Victory in the Pacific
Program Transcript

Part One: Death Before Surrender

Narrator: In June 1944 a vast American armada began the siege of Saipan in the Mariana Islands of the Central Pacific. Its airfields would put American bombers within range of Tokyo. The end of the war against Japan seemed in sight. The landing at Saipan would be as decisive for the war against Emperor Hirohito as the Normandy landing, a few days earlier, would be for the war against Hitler.

Edward Drea, Historian: The loss of the Marianas was of critical importance to Japan, and the leaders knew it immediately. You even have an entry in the, oh, confidential war diary that says, "All we can expect now is a slow and steady road to defeat." But they don't give up. They're beaten from this point on, but they don't give up.

Toshi Hasegawa, Historian: In dictionary of Japanese army, there's no term "surrender". You have to fight to the end.

Richard Frank, Author: This, for most Americans, placed the Japanese simply beyond the pale, not merely people of a different race but virtually aliens from another galaxy.

Donald Miller, Historian: These are, to a lot of American troops, you know, monkeys with machine guns.

Narrator: And to the Japanese, the Americans are big hairy red beasts, who are going to defile our culture, rape our women. This is a war that's going to fly out of control. It becomes a war of racial savagery that culminates in a decision to drop an atomic bomb as an act of liberation to end the thing.

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Conrad Crane, Historian: We tend to focus today on the bomb as some kind of key decision of 1945, that all these leaders are agonizing whether to use the bomb or not. They weren't agonizing about that at all.

Narrator: In the annals of warfare the final year of the war in the Pacific stands alone. It would be as brutal as war gets a death embrace between America demanding unconditional surrender. And Japan desperate to resist.

Narrator: By 1944, the fierce resistance of the Japanese Imperial Army was familiar to American troops. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, as they began to retake the Pacific, they saw it in the Gilbert Islands where, of a Japanese garrison of almost 2600 on Tarawa, only eight did not fight to the death. They saw it in the Marshall Islands where, of almost 5,000 Japanese troops on Kwajelein, only 79 survived. And in the Marianas, they saw 30,000 on Saipan reduced to 1,000. The day after the battle for Saipan ended, they saw something they had never witnessed before. A Marine told TIME correspondent Robert Sherrod, "There were hundreds of Jap civilians up here on this cliff. In the most routine way, they would jump off. I saw a father throw his three children off, and then jump himself."

Koyu Shiroma, Age 5 in 1944: My father usually tell me, you know, "American people going to kill you, someday, somehow. It's better off dying than caught by American soldier." My father told me so I just follow people, people, and lot of people jump the cliff. So everybody jumping, so I just jump myself. I find I was hanging on a tree. Branch caught me, save me. Anyway, I can laugh now because I'm here. I was just hanging there over the cliff. Then few minutes later other people jumping. Whole families jumping. Some people say " hamnohaim banzai". "Banzai". "The sea is so congested with floating bodies," a Naval officer told Sherrod, "we can't avoid running them down." "Saipan is the first invaded Jap territory populated with more than a handful of civilians," Sherrod wrote. "Do the suicides mean that the whole Japanese race will choose death before surrender?"

Donald Miller: And he said, I wonder if this is what the Japanese leaders want us to believe, and maybe to get us to back off unconditional surrender, because it'll be such a slaughter.

Narrator: By January 1945, the Japanese navy had been nearly eliminated. Japan was dependent on oil and food from its Asian Empire. Much of its merchant fleet was gone. The Imperial Army developed a plan to save Japan from humiliating defeat. It was based on death before surrender. It predicted Americans would assault Iwo Jima, then Okinawa where they hoped their fierce resistance would force a negotiated peace. They also prepared for an invasion of Japan from Okinawa. The range of American fighter planes indicated where the landing would be- on the island of Kyushu. From Kyushu, the Americans would try to launch an invasion of Tokyo. If the final decisive battle had to be fought on Japan's main islands, its soldiers would fight to the death. Alongside civilians, armed with sharpened bamboo spears. The army called the plan Ketsu-Go.

Richard Frank: The premise of Ketsu-Go was that American morale was brittle. Japanese leaders believed with great conviction that a great deal of bloodletting in an invasion of Kyushu would compel American politicians to negotiate out an end to the war on terms that the Japanese would find acceptable. Those terms essentially involved preservation of an old order in Japan, an old order in which the militarists and the imperial institution were dominant.

Narrator: Japan's military government had expanded its empire from Korea and Manchuria to China, Southeast Asia, the Philippines and the southwest and central Pacific. It totaled more than five million troops. Their commander-in-chief was Emperor Hirohito. Hirohito was considered divine the 124th descendant of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess.

Akira Iriye, Historian: I just remember when I was in grade school, history lessons consist of us just memorizing all those 124 Japanese emperors' names, and you got the higher grade, the

more names you could remember. I could never remember more than 20 or something. Every day before classes started, we all recited in a sense a pledge of allegiance, but this is the allegiance to the emperor, saying that we are all children-children of the emperor, and that the emperor could do no wrong, had never been defeated, he's watching over our fate, and nothing could go wrong.

Narrator: Japan's objective was to preserve its old order -- the emperor presiding over a military regime. The Allies' objective was to defeat and dismantle the old order. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill demanded unconditional surrender of both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

Donald Miller: When you're fighting an enemy antithetical to all the values that you stand for, these systems have to be expunged by wars that are, in a sense, revolutions, that overthrow regimes, that don't just defeat the regime, but that eliminate them entirely so Japan never goes on another war of conquest in Asia again. So that's the purpose of unconditional surrender.

Narrator: On January 20, 1945, Emperor Hirohito approved Ketsu-Go.

Toshi Hasegawa: The plan itself was a very horrifying thing, because I think the idea was to turn every soldier, Japanese soldier, and every civilian into a kamikaze. It was suicidal.

Narrator: The emperor was concerned enough to consult seven former prime ministers. All urged him to fight the decisive battle except one: Prince Fumimaro Konoe feared defeat and with it a resurgence of communism. He remembered the uprisings Japan had repressed in the 1920s and '30s.

Haruo Iguchi, Historian: Konoe was saying that it's over. There's no way Japan can win. We should now pursue a peace settlement of the Pacific War, now. And if we keep on fighting,

what is dangerous is says, oh, well, of course a nation will be in smithereens. But what's more dangerous is that Japan's defeat will create social upheaval, and there will be a Communist revolution in Japanese society. And that ultimately will undermine the Imperial throne.

Narrator: Emperor Hirohito shared the concern about revolution. But he too wanted one last decisive battle. "What worries me," he confided, "is whether the nation will be able to endure it until then." He worried about a popular reaction against the "ordinary hardships" of war. The hardships his nation was about to endure would be anything but ordinary. Major General Curtis LeMay arrived in the Mariana Islands in mid - January 1945 to take over the 21st Bomber Command the B-29s. The B-29s had been rushed into service without proper testing. No matter, LeMay was told to get results.

Conrad Crane, Historian: Curtis LeMay was probably the most innovative air commander of World War II. He really became the Air Force's problem solver. You had a tough problem, you gave it to LeMay. When he was in Europe, he developed the tight defensive formations they used for bombing. He developed the way they did their bomb runs.

