The Decision for Peace

Interrogation of Sakonichi, Hitozuma, a career government official, and Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Suzuki cabinet, from a report of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey.

Q. When was the Suzuki cabinet appointed?
A. April 7, 1945.

Q. Was it the expectation that this cabinet would consider ways of making peace?
A. The Prime Minister, Mr. Suzuki, doubted the possibility of our continuing the war, so right after the Cabinet was formed he ordered me to examine into the details of the Japanese fighting power and to advise whether it was sufficient to continue the war. I reached the conclusion at the end of April, and the beginning of May, that Japan could not continue the war.

Q. What factors led you to this conclusion?
A. Our inability to manufacture airplanes, the amount of factory damage from bombing, ship losses and damage, the food situation, and the sentiment of the people. The official government propagandas always insisted on ultimate victory of Japan, but the people had doubt because at the time of the Okinawa battle the military said that they could defend Okinawa, but Okinawa fell. When the last B-29s came to Tokyo, Army fighter planes went up and tried to fight them, but as the raid continued, the number of defending fighter planes which rose gradually less and less. The people saw this, and it gave them some idea of the fighting power of Japan. There were no more rumors that the fall forces were going to be destroyed by American forces; they were very anxious about their food.

Q. Do the Cabinet and the Prime Minister usually take the sentiment of the people into consideration in their deliberations?
A. They should but usually they do not. Tojo did not, it is clear. Suzuki did. At the very beginning of his government he asked the Emperor how he thought about the war. I think the Emperor knew the people did not want to continue the war, that their sentiment was against. I guess the Emperor told Mr. Suzuki his will. So Suzuki ordered me to make the investigation which I have told you about.

Q. By what means did the Emperor know that the people did not want to continue the war?
A. He read the postscripts through the people, through meetings with the former Prime Minister, for example, my father-in-law, [Adm. Konoe] Okada, who are sort of elder statesmen.

Q. Did the Emperor have access to the foreign radio?
A. I don't think so. Then also there were the members of the Imperial Household Ministry who were always against war.

Q. How did you go about finding out the sentiment of the people?
A. I listened to what they said, in the restaurants, on the streets, and so on. They did not know the number of airplanes we had, or the iron manufacturing capacity, but they could feel what the situation was. You can't stop them from feeling, you know.

Q. Did you have any organized method, like the Gallup system?
A. No, there was no organization. But I saw so many people every day. At many as 20 or 30 people came to see me every day. I knew well what the sentiment was with regard to Japan's manufacturing capacity, because I was an officer of the Cabinet Planning Board at one time.

Q. How long?
A. 1941-12 and 1941-14, during part of the Tojo and part of the Kono cabinets. When I was in the Tojo cabinet, I tried to break it up. You know, there is an old Japanese proverb which says that an insect is inside the lion and the lion is killed by the insect. [Novel] Hoshino, head of Cabinet Planning Board under one of Kono's cabinets, and Tojo's Chief Cabinet Secretary, said it to some of my colleagues that he thought Sakonichi was the insect inside the lion.

Q. You were not happy working with Hoshino?
A. No, but I knew him very well. We were both in the Finance Ministry together before the Manchester incident. I guess he wanted me to the Planning Board because he knew I had some skill in planning. I planned many things, but I expressed most of them, and especially I would not listen to anything about the sentiment of the people. I thought Tojo did not know how to stop the war. He knew how to start one, but not how to stop it. You know, when I was learning to drive a car in
New York, the teacher told me that before I could learn to drive the car I must first learn how to stop it. Before Tojo the cabinet breakers were always 

RSNIA, Square without any matter. They have 

played a particularly important role in Japanese 

history, and always they have been connected with 

the military. Under Tojo, all the RSNIA were 

praised to him because he was the military's man. 

Under Tojo they cherished him.

Of course, I could not indulge in any propaganda 

against Tojo, because I was in the Cobalt, but I 

believe that Okada and I were the center of the 

opposition to Tojo. It took just 1 year to do it.

You may wonder why Okada disliked Tojo as I 

shall tell you the story. Before the war Tojo 

gathered together all the former Prime Ministers 

and explained why he was going to start the war. 

