams, Sr., *Japan's Political Revolution Under MacArthur: A Participant's Account* (University of Georgia Press, 1979), p. 90.

¹⁹ Justin Williams papers, University of Maryland.

²⁰ Who took part earlier in the discussion of the abdication issue in 1948.

²¹ Suzuki Hajime, *Ningen tennō no sugao* (Heian shoten, 1974), p. 197.

²² Reminiscence by Ashida Hitoshi, *Mainichi Shimbun* August 2, 1955.

²³ 'The new prime minister [Ashida] got [General] Whitney to write him a letter on 3 April 1948, asserting there was no basis for a new election at that time and supporting steps to increase attendance at Diet sessions.' Finn, *Winners in Peace* p. 172.

²⁴ Justin Williams, 'Completing Japan's Political Reorientation,

1947–1952: Crucial Phase of the Allied Occupation', *American Historical Review*, 73, 5 (June 1968), pp. 1454–1469, who did the lobbying for this, treats the incident in some detail and stresses the fact that Yamazaki was actually a MacArthur (read: Government Section) favourite and that he had simply been outmanouevred.

²⁵ Williams Papers, University of Maryland.

²⁶ The standard account is Eleanor M. Hadley, *Antitrust in Japan* (Princeton, 1970). See especially Chapter. 9, 'The United States Reorients Its Economic Policy in Japan', pp. 166 ff.

²⁷ Kase Hideaki, *Tennō no tataikai* p. 161.

²⁸ William P. Woodard, *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945–1952, and Japanese Religions* (Leiden, 1972).

²⁹ For details, see Ray Moore, ed., *Tennō ga Baiburū o yonda hi* (The day the Emperor read the Bible), (Kodansha, 1982) a collection which has not appeared in English.

³⁰ The text incorrectly dates this visit in November 1948.

³¹ The best account of these activities, not yet available at the time the author wrote, is Howard B. Schonberger, *Aftermath of War: American and the Remaking of Japan, 1945–1952* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989) Chapter 5, 'Harry F. Kern: The Japan Lobby in American Diplomacy', pp. 134 ff. *Newsweek* on 12 November 1948, outlined Pakenham's past: born in Tokyo, where his father was British Naval Attaché, a boyhood playmate of Konoe Fumimaro, briefly a page at Queen Victoria's court, educated at Harrow and Sandhurst, observer with a Japanese regiment, followed by Oxford, service in the Coldstream Guards, six years with the *New York Times* and ten years with *Newsweek* The magazine assured its readers that, according to Harry Kern, Pakenham was 'one of the few people in the world who knows when the Japs are lying. Our readers can expect to be fully informed of any future Nip duplicity.'

³² Reminiscence by Kern published in *Shukan bunshun* 18 August 1983. Of course Kern, by then a confidant of highly-placed Japanese and implicated in aircraft acquisition commissions for the Self Defence Forces, was not likely to diminish his own importance.

³³ New York: Random House, 1969.

³⁴ This was the particular warning of James L. Kauffman, a senior partner in a Japanese law firm before the war, who denounced the deconcentration programme in an influential report *Newsweek* published on 1 December 1947 concluding that 'the Occupation to date has not only been a failure but it has sought to impose on the Japanese an economic system which is distinctly un-American.'

³⁵ Schonberger, Howard B., 'The Japan Lobby in American Diplomacy, 1945–1952', *Pacific Historical Review* 46, no. 3 (August 1977), 327–359, and amplified in *Aftermath of War*, cited above.

³⁶ On 20 December 1948, after the programme had been jettisoned, an article in *Newsweek* by Kern charged that the deconcentration policy (FEC-230) had been fobbed off on Tokyo by a cabal of people like Owen Lattimore, John Carter Vincent, Laughlin Currie and Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, none of whom had Japan experience, by outmanoeuvring Joseph Grew, Joseph Ballantine and Eugene Dooman, who did.

³⁷ Gunther was preparing a biography of MacArthur with that title, but when the Korean War changed his evaluation he renamed it *The Riddle of MacArthur: Japan, Korea and the Far East* (N.Y.: Harper, 1974).

³⁸ The islands of Habomai, Shikotan and Kunashiri seized by the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War as part of the Kurils. Japan demands their return, arguing that they were under Japanese rule prior to the 1875 agreement in which Russia transferred 'the Kurils' to Japan.

