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By **JR** NARA Date **7/1/05**

TOP SECRET

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Ref. DS Item MIL-1

Ambassador Sato's 20 July Message to  
Foreign Minister Togo

After careful reflection I am transmitting my views without reserve.

1. It is reported that since 14 July the American task force, which has become active in northern waters, has approached and shelled the Kamaishi, Muroran, and Mito areas and that carrier planes have been preventing communication [by rail ferry] between Hokkaido and the mainland [Honshu] and have also sunk a number of ships. In contrast--according to enemy reports--counter-measures taken by both our Air Force and Navy have approached the nonexistent. I think that this unfortunately demonstrates clearly the decline of our fighting power, and, if the same tendency continues, the activity of the enemy fleet will become [even more] bold as time goes on. The enemy has publicly thrown down the gauntlet to the Japanese Navy and indeed has even gone so far as to broadcast boldly the names of the powerful ships in the raiding task force and of their commanders.

-A1-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 957308

By JN NARA Date 7/1/05

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

2. Moreover, enemy air raids from bases in the Marianas, Okinawa, and Iwo are already reaching every part of the Japanese mainland almost daily. The great cities have been reduced to ruins. In addition to attacks on munitions plants, storehouses, etc., they have begun bombing even medium and small cities which are being wiped out one after another.

In addition, it has become clear that our air defenses have declined in effectiveness since the start of the B-29 raids, and it must be concluded that the enemy has gained mastery of the air.

3. It is clear that, once control of the air has fallen into enemy hands, our war situation will deteriorate at an accelerated pace. That control, once lost, is almost impossible to regain in the absence of outside aid. Therefore, there will be no means of rescue and only increasing trouble for Japan except as she may hope for the production of a large number of planes in Manchukuo. It is, however, difficult to believe that Manchukuo's industries can avoid heavy bombing, especially since the enemy is planning even now to send heavy planes from Okinawa against this area in the near future.

-42-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

REF ID: A66000  
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
DECLASSIFIED

Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JK** NARA Date **7/1/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

4. I naturally do not know whether there will be an enemy landing on the Japanese mainland, but I would not want to go so far as to say that this will not occur. Judging from the thoroughness of the enemy's landing operations on Leyte, I believe that--even though geographical conditions are different--we must indeed be ready for an invasion.

Just as we can assume that the enemy will one day attempt a landing, it is also clear what Russia will do after our fighting strength has been destroyed.

The enemy, in order to accomplish the destruction of our fighting strength, will not only concentrate so far as possible on smashing our military installations and productive facilities, bombarding our shores, etc., but will also attempt to deprive our people of the very means of subsistence. The enemy must already be fully aware of the food difficulties in our country and of the importance of this autumn's harvest to the maintenance of our war strength. Consequently, we cannot overlook the possibility that attempts will be made to destroy our crops when the time comes for their harvest. For example, the enemy may well ascertain when the

-A3-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

REF ID: A66771 THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
DECLASSIFIED

Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JK** NARA Date **7/16/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

rice fields throughout Japan are dry in preparation for harvest and devise a scheme for reducing these fields to ashes at one fell swoop. He will naturally regard this as one of our weak points of which he can take advantage.

If we lose this autumn's harvest, we will be confronted with absolute famine and will be unable to continue the war. Furthermore, the Empire stripped of its airpower will be able to do nothing in the face of the situation and will be at the enemy's mercy.

5. In my message of 8 June, I pointed out that it would be unthinkable for us to continue the war once our fighting strength had been destroyed (DS 11 Jun 45). In the absence of Supreme Orders, our Imperial Army and the people as a whole will not, of course, lay down their arms until the last mile has literally been reached. Nevertheless, all our officers, soldiers, and civilians--who have already lost their fighting strength because of the absolutely superior incendiary bombing of the enemy--cannot save the Imperial House by dying a glorious death on the field of battle. When we consider how the Emperor's mind must be disturbed because

-A4-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JH** NARA Date **2/16/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

70 million people are withering away, we must recognize that the point of view of the individual, the honor of the Army and our pride as a people must be subordinated to the wishes of the Imperial House. I have therefore come to the conclusion that there is nothing else for us to do but strengthen our determination to make peace as quickly as possible and suffer curtailment.

6. As for [the making of] peace proposals, I myself had felt that the best way to do this would be to send a Special Envoy to Moscow as you have already stated. Unfortunately, however, this idea has met with the disapproval of the Russian authorities and we are therefore faced with the necessity of finding some other expedient.

Once we decide to make peace, we must resign ourselves to severe peace terms and have an armistice treaty concluded as quickly as possible by the military representatives of both sides; any sacrifices beyond that will also have to be accepted.

The one condition we must insist upon in concluding a peace treaty is the safeguarding of our national structure [i.e., maintenance of the Imperial

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 957308  
By JK NARA Date 7/1/05

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

House<sup>7</sup>. As I said in my message of 18 July <sup>DS</sup> 20 Jul,  
45<sup>7</sup> we must impress very strongly upon the enemy that  
this is an absolute requirement on our part. One  
possible course of procedure is to exclude this issue  
from the peace terms on the ground that it is a domestic  
problem. In that case, however, we would have to convoke  
something like a constitutional assembly in order to  
make a show of consulting the voice of the people--and  
in such an assembly we could hardly expect complete  
absence of persons--such as the extreme leftists--who  
would openly oppose the maintenance of the national  
structure. Moreover, the convocation of such an assembly  
would in itself conflict with our own Constitution, but,  
as we are about to run into a catastrophic situation, we  
will have to furnish some proper solution to the <sup>prob-</sup>  
lem of<sup>7</sup> expression of adverse opinion.