Okada, [Adm. Mitsumasa] Yosuke, and [Bureau 

Rejo] Watanabe did not agree. Okada asked 

Tojo about the condition of Japan's merchant 

shipping. Tojo explained that we might lose 

80,000 tons per month, and I don't remember the 

exact amount of new construction he mentioned 

but it was by his calculations more than enough 

to make up for what was lost. Okada said his 

estimate was wrong. And the fact was that 

Okada was right. It was as he said. We lost 

well, maybe 200,000 or 200,000 tons per month. 

Our capacity for building was 300,000 tons per 

tone, but we couldn't build that much because we 

soon didn't have the materials. There were many, 

many shipyards which were idle during the war 

for this reason. So Okada said that Tojo was a liar. 

No, that is not the word, that he has no sense for 

estimating the fact.

Q: You said a few minutes ago that it took 

just a year to accomplish your project against Tojo. 

Would you if you would give us the story of what 
happened in that year?

A: First we talked to [Marquis Kitchi] Kido 

(Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal) because he could 

nominate the Prime Minister. Of course, the 

Emperor formally nominated him, but it was Kido 

who actually did it. And we went to Tojo, 

that it would be best for him to resign. Tojo 

decided to reconvene his cabinet because Mr. 

Kihl [Nihonkoku Nobusuke Kishi, Minister of 

Commerce and Industry] and [Matsuo] Shigemitsu 

came over to our side. This was just before the 

Mukden campaign. Tojo asked Yosuke to be 

Minister without portfolio. Okada called a meeting 

of the former Prime Ministers, and they 

decided that Yosuke should continue to be in 

the cabinet, so Tojo was compelled to resign. 

General 

Abe accepted his invitation, but Tojo could not 

stand up against the solid opposition of the former 

Prime Ministers. 

Okada tried to get them to build a Cabinet of 

peace-minded people, and the Army fought against 

it. Kiseki was an old soldier, but outside of the 

government he had been very critical of Tojo, so 

we expected that Kiseki might do something, but he 

was not strong enough to fight the military. I 

think it was a ploy that Kiseki ever came in as 

Prime Minister.

Then Suzuki was appointed. His nomination 

meant a change in the tendency of operation of 

the government. The Emperor for the first time 

could express his own opinion, I think. Many of 

the lower officials of the government, like me, had 

had official conferences in which we might say 

something like, "How can we continue the war 

without itself?" Next day the Kensei would come 

to my office and say "We hear that at a meeting 

last night you expressed doubt of final victory." 

All were afraid of the Kensei.

Well I came to the conclusions I have told you 

about before, and Suzuki declined I was right. 

He went to the Emperor and came back a short 

due later. He said to me that we must start some 

steps toward peace. This was in the middle of May. 

So we asked Himin, Kishi [former Prime Minister] 

to speak with the Russian Ambassador [Joseph 

Alekseevich] Malin in private. He did so on 

several occasions, sounding out the Russian 

attitude toward interacting with America. In 

the beginning it looked as might be successful, but 

the talks never reached a successful conclusion. 

In May Germany weakened, as you know, and after 

that the War Minister [Gen. Kurechis Aman] 

asked the Cobalt for a conference in the presence 

of the Emperor to decide the fundamental principle 

of the war—whether to continue it or not. Of 

course, we [laughing] had had many rehearsals of 

that meeting.

The military insisted upon continuing, but I and 

others had different views, although we couldn't 

actually advocate the stopping of the war because 

the MPs were still around. I drafted the memo- 

randum for the conference, and I started it with 

the statement that we should try to accomplish 

the war and keep the Emperor's reign intact and 

the home land. Of course, the military read it 

and tried to accomplish as meaning that the war 

should be continued, but it was followed by the 

detail which I had collected for my report to Mr. Suzuki. 

The whole thing was presented at the conference in 

the presence of the Emperor. Those attending were
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the Prime Minister, the war Minister, the Navy Minister (Yosuke), the Army Chief of Staff (Gen. Yokohiro Umezu), the Chief of the Navy General Staff (Adm. Seizuru Toyoda), and the Foreign Minister (Shigemori Togo). Each expressed his own opinion, but were expressed his real feelings. But if you read the details of my memorandum, it is clear that the war had to stop. The Emperor himself had read the report as well as the others. This was on the ninth of June. At that time the Emperor told nothing.

On the 25th of June the Emperor, by his own will, called a meeting of the Prime Minister and the others, but he mentioned a speech he made in the meeting of June 9th. At that point S. explained that the Cabinet had to present a written request for permission to hold a conference in the presence of the Emperor, but the Emperor would call me at his own initiative at any time, although he rarely did so.