Harry George, B-29 Co-pilot: Very strong- minded, willed. "Iron Pants LeMay," I guess you could say. You didn't say "No" to him. You said, "Yes, sir!"

Narrator: Called the Superfortress, the B-29 was the most advanced bomber in the world. Production of B-29s would cost more than developing the atomic bomb.

Harry George: One hundred and forty-one foot-foot wingspan, 99 feet long, four powerful engines on it, and electronically, remote control gun sights, two bomb bays. Oh boy that was something else.

Robert Rodenhouse: And to think that they could take an airplane, a bomber, and pressurize it so that we could feel the same at sea level as we do at 30,000 feet. It just blew my mind.

Donald Miller: It could fly for about 18 hours, comfortably 3,700 miles, from the Marianas, Guam, Saipan and Tinian, all the way up to Tokyo, two, three hours in the air over Tokyo, and back. So it's almost perfectly designed for the long-distance fighting in the Pacific.

Narrator: The first B-29 mission over Tokyo from the Marianas was on November 24, 1944. It was so important to the Army Air Forces they made a film about it, narrated by Capt. Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan: Within a radius of 15 miles of the Imperial Palace live seven million Japanese, a people we used to think of as small, dainty, polite, concerning themselves only with floral arrangements and rock gardens and the cultivation of silk worms. But it isn't silk worms and it isn't Imperial Palaces these men are looking for. In the suburbs of Tokyo is the huge Nakajima aircraft plant. Well bud, what are you waiting for?

Narrator: The film overlooked the problems that plagued the B-29s.

Robert Rodenhouse, B-29 Pilot: The biggest problem was something that the Air Force discovered, that nobody ever knew about or heard about. And that is a jet stream. If we were going with the jet stream, our bombs were going over the target. And if were going against it, the bombs would be short of the target. We had a lot of bombs miss the target. Only 24 of the 111 planes on the first mission over Tokyo dropped bombs near the aircraft factory. Damage was negligible. For two months, LeMay had the same problems with high altitude flights. The jet stream and bad weather over Japan forced him to try something bold, something that had never been tried before.

Film Announcer: This quaint looking jellyfish contains enough gasoline to spread fire of 1000 degrees over 30 square yards. When dropped from a plane, it pancakes and spreads consuming flame like a fountain.

Narrator: The incendiary jelly napalm had just been developed in 1944 by DuPont and Standard Oil.

Donald Miller: The incendiaries were clusters of bombs all bundled together. When the bomb hits, the jelly gasoline spreads. It starts little fires. And his great hope was that the little fires would converge and create a large fire, an all-consuming urban conflagration. Here's Tokyo. Houses made of tarpaper, houses made of flimsy wood. You know, a bonfire and it just needed a match to strike it. And napalm is perfect for that. Narrator: LeMay's gamble was not using napalm. It was flying at low altitudes to avoid the winds. Low altitudes like the mission he had sent against Holland in 1943 with B-26s. "Not one B-26 came home that day," he remembered. "So that's what happens at low altitudes."

Robert Rodenhouse: To us that was totally absurd. We couldn't conceive of taking that airplane, designed for high altitude bombing, and bring it in there like it's a B- 26 Marauder. We thought they could throw the kitchen sink up there and hit us. My crew says, I think those generals lost their marbles.

Harry George: What are we doing here with an airplane at 5,000 feet, when it was-- we were trained to do missions above 20,000 feet?

Conrad Crane: When the B-29 crews heard that he was also taking away most of the armaments - the only bullets being left on board were for the tail guns, he was disarming the other guns -- they were really disturbed. They felt they were going in defenseless.
Narrator: In his memoirs, LeMay recalled the anguish of his decision.

Female Voice: "Dear General. This is the anniversary of my son Nicky being killed over Tokyo. You killed him, general."

Male Voice: If we go in low at night, I think we'll surprise the Japs, not only take out the guns and ammunition, take out the gunners too, less weight, fewer people jeopardized.

Female Voice: "I'm going to send you a letter each year on the anniversary of his death, to remind you." "Dear General, Dear General."

Male Voice: "We don't think their night fighters amount to anything. We don't think their night fighters amount to anything. And we could be wrong as hell."

Female Voice: "Dear General, this is the anniversary of my son, Nicky being killed over Tokyo." "Dear General, Dear General, Dear General."

Narrator: On March 9, 1945 Gen. Curtis LeMay dispatched 325 B-29s armed with incendiary bombs on the first low altitude mission against Japan. Among the targets in the Sumida district of Tokyo were several large factories that made airplane parts. War production was also dispersed in small factories and hundreds of households with drill presses and lathes. It was one of the most densely crowded areas in the world. Yoshiko Hashimoto's family lived in the Sumida district.

Yoshiko Hashimoto, Firebomb Survivor: From the beginning of 1945, the B-29 bombers flew over Tokyo more frequently. They came almost every night, and we would go to bed with our regular clothes on every night, then, we had the air raid the night of March 10.

Narrator: LeMay stayed up that night for the radio reports from his lead pilot. The early ones read: "Large fires observed. Flak moderate. Fighter opposition nil." The later ones read: "Conflagration".

Yoshiko Hashimoto: Warehouses, lined up on both sides of the river, were burning. Women's hair and men's clothes caught on fire. My mother took off her protective hood from her head,

put it on my head, and looked into my eyes. Without a protective hood, my mother's hair must have caught on fire after I jumped into the river. She must have died in agony. I cannot hold back my tears whenever I think about it, and cannot forget her sad face looking into mine.

Robert Rodenhouse: When we got over the target it was like a thousand Christmas trees lit up all over. And you could feel the heat when you're there, and-and you could smell the smoke and the stench of human and animal flesh as that city is being consumed by millions of fires all over. And they can't extinguish them. It's awesome. It's awesome.

Narrator: Next night LeMay was shown the photos. An aide remembered "a full minute of silence. 'All this is out,' LeMay then said, running a hand over several square miles of Tokyo. 'This is out -- this -- this.' " " 'It's all ashes,' another general said. 'All that - and that - and that.'" LeMay's B-29s had flown far below the jet stream, too low for the heavy anti-aircraft. His gamble had worked. The military targets were gone. As many as 100,000 civilians died that night. No bombing raid in the war had been more destructive.

Robert Rodenhouse: I'm sort of a religious person. I was brought up with a strong faith. And I couldn't understand why there was a God that would permit that to happen, and use me to see that it was being done, you know. And it bothered me a lot. It bothered me a lot. And I never forget I wrote home to my pastor about that, and he says, "You know, that's a secret that's known only to God. He did what He wanted to have done."

Harry George: Naturally we knew that there was going to be civilians killed, and I don't think we ever got to a point that "Hey, this is awful," you know. "Let's quit." We were directed to do these missions, and we did them.

