

Hirohito's "Jewel Voice Broadcast"

On Aug. 15, 1945, a Japanese emperor, for the first time ever, spoke to the common people. They heard a scratchy recording of a voice on the radio. It belonged to the Emperor Hirohito (known since his death as Emperor Showa), and he brought bad news: After combat defeats and atomic bombings, Japan was accepting the Allies' call for unconditional surrender. The rescript was recorded on Aug. 14. Die-hard Army fanatics, hearing of it, stormed the palace to destroy the record. Loyalists are said to have smuggled it to safety in a laundry basket. In a masterpiece of understatement, the rescript noted, "The war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage." Ever after, it has been known as "the Jewel Voice Broadcast."

TO OUR GOOD AND LOYAL SUBJECTS:

After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining to our empire today, we have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

We have ordered our government to communicate to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union that our empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well-being of our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by our imperial ancestors, and which we lay close to heart. Indeed, we declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone—the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the state, and the devoted service of our 100 million people—the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives.

Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.

Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our imperial ancestors? This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Powers.

We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to our allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently co-operated with the empire towards the emancipation of East Asia. The thought of those officers and men as well as others who have fallen in the fields of battle, those who died at their posts of duty, or those who met with untimely death and all their bereaved families, pains our heart day and night.

"Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War"

H. I. M. Michinomiya Hirohito
(The Emperor Showa)
Radio Address to the Nation
Tokyo
Aug. 15, 1945

Find the full text on the
Air Force Magazine's website
www.airforce-magazine.com
"Keeper File"

The welfare of the wounded and the war sufferers, and of those who have lost their homes and livelihood, are the objects of our profound solicitude.

The hardships and sufferings to which our nation is to be subjected hereafter will certainly be great. We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all you, our subjects.

However, it is according to the dictate of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable.

Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the imperial state, we are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity. Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion which may engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife which may create confusion, lead you astray, and cause you to lose the confidence of the world.

Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith of the imperishableness of its divine land, and mindful of its heavy responsibilities, and the long road before it.

Unite your total strength to be devoted to the construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude; foster nobility of spirit; and work with resolution so that you may enhance the innate glory of the imperial state and keep pace with the progress of the world.

14th day of the 8th month of the 20th year of Showa. ■