The Emperor told them that the conclusion in the document presented in the conference of June 9th seemed to be very paradoxical. He knew the real meaning of the conclusion. He said, "I think it is necessary for us to make a plan to stop the war once as well as twice to defend the home islands." (S. explained that at that time the Army was making much of the plan to defeat the American forces when they landed on the home islands.)

As a result of this exposition by the Emperor, Suzuki decided to stop the war. After the meeting, Mr. Suzuki came back, and he said to me, "Today the Emperor said that everyone who has wanted to say but was afraid to say." Q: What was the reaction of the military to this decision?

A: Yosuke understood and approved the idea. The War Minister, Anami, also approved, but he could not express his real feelings of the generals around him and the fear of retribution.

After that the government decided to send Prince Konoe to Russia and asked Russia if he would be present. The Russians said that they could not decide on the matter unless they received from the Japanese government an expression in more detail of the purpose of the Prince's mission. We sent a cable to Ambassador (Nakasone) Sano in Moscow to explain the mission, as follows:

1. To make an improvement in relations between Russia and Japan (in view of the recent demobilization of the Neutrality Pact).
2. To ask the USSR to deener to establish a good relationship with the United States in order to stop the war.

The Russian answer was that Stalin and Molotov were just leaving for the conference at Potsdam, so an answer to the Japanese request could not be made until they returned. We wanted an answer before the conference, but we just couldn't have it, as there was nothing to do but wait.

Suzuki and I felt quite pessimistic about the Russian attitude toward our proposal. Then on June 26th came the Potsdam Declaration. Suzuki, Togo, and I talked together, and I felt that this declaration must be accepted as the final terms of peace (surrender), whether we liked it or not.

Still the military side of the government said that the terms of the proclamation were "too dishonorable."

On the 7th of August, early in the morning, about 2 o'clock, the bell rang beside my bed. (My own house was bombed in April and I moved to my official residence. That was bombed in June, so I moved my bed into my office, and I stayed there 24 hours a day. In the morning when I got dressed, I would put on my hat and walk through the building, return to my office and hung up my hat. That I called coming to the office. At night I would again put on my hat and walk through the building the same way. That was coming home from the office.) When the bell rang beside my bed, it was Daiso telling me that President Truman had announced that the atomic bombs had been used at Hiroshima. I already knew that the Hiroshima damage had been very severe and that it had been caused by just one airplane. Everyone said that America had used a new bomb, but they didn't think it was an atomic bomb because scientists had told us that no country could finish the atomic bomb for me in this war.

The military said that it was probably a 10-ton bomb bursting in the air. They made their calculations, but found that a 1-ton bomb could not cause that much damage. They suggested that it might be a 100-ton bomb. After the announcement, we sent someSlims to Hiroshima, and they reported that it was a real atomic bomb.

* Asked in cable, why the military permitted the approach to Russia, if they were bombs in accordance of the Potsdam Declination, balance replied: "The War Minister (Anami) knew of our regulations, but he never told his military staff. For that I advise Mr. Anami and that is why he committed suicide." He continued, "On the other hand, if officially" your official, you did not stop the war, but decided to stop the war, Office said to be killed in a war. I don't know that the 1-ton bomb could not cause that much damage. It shows his character that he didn't, despite what he heard of our regulations. Yosuke said, also expressed his idea in the same way of being a brave man. Mr. Anami would commit himself*.
When this news came in on the morning of the 7th I called the Prime Minister on the phone and reported the announcement. Everyone in the government and even in the military knew that if the announcement were true, no country could carry on a war. Without the atomic bomb it would be impossible for any country to defend itself against a nation which had the weapon.

The chance had come to end the war. It was not necessary to blame the military side, the manufacturing people, or anyone else—just the atomic bomb. It was a great excuse. Someone said that the atomic bomb would be the Russian means to save Japan.

Q: How long do you think the war would have continued if the atomic bomb had not been used?

A: We had already asked the Russians to intercede, and we could expect that they would eventually agree to some answer. If it had been unfavorable, there was just one way to bring peace and that was to broadcast directly to the United States. But it would have been difficult to find a good chance to do so. I think you can understand. Suzuki tried to find a chance to stop the war and the atom bomb gave him that chance.