Narrator: "Congratulations," Army Air Force's commander Gen. Henry Arnold wired from Washington. "This mission shows your crews have the guts for anything." Sixteen square miles

of Tokyo lay in ruins. 267,000 buildings - about one quarter of the city. "We don't pause," LeMay would write, "to shed any tears for uncounted hordes of Japanese who lie charred in that acrid-smelling rubble. The smell of Pearl Harbor fires is too persistent in our nostrils." He ordered more raids. On Nagoya, with its huge aircraft plants. Osaka, with its shipyards and steel mills. Kobe, Japan's major port. Back to Nagoya. "I thought it would be possible," he later recalled, "to knock-out all of Japan's major industrial cities during the next ten days." LeMay never got the chance. He ran out of bombs.

Edward Drea: You know, when you kill 100,000 people, civilians, you cross some sort of moral divide. Yet at the time, it was generally accepted that this was fair treatment, that the Japanese deserved this, that they had brought this on themselves. These are easy and simplistic wartime rationalizations. In retrospect though, some divide had been crossed. Civilians were now fair game.

Conrad Crane: This is the great escalation in the air war. It's a lot easier, once you've incinerated 100,000 Japanese in Tokyo, to drop an atomic bomb that's going to kill less than that, on Hiroshima.

Narrator: LeMay was later asked about the morality of the firebombing. "Every soldier thinks something of the moral aspects of what he is doing," he answered. "But all war is immoral and if you let that bother you, you're not a good soldier. I suppose if I had lost the war," he added, "I would have been tried as a war criminal." Emperor Hirohito inspected the ruins nine days after the firebombing. An aide noted victims "digging through the rubble with empty expressions on their faces that became reproachful as the Imperial motorcade went by. " The rebellion the emperor feared seemed more plausible. He counted on his subjects to endure and did nothing.

Richard Frank: When you talk about Japan's leadership, you have to bear in mind that all the important players who really had a role in deciding what was going to happen [to] Japan were

in Tokyo. These men watched Tokyo be burned down around them. And what is astonishing is, when you go back to the records of their meetings, you can go through this entire period and find but one perhaps stray reference by one of these men to the fact they are watching Tokyo burn down around them, and it's having no effect on their position with respect to what to do. Walt Moore, 1st Marine Division: Absolutely awesome. I couldn't believe what I could see. It was over the horizon. That many ships.

Jack Hoag, 6th Marine Division: Ships everyplace, thousands of them, as far as you could see.

Narrator: As the emperor toured Tokyo, the largest fleet ever assembled approached the Japanese island province of Okinawa. There were more than 40 carriers, 18 battleships, 200 destroyers. It was vaster than the invasion fleet at Normandy. Nearly 200,000 troops had boarded at 11 ports - from Seattle and San Francisco to Leyte in the Philippines.

George Niland, 6th Marine Division: We had the, that feeling of confidence, because all these big guns were firing in the air. And we thought, well, with all this artillery, they'll probably kill most of the Japs so it'll be easy.

Narrator: Their mission, as the Japanese high command had predicted, was to take Okinawa, and use it as a staging area for an invasion of Japan's main islands, only 350 miles away. The troops who landed knew this could be the Imperial Army's last battle before it defended the main islands. They knew the Japanese would fight to the death.

Jerome Connolly, U.S. Army Medic: Oh man. you're scared to death. There's no question about it. You're, you're as frightened as a man could be, as you go in.

Jack Hoag: But there was no shooting going on. Nothing happened. Which was real strange. Once in a while you would hear a gunshot someplace, but nothing happened.

George Niland, 6th Marine Division: Nothing. Zero. Everybody was shocked. There was no resistance at all.

Donald Miller: They went in on April 1 and they thought: What is this? An April Fool's joke? "Where are the Japs?" We got all this big buildup on the boat. And they told us about the ferocious snakes and the Japs are worse than the snakes, and we're going in there and it's going to be maybe the final battle. Then there's nobody on the beach?

Narrator: For five days, American forces were unopposed as they headed south. An admiral radioed Chester Nimitz, Commander of the Pacific Fleet, "I may be crazy, but it looks as if the Japanese have quit the war, at least in this sector."

Donald Miller: And Nimitz wired back, "Delete everything after 'I may be crazy.' "

Narrator: General Mitsuru Ushijima could smile from his mountain headquarters beneath ancient Shuri Castle. He was luring his enemy into a trap.

Donald Miller: Ushijima was very smart. He followed a theory the Americans called it the "cornered rat" theory. Terrain's everything here. And the southern part of the island, the terrain explains it, a series of ridges in the south. So he builds steel, concrete, and coral garrisons inside the mountains. So he has two things that you need to win a battle. He has concealment, and he's got the advantage of height.

Narrator: The first major line of defense was at Kakazu Ridge. Ushijima's command post was under Shuri Castle four miles south in the main line of defense. These ridges ran the width of the island. There were no open flanks. The Army's commander decided to storm the ridges.

Jerome Connolly: You got up every morning, and there'd be another craggy, rock-piled hill and the Army, infantry, would take off over whatever open ground there was. The Japs would then lay into them, and we'd try to keep them down with our machine guns. And that was like a continuum. Every day it was the same story, only different guys got hit and different guys got killed, I used to look at those infantry guys go across -- go across those fields. God, it's tough to believe.

Narrator: The Army sent in tanks.

Katsuo Nagata, Okinawan Student Conscript: We student conscripts were ordered to deliver bombs to Kakazu for destroying U.S. tanks. We carried 10 kg bombs on our shoulders and headed for Kakazu at night. The Americans launched a star shell and then came the gunfire. We had to hide in the shade whenever a star shell was up, but finally we managed to deliver the bombs to Kakazu. I heard that, the next morning when the tanks came, they armed the bombs and made suicide attacks into the tanks.

Narrator: After nearly a month of attack and counterattack, Marines relieved a shattered Army division.

George Niland: We got down there and - and we were in a particular place where wounded were left on stretchers. They had to evacuate very quickly. And we found the wounded Americans dismembered and mutilated horribly. And we found them laying there with their heads cut off, and their hands cut off, and their private parts in their mouths. We just hated them. God, did we hate them. And we wanted to kill them. You talk to the average Marine, he enjoyed it. And that sounds bloodthirsty, but it's true. You enjoyed it. That was one less Jap you had to worry about. They had not been killing "men," a veteran recalled. "They were wiping out dirty animals."

Jack Hoag: We just looked at them-- They were just- just something to eliminate. But we didn't think of them as humans or anything like that. If you see him, shoot him. And that's the way we all felt.

Donald Miller: When you're fighting an enemy that will not surrender, that considers surrender disgraceful, and punishes prisoners who do surrender for being unmanly, and treats them that way, this is a war that's going to fly out of control, and the atrocities really begin to mount.

Narrator: The Battle of Okinawa was just beginning. These pilots would help make it one of the most terrible in the history of warfare. Those who assembled on air bases on Kyushu on April 6, 1945 belonged to "special attack forces," kamikazes. The last desperate effort of the Japanese air force was to send pilots on a one-way mission. Corporal Masayuki Shimada remembers the ritual.

