

2 October 1945.

MEMORANDUM TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:

The attitude of the Japanese toward their Emperor is not generally understood. Unlike Christians, the Japanese have no God with whom to commune. Their Emperor is the living symbol of the race in whom lies the virtues of their ancestors. He is the incarnation of national spirit, incapable of wrong or misdeeds. Loyalty to him is absolute. Although no one fears him, all hold their Emperor in reverential awe. They would not touch him, look into his face, address him, step on his shadow. Their abject homage to him amounts to a self abnegation sustained by a religious patriotism the depth of which is incomprehensible to Westerners.

It would be a sacrilege to entertain the idea that the Emperor is on a level with the people or any governmental official. To try him as a war criminal would not only be blasphemous but a denial of spiritual freedom.

The Imperial War Rescript, 8 December 1941, was the inescapable responsibility of the Emperor who, as the head of a then sovereign state, possessed the legal right to issue it. From the highest and most reliable sources, it can be established that the war did not stem from the Emperor himself. He has personally said that he had no intention to have the War Rescript used as Tojo used it.

It is a fundamental American concept that the people of any nation have the inherent right to choose their own government. Were the Japanese given this opportunity, they would select the Emperor as the symbolic head of the state. The masses are especially devoted to Hirohito. They feel that his addressing the people personally make him unprecedentedly close to them. His rescript demanding peace filled them with joy. They know he is no puppet now. They feel his retention is not a barrier to as liberal a government as they are qualified to enjoy.

In effecting our bloodless invasion, we requisitioned the services of the Emperor. By his order seven million soldiers laid down their arms and are being rapidly demobilized. Through his act hundreds of thousands of American casualties were avoided and the war terminated far ahead of schedule. Therefore having made good use of the Emperor, to try him for war crimes, to the Japanese, would amount to a breach of faith. Moreover, the Japanese feel that unconditional surrender as outlined in the Potsdam Declaration meant preservation of the State structure, which includes the Emperor.

If the Emperor were tried for war crimes the governmental structure would collapse and a general uprising would be inevitable. The people will uncomplainingly stand any other humiliation. Although they are disarmed, there would be chaos and bloodshed. It would necessitate a large expeditionary force with many thousands of public officials. The period of occupation would be prolonged and we would have alienated the Japanese.

American long range interests require friendly relations with the Orient based on mutual respect, faith and understanding. In the long run it is of paramount, national importance that Japan harbor no lasting resentment.

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