I asked the Cabinet Board of Information to put all the information about the atomic bomb in the newspapers and on the radio, in order to tell the people just how fearful it was. But the General Staff Information Office stopped it. They tried hard to emphasize that the people need not fear the atomic bomb if they were in shelters. I had much trouble with the Chief of Military Information. All the Cabinet Board of Information was finally allowed to say was that the atomic bomb had been used at Hiroshima. This item appeared in the evening papers of August 8. Of course, all the intellectuals knew the meaning of the announcement, but there had been so many stories and novels about atomic power. I wanted all the people to understand the meaning of the bomb, but it took a full day just to get the bare announcement released.

On the morning of August 7, Suzuki and Togo [Foreign Minister] conferred and reported the news to the Emperor. They also gave their opinion that this was the time to accept the Potsdam Declaration. The Chief of Staff could not make up his mind. I told him I was ready to go.

E. On the morning of August 9 the bell beside my bed rang again, and Suzuki reported that Russia had declared war on us. I previously had a feeling that without the war we would have continued until Japan was no more.

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report from Tatsu that he was going to meet with Molotov in Moscow at midnight Japanese time on August 8. So I was expecting some sort of news. I felt rather pessimistic about the Russian negotiation, but we didn't expect a war declaration.

I then got the full text of the war declaration. I took it to the Prime Minister at about 5 o'clock in the morning. I told him that there were two ways for the Cabinet to go:

1. They could resign because they had tried for peace through the Russians and had failed.
2. They could take some step of a positive sort.

The Prime Minister said, "If we resign it will take 2 or 3 days for a new cabinet to be formed. The loss of 2 or 3 days is intolerable, since that lapse of time might decide the national destiny. It is necessary for us to take some positive step."

1. To declare war on the Russians and continue the war until the entire nation was destroyed, to the death of the whole nation.
2. To accept the Potsdam Declaration.

Suzuki said he would see the Emperor and he left about 7 a.m. He came back an hour or two later and told me that he decided to accept the second alternative step (Potsdam Declaration) and that the Emperor's ideas were the same. He then ordered me to take the necessary procedure to make the proper arrangements.

It was necessary to hold two meetings:

1. A meeting of the Special or Inner Cabinet, made up of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the War Minister, the Navy Minister, the Army Chief of Staff, and the Chief of the Navy General Staff.
2. A meeting of the Cabinet.

The first was held at 10 on the morning of August 9. Ordinarily I, as the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the Director of the Bureau of Military Affairs (Lt. Gen. Misao Yoshimura), and the Director of the Naval Affairs Bureau (Asst. Admiral Zen'itsu Hoshino) participated in these meetings. I suggested to the Prime Minister that we three should not be included this time, because if we were, the attending members would not speak freely. Mr. Suzuki agreed. So they all had assembled I took three two seats, and sat in the other room. The important thing here is the fact that I took them out of the room. This had a very significant meaning. Mr. Anami [War Minister] had decided himself inside, but he had to express this decision openly. When I took the

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two military assistants, the War Minister saw what was meant, and gave him his chance. On the surface this was a negligible event, but it really is not.
The conference lasted for three hours. I walked in two or three times, and each time everyone was seen deep in his chair, and they said nothing. The atmosphere was very gloomy and very cold. Afterwards the Prime Minister came out and told me that two opinions had been expressed and no agreement had been reached.

1. To accept the Petroleum Declar.ion unconditionally, with the understanding that the Petroleum Proclamation did not include the requirement that the Emperor's legal position be altered.

2. To accept the Petroleum Declaration with the following conditions: First, that the Allied forces would not occupy the home islands, except the small islands off the coast; second, that the Japanese military and naval forces abroad were to be withdrawn by the Japanese Minister and demobilized; third, all war crimes should be punished by the Japanese Government.

Sunsui said that he, Yenari, and Togo were in favor of the first opinion; that Amami, Umeza (Army Chief of Staff), and Togashi (Chief of Navy General Staff) favored the second opinion.

Then I said, "Let us have a Cabinet conference."

He agreed and I arranged for a 1 p.m. Sixteen ministers were in attendance. They were gathered about a big round table. As Chief Secretary, I sat at a small secretarial desk in one side. When the meeting opened, Togo (Foreign Minister) explained the discussion at the former Cabinet meeting. About nine members agreed with the first opinion (Unconditional acceptance of Petroleum Declaration), four with the second opinion (conditional acceptance) and three were on the fence. (These took such positions as the three conditions in the second opinion were too many, that two were enough, the Prime Minister should take the decision and the rest should follow.) The Cabinet meeting continued until 8 p.m., with one hour out for dinner. Toward the end I wrote a note to Sunski suggesting that he had better declare an intermission. This he did, announced.

The Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister, and I then met in the Prime Minister's room, and I told Sunski that it was apparent that the Cabinet conference was unable to reach a decision. I asked him what he thought we should do. Then he said,

"I'm sorry, but I don't think we can reach a decision tonight. I think it would be better to have an intermission and let the ministers discuss the matter in their own time."

It was agreed, and I proceeded to make the arrangements.

To hold a cabinet meeting in the presence of the Emperor, it is necessary to prepare a document stating the purpose of the meeting, over the signatures of the Prime Minister, the Army Chief of Staff, and the Navy Chief of Staff. I wrote this document and got the signatures. It was taken to the Emperor and he agreed to the meeting.

The conference (with the Emperor) was held at 11:30 p.m. The Cabinet members were still at the intermission. I read the text of the Petroleum Declaration. It was very hard to do because the word of the declaration was very hard; the contents were not cheerful things to read in the presence of the Emperor. Then the Foreign Minister expressed his opinion, and the other members, all of them, expressed theirs, as in the morning conference. About 3 o'clock on the morning of the 10th, the Prime Minister stood up and made the following announcement: "We have discussed this question for a long time and everyone has expressed his own opinion sincerely without any conclusion being reached. The situation is urgent, so any delay in coming to a decision should not be tolerated. I am therefore prepared to ask the Emperor his own wish and to decide the conference's conclusion on that basis. His wish should settle the time, and the government should follow it."

(At this point Sunski explained very succinctly that this was a very delicate and unusual procedure, that under the constitution the Emperor cannot decide anything by himself, that there is no constitutional procedure for the Emperor to express his wishes in matters of policy, and that the Emperor must always follow the government's advice.)

Sunsui stepped two or three steps away from the Emperor and asked him to express his own opinion. The Emperor just handed a box and told Sunski to go back to his seat. The Emperor then started to express his own opinion: "I agree with the first opinion, as expressed by the Foreign Minister. I think it should be followed with the consent of the Imperial Japanese situation, to continue the war meaning only the destruction of the whole nation. My ancestors and myself have always wished to put forward the nation's welfare and international peace in our prime interest. To continue the war..."
now means that cruelty and bloodshed will still continue in the world and that the Japanese nation will suffer severe damage. So to stop the war on this occasion is the only way to save the nation from destruction and to rescue peace in the world. Looking back at what our military headquarters have done, it is apparent that their performance has fallen far short of the plans expressed. I don't think this discrepancy can be corrected in the future. But when I think about my obitue soldiers abroad and of those who died or were wounded in battle, about those who have lost their property or lives by bombing in the home land, when I think of all those sacrifices, I cannot help but feel sad. (Zakemis said that the Emperor used very heavy emotional words in this part of the statement, and because of them the members of the Cabinet cried openly.)

I decided that this war should be stopped, however. In spite of this sentiment and for more important considerations.

Mr. Suetsu then said, "The United States has made a decision. We should accept their decision."

I told him that the war should be stopped unconditionally.

I forgot to say that the conference in the presence of the Emperor was attended by (Barron Kitchlue) Hiramatsu, President of the Privy Council. He did his duty as the Emperor's special messenger. A Privy Council resolution is essential for the ratification of the international agreement, such as the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, but there was not time to assemble the full Privy Council. They are old men, living all over the country, and it would have taken a considerable period to assemble them all for a formal meeting. So I decided to advise the Prime Minister that this should be stopped. So Mr. Suetsu asked the Emperor to call Prince Hiranuma into the meeting. Hiranuma agreed with the first opinion (unconditional acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration), and his agreement was sufficient to constitute acceptance by the Privy Council.

The cable of acceptance was sent early, about 7 a.m., on the morning of the 13th through the Swedish and Swiss Governments. About 9:10 on the 12th we received a broadcast from San Francisco giving us your government's answer, but we did not receive the official written document by the evening of the 13th.

There was little difference between the broadcast version and the official text. We studied the formal the whole day on the 12th, the official document. On the afternoon of the 13th, San Francisco broadcast that the Japanese reply was very late and that it was the result of your government's intentions as early as the day before. (Meanwhile we had heard from a prisoner of war, a B-29 pilot, that your government planned to use the atomic bomb on Tokyo on the 13th.)