Masayuki Shimada, Kamikaze Pilot: This is a headband painted with my own blood. When I wrote my farewell letter in the barracks, I cut my little finger, used the blood to paint a Japanese flag on the headband, and wore it when I flew out the next day. The next morning, I went to the airfield right before 9 AM, where my superior officer made a speech of encouragement and we had a farewell toast. The twelve of us shook hands, said to each other, "See you at Yasukuni."

Narrator: Their reward would be a place of honor among the spirits of the war dead who dwelled at Yasukuni, the great Shinto shrine in Tokyo.

There even the emperor would bow. The pilots were told they would protect the empire as the divine wind the kamikaze, had seven centuries before. Kublai Khan and his huge Mongol armies invaded twice in the 13th century, only to be destroyed, at the last minute, by typhoons. These pilots would be the first wave of ten to try to cripple the US Navy supporting

the siege of Okinawa. "Remember the carriers," their commander urged. "The enemy has many ships. Do not attack the first ship you see."

Masayuki Shimada: In my plane, I found a message card, "We wish success to Corporal Shimada. From the maintenance crew." I was moved by it very much. Then, at a sign from the captain, we took off right away.

Narrator: Three hundred and fifty-five planes began the attack on April 6th. Kamikazes had attacked the Navy before, but never on such a scale.

Masayuki Shimada: One and a half hours passed, two hours passed and we came near Okinawa. I could no longer hold in my emotions and shouted out with the loudest possible voice, "Mother!" I don't remember calling for my father but I do remember I called for my mother.

Narrator: That same morning, a Japanese battleship slipped her moorings in Japan's Inland Sea and headed for Okinawa. The Yamato bore the ancient name for Japan. With 18-inch guns, she was the largest battleship ever built. She had no fighter escort. The symbol of Japan's pride had embarked on a suicide mission.

Yoshio Emoto, Japanese Imperial Navy: As the Yamato left the Bungo Strait, the captain gathered the officers and everyone on the crew to the deck and read out the orders he had received from the commander of the Imperial Navy. Our country is in a critical situation. It is time for all the one hundred-million Japanese people to stand up and prepare for the final battle. And we, the Yamato crew, should take the lead.

Narrator: The Yamato's mission was to attack the fleet of Okinawa. She never got that far. Her contribution would be to attract fighter planes from the US carriers and leave the fleet more vulnerable to kamikaze attacks.

Yoshio Emoto: I was up high and saw the five wakes of torpedoes coming toward us. The captain calmly accepted the situation. He did not react at all to the sound of the explosions. The torpedoes slammed into the side of the ship. I clearly remember the scene. The Yamato looked like a potato stabbed with hundreds of steel sticks.

Narrator: It would take 11 torpedoes and eight bombs to sink the Yamato. Most of the crew, more than 3,000 men, went down with her. Lt. Yoshio Emoto was one of 269 survivors.

Yoshio Emoto: Westerners often ask me how the Japanese could choose death over surrender. I have to bring up the traditional notion of sacrifice and heroism in the defense of the nation, "Yamato Damasii." It comes largely from the spirit of the Samurai. We were taught that "Yamato Damasii" was a virtue, a fundamental principle of the Japanese people. To be taken captive was against this principle, and the biggest shame and disgrace to us. On one mission, one of the men in my unit was shot and critically wounded. He was young and had a wife and small children. I asked him whether he wanted to leave a message for anyone. He said there was no message to leave. Then he faced the direction of the Imperial Palace, threw his hands in the air and said, "Long live the Emperor!" and died. I do not think that Westerners can fully understand this behavior.

Narrator: "There was a hypnotic fascination to a sight so alien to our Western philosophy," an admiral observed. "We watched each plunging kamikaze with the detached horror of one witnessing a terrible spectacle rather than as the intended victim."

Donald Miller: A lot of these kids were pretty clear-thinking. They were college graduates, the best and the brightest, many of them, in Japan. They're thinking in terms of community, family, which is everything to the Japanese‹protection of your parents, of your brothers and sisters, protection of your home village. If they could stop an invasion that would destroy

their country, their culture, their Emperor, and their villages, they will have done great things. So they took to the air. Hero gods of the sky.

Narrator: Two kamikazes attacked the aircraft carrier Bunker Hill on May 11.

Al Turnbull, U.S. Navy: Both of them strafed over my head, fortunately. But the second one dropped his bomb into the ready room that I had just left five minutes before. And then he turned his plane and dove into the carrier. And then the gasoline lines that were laid out on our deck - we were being refueled, ready to fly again - those caught on fire. And then whatever ammunition was laying out on the carrier deck, those all exploded. As soon as one plane would explode, it would set another on fire. And then that would explode. If there were bombs in the bomb bay, they would go off. You couldn't breathe it. It was intense. I mean, thick. There was no oxygen anywhere. The wind was coming back to the stern where we were. There's no place for us to go, except get out of that smoke, get away from that heat. It's going to kill you, if a bomb doesn't.

Donald Miller: Death on these ships was really awful. Everybody in the Pacific that served on the hospital ships said the worst scarring and the worst victims were the victims of the oil fires, you know, burned from head to foot. Everyone said that to see a burn victim in a state of agony was-was the worst kind of experience anyone could have in the war, except to be the victim himself. And this mentality of constantly being on alert, the warning, the attack, the warning, the attack, and a place coming right on you, drove a lot of guys beserk.

Narrator: In the ten waves of kamikaze attacks off Okinawa, Japan lost 1900 pilots. Corporal Shimada was not one of them. He had maintenance problems, an oil leak, and crashed off a small island. After six weeks he managed to get back to his base.

Masayuki Shimada: I said, "I wish to go on another mission. Please prepare a plane for me." To my surprise the officer was angry and yelled at me, "How could you come back alive? You

must have spared your own life." "You idiot!" I was angry, my hands were trembling with rage. They called us war gods. For the first time I realized that I was regarded merely as part of the plane. Isn't it natural that I decided not to sacrifice my life again?

Narrator: In the sea off Okinawa the US Navy suffered its greatest losses of World War II -- almost 10,000 killed or wounded. The Japanese sank 30 American ships and damaged 368 others. Chester Nimitz, admiral of the Pacific fleet, was appalled. In April he had agreed to a strategy of invading Japan. After two months in the Okinawa campaign, he cabled Washington that he could no longer support it. Many on the front lines shared his concern.

George Niland: And we started getting instructions on invading Japan. And we considered ourselves dead men. We really did. We knew we wouldn't survive.

Part Two: Invading Japan

Narrator: In May 1945 US forces in Europe celebrated victory over the Nazis. Some would occupy Germany. Others would return home. Many would redeploy to the Pacific for the invasion of Japan. Imperial Army troops in China had already begun pulling back to Japan to thwart the anticipated American invasion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff met May 25th to plan the invasion. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall took the lead.

Edward Drea, Historian: It wasn't only because Marshall was an Army man that he pushed for an invasion. Marshall believed that a democracy really just couldn't fight a seven years war. He didn't know how much longer the American people could endure this. If that was the case, then it was imperative to end this war as soon as possible. The most direct way to do that was through an invasion of Japan.