³⁹ *Watanabe Takeshi nikki* (Tokyo, Toyō keizai shinpōsha, 1983).

⁴⁰ The following is a written version of the message, prepared in early August 1950, and sent by Pakenham to Kern. Pratt Papers, US Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

⁴¹ This wording follows the text as summarized in Schonberger, 'The Japan Lobby', and a photograph of Kern's report reprinted in the Hata original. His summary includes the suggestion of a high-level elite consultative group 'composed of experienced men trusted by both the United States and Japan' – presumably senior Japanese, 'now silent' because of the purge. Finn, *Winners in Peace* p. 257, however, considers the Matsudaira letter 'another example of free wheeling by a palace functionary' (though without citing others) and reports that Watanabe, whom he interviewed, thought it a possible fake (by Pakenham or Kern?). Professor Toyoshita Narahiko, on the other hand, in an as yet unpublished paper 'Japanese Peace Negotiations and "Double Diplomacy"', accepts it as genuine and fully consonant with evidence in official American sources.

⁴² Schonberger, p. 355. The Toyoshita unpublished study, 'Japanese Peace Negotiations and "Double Diplomacy"', agrees that the Emperor used Matsudaira to bypass not just MacArthur, who opposed bases anywhere other than Okinawa, but also Yoshida, whose public, as opposed to private, statements indicated opposition to American bases.

⁴³ The Occupation's 'Red Purge' had begun on 6 June 1950 when MacArthur banned all members of the JCP Central Executive Committee from public activity and followed this the next day with a purge of

seventeen editors of the JCP daily, *Akabata* Tokuda and other leading communist figures then went underground.

⁴⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1950, Vol. VII.

⁴⁵ Although the author speaks of atomic bombs, there is no record of suggestions going beyond the use of atomic waste along the dividing line.

⁴⁶ Nakasone would later serve as prime minister from 1982 to 1987. The letter, dated January 1951, is contained in the Williams Papers at the University of Maryland.

⁴⁷ This is contained in a document prepared by Yoshida in early February 1951 that calls for 'Security forces, land and sea, totalling 50,000', and 'What might be termed a 'Security Planning Headquarters' to be set up in the 'National Security Ministry'. This document became known only in 1977, and has never been published in full. See Finn, *Winners in Peace* p. 280.

⁴⁸ If so, a shrewd conjecture. 'We now know that through backdoor channels he [Yoshida] was even prevailing on the Socialist party leaders to whip up anti-rearmament demonstrations and campaigns during Dulles' visits!' Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Japanese Question: Power and Purpose in a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1992), p. 24.

⁴⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1951, Vol. 6, no. 1, Cable from Sebald to the Secretary of State, February 10, 1951.

⁵⁰ Yoshida had emerged as leader of his party upon the purging of Hatoyama Ichirō by SCAP in 1946. Upon being depurged in 1951 Hatoyama was immediately a logical successor to Yoshida, whom he replaced in December 1954.

⁵¹ Hosokawa Ryūichirō and Yorioka Kenchi, *Yoshida Shigeru ningen hiwa* (Tokyo: Bunka sōsaku, 1983).

⁵² *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1951, v. 6, p. 994.

⁵³ *Asahi Shimbun* 12 April 1951.

⁵⁴ Cable from Atcheson to the Secretary of State, 13 October 1945, State Department Archives.

⁵⁵ Pakenham memo, 18 April 1951, Dulles Papers, Princeton University Library.

⁵⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1951, Vol. 6: Japan, p. 1007. The incident in question has been treated by Chalmers Johnson in *Conspiracy at Matsukawa* (Berkeley: 1972).

⁵⁷ Dulles Papers, Princeton University Library.

⁵⁸ Watanabe Osamu, in 'The Emperor as "Symbol" in Postwar Japan', cited previously, p. 114, argues that the emperor's Occupation period initiatives, taken without consultation with cabinet members, went beyond his powers under even the Meiji Constitution, and adds that he

was equally free with advice to Prime Minister Ashida, as when he urged measures against the Communist Party and expressed concern about having left-wing socialists in the cabinet in 1948.

⁵⁹ Ridgway to the joint chiefs of staff, Cable C-69746, 28 August 1951.

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