I was very much worried. So I ordered Doniel to broadcast that the Japanese government had not yet received the official reply of the American Government. This broadcast was stopped by the military on the grounds that they were afraid the military forces abroad would pick it up, so it was not broadcast in full.

That was about 5 p.m. Fifteen minutes later San Francisco broadcast that they could understand why the Japanese reply was late. Immediately three, after several high officials of the military came to me and asked me why I had told Doniel to issue this broadcast. They had been to the Imperial official and had been told that I had ordered the broadcast despite the military objections and would take complete responsibility. This conversation was repeated several times with the military officials, but nothing came of it, and no harm was
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done to me. You see, the military were trying very hard to cancel the Emperor's decision to accept the Potsdam Declaration unconditionally.

The official answer of your government was not received on the morning of the 13th, as you know. We had a Cabinet meeting beginning at 1 p.m. The discussion was confined entirely to the part which said that the ultimate form of the Japanese Government should be decided by the Japanese people themselves. Some said that this was accept- ance of our proposal, while others said that it was a refusal.

It is difficult to explain the second opinion, that this was a refusal of our offer. (Sakiyasu paused at this point, reflecting.) I forgot to say earlier that in our cable to the United States, which I drafted myself, I had stated that the "legal position" of the Emperor should not be altered. Hiranuma, President of the Privy Council, who is a very technical nationalist, believed that the "pre-requisites" of the Emperor are not derived from the Constitution, so that the position of the Emperor is not a legal but a natural one. He, therefore, insisted that the word "pre-requisites" be substituted for "legal position." That was all we meant by the statement anyway. But I was overruled.

About 13 ministers held the opinion that the American answer was acceptable, that the Japanese people could decide the ultimate form of the government. Three believed that it was unacceptable because the Emperor's position should not be dependent upon the people. Again, no conclusion for the conference was reached, and we declared an interval about 6 p.m.

I thought that another conference in the presence of the Emperor would be necessary, but I saw that it was going to be impossible when the members of the military staff came to see me and said, "You need a trick of the night (to get the Imperial decision)." They thought I should arrange and stage everything. Nevertheless, I asked the military and naval chiefs of staff to sign a request for a second conference in the presence of the Emperor. They refused. They did not want the Emperor's decision to be apparent.

(All this was going on while the Cabinet session was an intermittent one because you see, these intervals are a very convenient thing.) I wondered what to do. The military had closed the path to a decision. I was very tired, and I thought it would be a good thing if we all got some sleep that night. But San Francisco was still broadcasting, and I was afraid of that atomic bomb. I suggested to Sasaki that the cabinet meeting should be postponed until morning and that I would talk with the military people that night. I said that I would talk with them, but I had no idea how I would get through them.

The two chiefs of staff had a talk with the Foreign Minister all that night. They wanted him to put the question to the American government again, to get the answer more exactly. The Foreign Minister told them that that would mean cutting the slim string of communication between the two countries, so he would not agree. They pressed him all night, but I stayed with them until 2 a.m. The Foreign Minister insisted that we had been able to establish a very delicate situation with the American Government, that to ask the question again would be construed as a refusal, which would result in the destruction of communications between the two governments.

Early on the 14th the Prime Minister came to the office about 8 o'clock. I said, "Did you sleep well?" He said, "Yes, did you?" I said, "One half hour!"

At 5 a.m. I had asked Sasaki completely on my own responsibility, to broadcast that the Japanese Government had almost decided to accept the reply of the American Government. The military people were very angry with Sasaki, and they (Sasaki) anxiously asked me to explain that I had ordered it.

But that is a minor point.