Narrator: The Chiefs set a date: November 1st. The island of Okinawa, once secure, would be a staging area for the invasion. In early May, after a month of fighting, US forces approached

Japan's main defensive line. There was a hill on it Marines called Sugar Loaf. One remembers it as "a pimple of a hill." "You could have run the 600 yards across that plain and up Sugar Loaf Hill," he recalled, "in a few minutes." The defenses of General Mitsuru Ushijima, Japan's commander on Okinawa, were so thorough, it would take the 6th Marine Division seven days and 14 attempts. By some counts, the battle for Sugar Loaf Hill was the hardest for Americans anywhere in World War II.

George Niland, 6th Marine Division: When we first went up Sugar Loaf Hill, we had a number of people shot in the back. Couldn't believe it. How do you get shot in the back when you're assaulting a hill? But it was coming from all sides. And the Japs were just zeroing in on us.

Narrator: Marines encountered fire from positions dug into the front of the hill, mortars lobbed from the back of the hill, fire from neighboring hills and artillery from Shuri Castle almost a mile away. Sugar Loaf could be re- supplied by tunnels. They ran from Shuri Castle to all the supporting hills. If Sugar Loaf fell, General Ushijima's main line of defense would collapse. Marines soon realized it was not about to fall.

George Niland: We found out that Okinawa had been used for a Japanese artillery range for over 50 years. So they knew every inch of it. And they could drop a shell in your back pocket so we were completely exposed, going up that hill.

Narrator: The Marines tried again.

Irvin Gehret, 6th Marine division: We just went down there, and then when we got on the hill, and all this open ground behind us, they shot us up and killed a lot of people wounded a lot of people, at least a third of our company.

Donald Miller, Historian: Sacrificial charges. They get repelled again and again. They actually get to the summit, get in a firefight with the Japanese, and get pushed off the rock, pushed off the hill.

Narrator: The Marines kept assaulting Sugar Loaf Hill.

George Niland: We took that hill 13 times. Thirteen times. In the night, they'd come back from the back of the hill, from under the hill, from beside the hill, and they'd counterattack. We suffered terrible casualties, and we'd have to pull back a little bit.

Narrator: Torrential rains and mud also hindered their advance. There was no way to bury the dead. The Marines lived among them. Nighttime brought its own terrors.

Donald Miller: These sneak attacks at night, it's psychological warfare. And it works in a lot of cases. It drove a lot of Marines nuts.

Irvin Gehret: This one person, he was right next to me. And it was a trench that we were in, waiting for the word to move out. All of a sudden he started crying and pulling grass out and putting it in his mouth, and stuff like that.

Narrator: More than twelve hundred Marines would leave the battle of Sugar Loaf Hill with what was called "combat fatigue". On the seventh day, the artillery fire that softened up Sugar Loaf Hill and its neighboring hills was unusually heavy. Then the Marines cleared out the side hills. Tanks encircled Sugar Loaf and attacked the backside caves. After seven days, the battle of Sugar Loaf Hill was over. Okinawa's main line of defense began to crumble. General Ushijima began to retreat. American casualties at Sugar Loaf Hill were more than 2,500. Emperor Hirohito wanted a final decisive battle. General Ushijima was trying to wage it.

Donald Miller: The idea is to bleed the Americans. It's a dual strategy. You can't win the war, but you can bleed them to such an extent that we can get better peace terms. The longer we prolong it, the longer that fleet sits out there and is susceptible to kamikaze air attack. They thought the combination of the two a long war of savage attrition, taking casualties, and then the slaughter at sea might convince the Americans that an invasion would be insanity.

Narrator: As the Imperial Army lost ground on Okinawa, Japan prepared for the final decisive battle on the main islands - Ketsu-Go. The plan was to destroy troop ships before they reached the beaches. Japan had more than 5,000 conventional warplanes to defend against an invasion. More than 5,000 kamikazes. 1,300 miniature suicide submarines. Several hundred piloted bombs.

Edward Drea: It was really little more than a rocket with a man in it, just to aim into a ship. The Japanese were going to use suicide frogmen with explosives strapped around them, to go and blow up landing craft.

Narrator: The Imperial Army planned to counterattack the US forces that made it to land. Civilians, attached to military units, were prepared to fight with sharpened bamboo spears.

Edward Drea: My Japanese professor was about 11 or 12 years old in 1945, and he told me they were taught to rush at an American tank with a satchel charge full of explosives, roll under the tank, and set it off. I mean, he was actually being trained to do this.

Richard Frank, Author: The Japanese had a substantial basis to believe that Ketsu-Go could deliver something to them better than unconditional surrender.

Narrator: General Korechika Anami became War Minister in April and the head of the pro-war faction in the government. He was a passionate defender of Ketsu-Go. General Anami was really the personification of a Japanese soldiers, soldier. He was athletic. Anami was quite

good at Japanese stick fighting or kendo. He seemed to be the typical samurai who cared about his troops, who told staff officers, "Get the hell out of my way. What are we doing for the troops?" Foreign minister Shigenori Togo began to doubt if Japan could continue the war. A report he commissioned warned people were growing critical even rebellious. The US blockade and firebombing had taken a toll.

Akira Iriye, Historian: I was about down to 44 pounds. And I remember writing to my mother about it, and she was so upset because that sounded like a complaint, that I was complaining about something. We were all undernourished, and all kind of skin diseases. I mean, lice were all over your hair. I mean, there was no sanitation. You-you would not want to turn these 10-year-olds into any kind of fighting soldiers. They couldn't even fight the lice.

Narrator: Togo warned the military, Ketsu-Go would destroy Japan. "If we can not fulfill our responsibility to the throne," replied a furious Anami, "We should offer our sincere apologies by committing hara-kiri." At an Imperial conference on June 8th, Anami argued that the entire nation should fight to the death. Then Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma, an advisor to the Emperor, presented the report Togo had commissioned.

Edward Drea: Hiranuma, comes in and says, "Well, wait. Our industries are wrecked. We're short of food. If we have a poor harvest, the people will starve to death. There's beginnings of popular unrest, the way this war has gone. We've had a series of defeats." And everyone says, "Well, yes, but let's fight to the bitter end." The extremity of their situation actually propels them to seek a decisive battle before their condition becomes so hapless, they can't even do that.

Narrator: The Emperor had hoped the final decisive battle would be on Okinawa. On Okinawa the US Army and Marines were destroying the last line of Japanese resistance cave by cave. Jack Hoag, 6th Marine Division: You'd get the interpreter up there, beg 'em to come out. And they wouldn't come out. They might send somebody out and shoot at you or something like

that. So, so you'd just seal them up. A lot of them that were sealed, they'd get a bulldozer in there and just cover up the entrance to the cave.

Walter Moore, 1st Marine Division: The horrible thing about flame is, it doesn't have to hit you. It sucks out all the oxygen. And you'd see people in the caves, soldiers Japanese, not a mark on them. They suffocated because there was no more oxygen to breathe. It was gone.

Narrator: Marines learned not to trust those who surrendered even civilians.