On the other hand, it is difficult to predict  
whether the enemy would agree to the foregoing procedure.  
If, however, it were decided--because of the suffering of  
the people--to give up the Imperial Family, our national  
structure would have undergone a grave change in the eyes  
of the world.

-A6-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 957308  
By JK NARA Date 7/16/05

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

7. The peace proposal which I advocate means the acceptance of the enemy's conditions, provided our national structure is maintained. So long as we keep our national structure, we will have preserved a minimum of honor as well as existence for the State, and this I think would be consistent with the ideas expressed in your message of 17 July. [that there could be no peace "unless the Anglo-Americans were to have regard for Japan's honor and existence"--DS 18 Jul 45].

8. Japan may be said to be standing literally at the crossroads of destiny and--though the people who have continued the fight can close their eyes in good conscience having given of their patriotism in full measure--our country is on the verge of ruin. While it is a good thing to be loyal to the obligations of honor up to the very end of the Greater East Asia war, it is meaningless to prove one's devotion by wrecking the State. I must therefore insist that we are required to bear every sacrifice for the existence of the State.

Since the Manchurian incident Japan has followed a policy of expediency. When it came to the East Asia war, we finally plunged into a great world war which was beyond our strength. As a result, we have now

-A7-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

REPRODUCTION AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED

Authority *NND 957308*  
By *JK* NARA Date *7/1/05*

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

reached the point where we have no assured production and are confronted with the danger that even Honshu will be trampled under foot. I think that we have the inescapable and fundamental obligation to resolve as quickly as possible to lay down our arms and save the State and its people.

We may surmise what the peace conditions will be by looking at the example of Germany; our people will have to pant for a long time under the heavy yoke of the enemy. Nevertheless, the fate of the State is dependent upon this, and after some decades we shall be able to flourish as before. The Government will surely choose this road, and I pray ceaselessly that the solicitude of His Imperial Majesty may be put at rest even one day sooner.

Immediately after the war ends, we must carry out thorough-going reforms everywhere within the country. By placing our Government on a more democratic basis and by destroying the despotic bureaucracy, we must try to raise up again the real unity between the Emperor and his people. We must also recognize that another cause for the evils we have drawn upon ourselves today lies in the fact that even before the Manchurian incident

-AS-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA



DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 957308  
By JK NARA Date 7/1/05

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

there were those who showed contempt for diplomacy and indifference toward international relations.

Moreover, since postwar Japan will be buffeted by the waves of the usual international relationships and will experience difficulty in extricating herself from adverse situations, I believe that in the future we must so realign our political structure as to give greater attention to foreign affairs.

Ever since the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact, our foreign policy has been a complete failure. The whole trouble was that, once we had aligned ourselves with Nazism, the world was divided into two camps--pro-Axis and anti-Axis. It is therefore essential that this mistake be recognized in the future and that there be a fundamental reorientation in our foreign policy.

9. After the Imperial Rescript containing a declaration of war was promulgated, it was naturally the duty of the whole country to devote itself to the prosecution of our war objectives, and I too have simply put forth my humble efforts as required. However, since we have been reduced to the situation which now confronts us, I think it necessary that we weigh the sacrifices which the continuation of the war must involve.

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JK** NARA Date **7/16/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

We should, however, give a fair hearing to the argument that "if the enemy actually carries out a landing, we will concentrate all our strength on a counter-attack and will thus bring about his disillusionment." I understand from your 17 July message [DS 13 Jul 45] that the Government and the Military are convinced that we will still be able to give the enemy a considerable shock with our war strength. I too would find it possible to hope for this if we had not completely lost control of the air and of the sea. Unfortunately we have now fallen into such a state that we cannot repulse the raids carried on day after day by the enemy fleet and air force, and our production installations are being destroyed one by one. Now that we are being scorched with fire, I think it becomes necessary to act with all the more speed.

Even though our Army should take control over the people and their possessions, that would in no way correct the disparity of military strength between the two sides and, as far as the volunteer units are concerned, it is clear that they will be unable to ----- [word missing] in the face of modern weapons. Thus if we were to fight for every foot of ground after

-A10-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JK** NARA Date **7/1/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

the enemy's invasion of the Japanese mainland and reaffirm our fighting spirit, we would inevitably be forced to yield the sword at the end and by that time the whole Imperial Domain would have been overrun by the enemy army. The fact that sovereignty of the state will pass to the hands of the occupying nation has been indicated by the example of Germany.

I have no longer any hope of attaining our original objectives. Our ability to take advantage of the momentum of the past to continue our resistance even to a slight degree has suddenly come to an end, and we are already in a position where we are not the equal of the enemy. To preserve the life of hundreds of thousands of people who are about to go to their death needlessly, to save 70,000,000 of my comrades from the misery that is facing them, and to preserve the existence of our nation, I have no other desire than to drink the bitter cup of this decision to prevent annihilation of our State.

I am presenting these statements, fully aware that they are not in accord with the treasured communication from His Majesty. I confess that my offense is tremendously great, but I have taken such a stand because

-All-

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority **NND 957308**  
By **JK** NARA Date **7/16/05**

TOP SECRET

ULTRA

I believe that this is the only way to save our country. If I am criticized as an advocate of defeatism, I will just have to put up with it, and I will gladly face any other accusations.

The above are my views which I have given without reserve. To say anything more would be mere repetition. I beg you to understand that it was only my patriotic convictions that caused me to speak in this way of my own free will. My unceasing prayer is that you will not conclude that what I have said has resulted from an excessive concern.

TOP SECRET

ULTRA