Sasaki said to me, "What shall we do now?" I suggested that they go to the Imperial Palace and ask the Emperor to call a conference of the Cabinet, the two chiefs of staff and Hiranuma in the Emperor's presence. The Emperor can do that at any time, although the government cannot request such a meeting without the signatures of the chiefs of staff on the petition. Mr. Sasaki went to the Palace and returned about 10 o'clock. Immediately after the return, a telephone call came from the Imperial Household Ministry summoning all three people to a conference. All were in informal clothes, but with the permission of the Imperial Household Minister, we all went as we were. The 16 Cabinet Ministers, the 2 chiefs of staff, Baron Hiranuma, the directors of the Bureau of the General Staff and Naval Affairs, and I were present at the conference. Mr. Sasaki announced that the Emperor had called us to discuss the matter of the American reply. He then expressed the opinion that the American answer was insufficient, so that we had better ask them again for a more concrete answer or, if that were impossible, to
The Emperor spoke. He said: "It seems to me that there is no other opinion on your side (the military's); I shall explain mine. I hope all of you will agree with my opinion." This was very important. You must remember that the Emperor never said to say anything in these conferences. Now he asked that the government agree with the opinion he expressed. This is a great thing in our political history. "My opinion is the same as the one I expressed the other night. The American answer seems to me acceptable." Everything then was decided, and all the members of the conference then realized that Japan had been defeated for the first time in her 3,000-year history. Everyone cried like children. I had intended to write down the Imperial Rescript, but I found I could not. Yet I do remember the Emperor's words to this day, just as I dreamed.

The Emperor gave almost the same reasons for his opinion as he had in the former meeting with the smaller group. He expressed his opinion on the reconstruction of Japan. He said that all must cooperate together. He then asked the Government to draft the Imperial Rescript to stop the war. He said that all the people who would naturally realize what the military situation is may be surprised. So if the ministers think it was better, he said he would speak personally to them over the radio. He said, "If the military and naval forces especially will be shocked, so I will go anywhere the Minister wants and explain the situation to the soldiers personally." The Emperor was wearing white gloves, and he himself put his hand to his eyes to brush away the tears. To see that, everyone felt that the Emperor had come back to the people from his capture by the military.

The decision was made and the conference was closed. The Cabinet members returned to their office and made the formal decision accepting the American answer. I wanted to draft the Imperial Rescript. Because I remembered his every word, it was not difficult. I put it in the Chinese style of writing. You should read the Rescript very carefully because it gives the Emperor's real statement, unlike the usual Rescript, which is drafted entirely by the Government.

The answer to the American Government was sent out about noon. The Rescript was issued at 11 A.M., and at 12 midnight, the Emperor's broadcast to the people was recorded for broadcast. At 4:30 the next morning (August 15) I was awakened by the noise of machine guns outside the Cabinet office. At first I thought it was American planes on a raid, but I soon discovered it was an attack by 50 or 60 Japanese soldiers. I immediately left the building by an underground passage, and went to the Metropolitan Police Headquarters. The machine guns fired lasted only 2 or 5 minutes; they entered the building and finding no one of any importance around, tried to set fire to it. They left in about 30 minutes and went to the private residence of Mr. Suzuki, who turned to the ground. Just 5 minutes before they arrived, I had called the Prime Minister, told him of the attack on the Cabinet offices, and suggested that he should get out at once, as it seemed likely that they would go next to his private residence.

At the Metropolitan Police Station I found that the Imperial Household Ministry had been occupied by a military force who were trying to get the record of the Emperor's broadcast and destroy it before it could be put on the air. They did not succeed in locating it. (Gen. Shimokawa) Tanaka (Commander of the Eastern District Army, Tokyo) spoke to the leaders of the group, trying to persuade them to vacate the premises, and he finally succeeded about 7 o'clock in the morning.

At noon on the 15th of August the broadcast of the Emperor's speech to the people was made.

Q: I understand that the attack on the Cabinet offices did not come completely as a surprise to you?

A: Informed people suspected that something was going on as early as the 12th or 13th. Posters were put up in the Ginza and elsewhere urging people to kill "the Degeneration of Japan, Suzuki, Sakurabara, Yos, Osada, Togo, and Hirose." Hiranuma's name was left off all of the posters and leaflets. The police said they were put up by "Reds" who were connected with the military.

Then on the 15th, all the military airplanes came out. They had not gone up to attack the B-29's for a long time, but they all came out, hundreds of them, and spread leaflets saying, "We will continue the war!" and "The Imperial Rescript is a forgery."

For one month, I lived with two policemen at all times, and at the recommendation of the police I changed my sleeping place every night. It was not so bad, but the tire problem was difficult, as it is mentioned, and moving all the time I could not get proper rest for me and my two bodyguards.

This was the second time I had had machine guns turned on me, the first being in the February 26th incident, when I was secretary to my father-in-law, Osada, the Prime Minister. Then I was a marked man, as they were after the Prime Minister himself. This was the second time, when they were leaders in the city, and I may not be a marked third time.