George Niland: Some people came out, and this old lady in a kimono. She looked old. And uh, she pulled out a grenade from under her armpit and threw it at a corporal. It was an American grenade. I don't know where she got it. But she pulled the pin and threw it and blew him to kingdom come. And I saw her do it. And so I shot her. And quite a few others.

Narrator: Many civilians in the caves, like those on Saipan, preferred death before surrender. Forty-six student nurses shared a cave with the army.

Ruri Miyara, Student nurse: Suddenly, I heard a call for surrender coming from above: "Are there any soldiers or civilians in the cave? Come out naked if you are a man and come out waving a handkerchief if you are a woman!" He repeated the call again and again, but no one responded. We had been told not to be captured. Captives would be despised as traitors, forever bringing shame to themselves and to their entire family. We had also been told that the Americans would kill men instantly and women would be raped and run over by tanks. Again, the voice said, "We are going to blow up this cave if you don't come out!" Still, no one responded. Some Japanese soldiers started firing and in response the American soldiers threw in a grenade. I clung to rugged rocks and raised my head only to be choked. Everybody started screaming, "Mother, help me!" "Father, help me!", "Teacher, help me!", "I can't breathe!" "Help!" "Help!" I don't remember waking up, but my friend told me later that I was buried under dead bodies.

Narrator: Only seven of the 46 student nurses survived.

(Mrs. Miyara sings Umi Yukaba, subtitles)
Across the sea, corpses in the water, Across the mountain, corpses in the field.
(Her singing segues into Umi Yukaba anthem for "Ushijima cave")

Narrator: As Americans approached General Ushijima's cave, he retreated to its depths. For a general death before surrender entailed a ritual. He knelt - facing north toward the Imperial Palace.

Subtitles of first verse of Umi Yukaba continue:
I shall die for the Emperor. I shall never look back.

Narrator: After 82 days, the battle of Okinawa was over. More than 70,000 died trying to defend it. More than 12,000 died trying to take it. An additional 36,000 were wounded. Almost one-third of the invasion force were casualties. The survivors would invade Japan.

Conrad Crane, Historian: Reporters are saying that the Japanese are the best cave and hill fighters in the world, And Okinawa is just an inkling of what's going to come when we actually hit the main Japanese islands.

Donald Miller: The American people were anxious to end this thing. There's a sense of "over by '45." But nothing in the character of these battles gave any indication that the Japanese were going to surrender.

Edward Drea: How do you end this, on both sides? I mean, you have to achieve an understanding. Now, with the Nazis it was pretty easy. The understanding was: We've walked over your entire country. You surrendered. Well, Japan hadn't been walked over. What was

the understanding? What was the basis for war termination? Because the Japanese wouldn't say surrender. How do you end it? How do you end it quickly? How do you end it efficiently?

Narrator: These questions faced America's new President, Harry Truman, who succeeded Franklin Roosevelt after he died in April. Okinawa was Truman's first battle as commander-in-chief, and it weighed heavily on him. "Shall we invade Japan proper or shall we bomb and blockade?" he wrote in his diary on June 17th. "That is my hardest decision to date." When he met with his advisors the next day, Truman was more concerned about casualties than a quick end to the war. Army Chief-of-Staff George Marshall was less concerned about casualties than ending the war quickly. He presented the invasion plan the Chiefs had agreed on. To establish air bases the US would invade southern Kyushu with nine divisions. Intelligence predicted six Japanese divisions would have to defend the entire coastline. On beaches in the south, invaders would outnumber the defenders by three to one. The Kyushu bases would facilitate air support for an assault on Tokyo in 1946. Truman never got a forthright answer on potential casualties.

Richard Frank: Marshall essentially evades giving a direct answer to that question. At one point, Admiral Leahy, Truman's chief of staff, suggests it'll be like Okinawa, 35% of the committed forces. Since we're talking about using about 776,000 men on Kyushu, that works out to more than 200,000 casualties. But nobody works that out.

Barton Bernstein, Historian: This is really the 5- star general talking to the World War I captain, ten weeks or so in office, still new and uneasy in the position, and here's a older, seasoned warrior, a man who commands great respect, Marshall, and he lectures the President. And at one point he tells the President basically, "Don't delay things and be irresolute. It's important to make tough decisions and be a leader."

Narrator: Hoping to avoid what he called an "Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other," Truman approved only the Kyushu landing and only after all the Chiefs endorsed it. He

postponed a decision on invading Tokyo. Only two weeks after committing himself to a fight to the finish, the Emperor summoned his war cabinet. It was June 22nd, the day Okinawa fell to the Americans.

Richard Frank: The Emperor's conference with this inner Cabinet was indeed a critical moment, and extremely unusual in the nature of Japanese politics, because the Emperor in fact took the lead, indicated that he wanted the government to actively pursue a diplomatic option mediating an end to the war. Not surrendering. Mediating an end to the war that would be acceptable to Japan.

Narrator: The diplomatic option also had to be acceptable both to General Anami, who led the military faction in the war cabinet, and to Foreign Minister Togo, who led an emerging peace faction. The Emperor had been warned the Soviet Union might enter the war against Japan. Nonetheless, the war cabinet decided to ask the Soviet Union to mediate.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Historian: For military, I think it is very important to keep Soviet out of the war. They were quite aware that they couldn't afford to have two-front war. And Togo thought that. Moscow approach, I think, is crucial to terminate the war.

Narrator: There was no decision on what peace terms Japan might offer. As Hirohito made overtures to the Soviets, Truman set off to meet their leader, Joseph Stalin. He went to the Berlin suburb of Potsdam to discuss post-war Europe with Allied leaders. And to see that Stalin kept a promise to enter the war against Japan after Germany was defeated. The Allies had promised Stalin territorial concessions if he entered the war. Stalin told Truman he would -- on August 15th. Truman's diary entry that night read: "Fini Japs when that comes about." In Potsdam, Truman received word from the director of the Manhattan project. The atom bomb had been tested successfully at Alamogordo, New Mexico. "Believe Japs will fold-up before Russia comes in," he wrote. " I am sure they will when Manhattan appears over their homeland." Within days after these optimistic diary entries, intelligence from intercepted

Japanese military cables, called Ultra, was alarming. In June the invasion planners projected three Japanese divisions in southern Kyushu.By July there was evidence of nine divisions - triple the number in just one month.

Edward Drea: Ultra told a startling story in July of 1945. Japanese units were moving into southern Kyushu at an alarming rate. It was as if the in very invasion beaches were magnets drawing the Japanese forces to those places where the Americans would have to land and fight their way ashore. It was very clear in the messages that the Japanese intended to fight to the bitter end.

Narrator: These intercepts were so secret that no one who saw them, including the President, was supposed to write about them. There is some evidence Truman saw the intercept dated July 25th.

Richard Frank: With Truman, we have this extraordinary entry in his diary on the 25th of July, 1945, where he talks about meeting in the morning with General Marshall and British Admiral Mountbatten, and they talked about the tactical and political situation. Well, there's no place in the world that US forces are engaged in a tactical battle on the 25th of July. It seems pretty clear to me that he must be talking about the intercepts. And what Truman is doing with that entry is leaving a cryptic message to us, down through the years: I saw, I saw, I saw.

Narrator: That happened to be the night Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent a wire authorizing the use of the atomic bomb.

Barton Bernstein, Historian: There was no reason not to do it. It made good sense. And it was not a weighty matter. In the framework of mid-1945, for Truman and those around him, the answer was self-evident. Nobody around him had any sustained and serious doubts about

using the bomb. It was the implementation of a long-run assumption, rooted in the FDR administration, and sharing many of the same advisors.

Conrad Crane: There's no way that any American president, faced with the expenditures that's been put into the project, faced with the casualties in the Pacific, could not have used that bomb. What would have come out later if all of a sudden the invasion went in and had all these casualties, and American public found out later that, well, we had this super-bomb but we didn't want to use it because we thought we were going to kill too many Japanese? Just couldn't make that decision.

Richard Frank: Nobody knew for sure what it would take to get the Japanese to yield. We're going to do everything we have been doing, and we're going to add the Soviets, and we're going to add the bomb, and we're going to add the invasion and hope that at some point in this process the Japanese crack and surrender.

Narrator: Truman was advised he might save American lives if he dropped the demand for unconditional surrender and allowed Japan to keep the Emperor. The idea had originated with Joseph Grew, former ambassador to Japan, now the Undersecretary of State. Secretary of War Henry Stimson also favored this conditional surrender. Truman had sailed to Europe with Stimson's draft of a warning the allies would give Japan. He recommended the Emperor remain as a constitutional monarch like the King of England. But it was James Byrnes, the Secretary of State, who had Truman's ear aboard ship. The Nazis had surrendered unconditionally, and he believed, Americans would demand the same of Hirohito.

Barton Bernstein: Byrnes is the most savvy politician in the administration. He was a leader of the Senate at the time that Truman was really a junior Senator. He was a mentor to Truman. Byrnes is the kind of person who worried about the electorate, who worried about domestic politics. It didn't take great perception to read the polls of early June 1945, and

discover that most Americans hated the Emperor, hated the Emperor system, wanted the destruction of both Hirohito and the system, and saw this as responsible for the war.

Narrator: Truman sided with Byrnes. If at Potsdam he had allowed Japan to keep the Emperor, many historians have argued, Japan might have surrendered before the atomic bomb was dropped. Intercepts, codenamed Magic, of the exchange between Foreign Minister Togo in Tokyo and Japan's Ambassador in Moscow, Naotake Sato, tell a different story.

Edward Drea: Ambassador Sato is very clear. The best you're going to get out of this is what he calls unconditional surrender, and then he thinks better of that and refines it to mean: Of course we would retain the imperial institution. But it would still be a surrender. And this is the best you're going to get.

Richard Frank: And all he gets back in response to that is, "No, no, no. We can't accept anything like unconditional surrender, and certainly not simply a modification to provide for a guarantee of the imperial institution." The foreign minister, Togo, says that in the name of the Japanese government. That's all enshrined in black and white, in the Magic Diplomatic Summary of July 22nd, 1945. In my view, it leaves no reasonable room for doubt that simply offering a promise about the Imperial institution would have secured the surrender of Japan.

Narrator: The Potsdam Declaration, issued July 26, 1945, was an ultimatum calling on Japan to surrender unconditionally and without delay or "risk prompt and utter destruction." It also offered various terms for Japan to rejoin the family of nations, It was signed by the allies in the war against Japan but not by the Soviet Union, which had not yet declared war. When the ultimatum arrived in Tokyo, Japan's prime minister Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, said the government intended to ignore it.

Haruo Iguchi, Historian: Since the Soviet Union's name did not appear as one of the countries that had signed the Potsdam Declaration why don't we wait for their final word with regard to whether or not they can mediate?

Richard Frank: When the Potsdam Declaration was issued, within the inner sanctum of the Japanese government, even what we regard as the moderates deemed the Potsdam Declaration as a sign of weakening American will; that we had already offered all these terms before the first drop of blood was shed in the invasion. And they were fortified in the belief that they should just press on.

Narrator: The Potsdam Declaration had said, "We shall brook no delay." By August 5, after nine days, Japan had not officially responded. Hirohito did not press his government to accept it. Instead, he worried about how to preserve the Imperial Regalia, emblems of the legitimacy of his rule. The sacred mirror, symbol of the sun goddess, was worshipped at the Grand Shrine at Ise. The sacred sword, symbol of bravery, was preserved at the Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya City. The sacred curved jewel, symbol of affection, was enshrined at the Imperial Palace. The Emperor wanted all of them at the palace for protection.

Donald Miller: Here's a man who ought to be thinking about his children as he called them, his people. Instead, his insiders say he was concerned about the insignia and symbols of office, all the things that gave him, in a sense, sovereignty and invested him with power. He was more concerned about the destruction of his power than the destruction of his country.

Narrator: On August 6th, the day an atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, Hirohito was still waiting for a response from Moscow. It was a response that Ambassador Sato had said would never come.

Harry Truman, U.S. president: It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July the 26th was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected

that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as they have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.

Narrator: General Marshall, the advocate of invasion, was having second thoughts. In July the intercepts identified nine divisions protecting Kyushu. On August 6th, they identified 13. For Marshall, it was a preview of hell. The landings at Normandy had been costly but successful. Marshall began to question if the invasion plans for Japan would succeed. He asked General Douglas MacArthur, who was to command the invasion, to consider moving the landing to northern Japan.

Edward Drea: Just imagine you're George Marshall, and on the eve of the Normandy invasion, you suddenly tell Dwight Eisenhower, "Hey, don't invade Normandy. Why don't we reschedule the whole thing and invade Norway, where the German defenses are weaker?" Well, I mean, the mind boggles because of all the work, all the effort, all the planning that's gone into this. Yet this is really, in effect, what Marshall is saying to MacArthur in August of 1945.

Narrator: The warning had been raised by his own intelligence officer, yet MacArthur downplayed it. Douglas MacArthur was determined to lead the greatest invasion in the history of warfare. One way to make an invasion possible, Marshall thought, would be to destroy beach defenses with atomic bombs. The Manhattan Project informed him at least seven would be ready by November 1st.

Edward Drea: Marshall is now planning to use atomic bombs as really as tactical support weapons against the Japanese beach defenses, to precede the landing by the American units almost as if it were naval gunfire support.

Richard Frank: The scientists had calculated that anybody who'd be killed by radiation would have already been killed by a rock or blast or heat. You read the contemporary planning documents, and you see that there is no appreciation of the potential danger of immediate or lingering radiation.

Edward Drea: If this would have happened, the invaders of the land of the gods would have entered the world of the dead on both sides.

Narrator: Just before mid-night on August 8th, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Fearing the atomic bomb would end the war before he entered, Stalin advanced the date. The Red Army launched the largest land operation of the Pacific war against the Japanese in Manchuria. At the same time U.S. forces were readying a second atomic bomb. For three days after the Hiroshima bombing, the Japanese government had not met. With the hope for Soviet mediation shattered, the War Cabinet gathered at 10:30 AM on August 9th to discuss the Potsdam Declaration. Foreign Minister Togo led the peace faction urging acceptance with one condition preserving the Emperor although stripped of his powers.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Historian: What prompted "peace party" is a profound fear that the Soviet influence, if allowed to continue then that would lead to the end of monarchical system.

Narrator: "The inevitable has come," said General Anami, who feared a two-front war. Yet Anami and the militarists, still confident in Ketsu-Go, favored adding three additional conditions: there would be no occupation, the Japanese military would disarm itself and the military would try its own war criminals.

Haruo Iguchi, Historian: They really lacked reality picture. They uh, it's rather amazing that they were audacious enough to hammer out such unrealistic three conditions attached to the preservation of the Imperial Throne.

Narrator: Anami told the war cabinet he was certain America only had one atomic bomb. It was at that time, just before 1:00 PM on August 9th, that word reached the meeting a second bomb had hit Nagasaki. The war cabinet was divided over surrender. The full cabinet then met. It too was divided. Only the Emperor could break the deadlock. He met first with his principal advisor, Marquis Koichi Kido.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa: And Kido had very important meeting with Emperor in that afternoon, that lasted for long time, unusually long time. That meant they met substantial issues. Emperor resisted to accept Togo's narrowest definition, and expanded it to include Emperor's political rule. In other words that one condition should not be merely preservation imperial house, but the preservation of emperor's status within the national law. He wanted actual power.

Narrator: The emperor wanted the powers he then enjoyed, the powers granted his grandfather under the constitution of 1868. When the emperor's inner circle met with him that night, Baron Hiranuma, a Shinto fundamentalist, tried to further solidify the emperor's powers.

Edward Drea: Hiranuma's argument was the constitution was irrelevant. The imperial line predated the Meiji constitution of 1868. The origin of Japan was the origin of the imperial house, and that was a divine event because the imperial family descended from the gods, long before any constitution existed. It was irrelevant to discuss the emperor's prerogatives in terms of legal arrangements. The emperor transcended those worldly forms. He was a transcendent being.

Narrator: The emperor broke the deadlock. Japan sent word to Washington it accepted the Potsdam Declaration with one condition that it did not "prejudice the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler." These prerogatives would give the emperor the power to

prevent the US from demilitarizing and democratizing Japan. This was not the powerless, symbolic emperor like the King of England that Togo and some of Truman's advisors - had imagined. Japan's response to the Potsdam Declaration arrived in Washington August 10th. Even after two atomic bombs, no one expected surrender so soon. Secretary of War Stimson dropped vacation plans to attend a cabinet meeting.

Richard Frank: Stimson took the lead. He urged Truman to accept the Japanese offer. Stimson told Truman that if we don't use the emperor to obtain an organized capitulation of the Japanese armed forces, we could be facing a score of Iwo Jimas or Okinawas across the Asian continent, in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. And that's an analogy to a casualty figure somewhere between 600,000 and almost a million. And Stimson isn't even talking about the home islands.

Narrator: Truman told his cabinet that telegrams he had already received were overwhelmingly against accepting Japan's offer. To Secretary of State Byrnes, these expressions of public opinion mattered.

Barton Bernstein: Byrnes said, "This will mean the crucifixion of the President." Wonderfully dramatic metaphor. That is, if the President accedes to retaining the imperial system, and presumably the emperor, he, the President, is going to be destroyed at home. This is the fear of the backlash.

Narrator: Byrnes got support from an unexpected quarter. Retaining the emperor had been the idea of Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew and Japan experts in the State Department, including Joseph Ballantine. They were derided by some as "emperor worshippers," but they knew what Baron Hiranuma meant by "imperial prerogatives".

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa: Ballantine immediately he said, "Oh, this is bad news. This is Imperial prerogatives." That means we are going to maintain the source of Japanese militarism. And that would be in contradiction with the basic objectives of the United States.

Narrator: Byrnes was in a tough position. To reject Japan's offer might prolong the war and give the Soviets a foothold in Japan and a role in the occupation The response Byrnes drafted for Truman sidestepped the fate of the emperor but made it clear he would not be in charge. "From the moment of surrender," it read, "the authority of the emperor and the Japanese government shall be subject to the Supreme Commander Allied PowersŠ" When Byrnes's response arrived in Japan, the war cabinet was once again split. For three rancorous days, General Anami led those opposing surrender. On August 14 the emperor intervened once again and imposed his will. "It is my belief," he said with sadness, "that continuation of the war promises nothing but additional destruction." Just before midnight, he recorded a surrender message. Within the hour, junior officers launched a coup d'etat, with the murder of two leaders of the Palace Guard. The rebels ransacked the Imperial Palace, hoping to destroy the surrender message. They burned the homes of Prime Minister Suzuki and Baron Hiranuma calling them pro- American traitors. General Anami never condemned the coup, but he never backed it. Without his support, it was doomed. Anami's last act was that of a proud Japanese warrior who had fought his battle and lost.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa: Anami's ritual suicide was very, very important symbolic meaning, because this is the end of Imperial army. So that's a clean break. This is end of the army.

Narrator: In a radio broadcast at noon on August 15th, Japanese people heard something they had never heard before their emperor's voice. He never mentioned "defeat" or "surrender".

Edward Drea: In essence what the emperor says is, "Things didn't quite go our way. The situation did not develop to our advantage." I mean, this is one of the classic understatements

in world history, when he looks around at this ruined empire and says, "Well, it didn't, didn't quite go as we expected." Well, okay. Surely didn't.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa: This is totally devoid of personal responsibility or responsibility of Japan causing that war.

Richard Frank: He also specifically singles out the atomic bomb as being a reason for the surrender, saying that the Americans are so unusually cruel and savage that to spare humanity from further such barbarities, I will end the war.

Narrator: The emperor, who had worried about a rebellion from his subjects, helped ensure his position by posing as their savior.

Harry Truman: I have received this afternoon a message from the Japanese government. I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan. In the reply there is no qualification.

Narrator: Word of the Japanese surrender would soon reach anxious American forces poised for the invasion.

George Niland: You couldn't believe how happy we were. It was like getting a death sentence revoked. You know, it just, it was wonderful.

Narrator: The emperor directed a special surrender message to his armed forces. He never mentioned the bomb but stressed the Soviet entry into the war.

Richard Frank: From the standpoint of securing their compliance, Soviet intervention was a far, far more potent argument. The prospect of massive Soviet armies sweeping down across Asia and confronting them, was a very real and intimidating prospect.

Conrad Crane: I think the best explanation of why the Japanese surrender is it's because a whole series of shocks that occur. Both bombs were important. And I think that the Russian invasion also is very important. Hard to weight which are more important. But I think it's worth saying that there's a certain equality there; that they are both very important.

Narrator: In explaining Japan's defeat, Hirohito wrote to his son, "Our military men placed too much weight on spirit and forgot about science." His wife, Empress Nagako, seemed to agree. A few days after the surrender, she wrote, "Every day from morning to night, B-29s, naval bombers, and fighters freely fly over the palace... making an enormous noise... As I sit at my desk writing and look up at the sky, countless numbers are passing over... Unfortunately," she added, "the B-29 is a splendid plane."