

# The Information War in the Pacific, 1945

Josette H. Williams

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平和 此のビラを持って居る者は敵兵を助けるべきではありません。敵兵に依つて良い事を行います。早く上官の所に連れて来ませう。

## THE BEARER HAS CEASED RESISTANCE TREAT HIM IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW. TAKE HIM TO THE NEAREST COMMANDING OFFICER. C-IN-C AMERICAN FORCES

TRANSLATION OF TEXT

LIFE SAVING LEAFLET  
1. The American Forces will aid all who follow the instructions given in this leaflet.  
2. Good treatment—food, clothing, tobacco, medical treatment, etc.—will be accorded in accordance with International Law.  
3. HOW TO USE THIS LEAFLET  
1. Come slowly toward the American line with your hands raised high above your head, and carry only this leaflet.  
2. Come one by one. Do not come in groups.  
3. Men must wear only pants or loincloth. Sufficient clothing will be provided. Women and children may come dressed as they are.  
4. Do not approach American lines at night.  
5. This leaflet may be used by anyone—Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Civilian, etc.  
6. Those who do not have leaflets may advise us the American line if they follow instructions or if they had a leaflet.

いのち たす 生命を助けるビラ

NO 311

一、此のビラを持って居る方は捕縛される人はアメリカ軍に助けられます。

二、そして国際法によつて良い食糧、食料、着衣、煙草、タバコ等を與へます。

### 此のビラの使い方

一、相手と互に高く掲げて、このビラの他には何も持たないでアメリカ軍の方へゆっくり進んで来なさい。

二、一人で一人で一人づつ来なさい。

三、別は糧食もしくは煙草だけを助け、又は自分の着て居る着衣で立し。直ぐ必要な着衣をあげます。

四、夜間は絶対にアメリカ軍の所へ来てはいけません。

五、此ビラは日本人軍兵も、朝鮮人も、フィリピン人も使へます。

六、此のビラを持たなくても、右の通り先述通りにすれば立しのです。

Leaflet used throughout the Pacific islands to promote the voluntary surrender of Japanese combatants in World War II. (All documents and photos provided by the author)

Josette H. Williams is a freelance writer and editor. Her article draws on US government records and the personal papers of her father, a senior official with the Office of War Information.

In August 1945, the world went into a state of shock at the sheer devastating power of nuclear weapons. Over fifty years later, that shock still eclipses the fascinating story of how the Japanese nation actually came to surrender. Many Americans believe that the

surrender immediately followed the use of the atomic bomb. Worse, young Japanese seem to consider the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to be isolated incidents without cause. Ignorance of the history of August 1945 may turn out to

be one of the lamentable legacies of World War II.

There is no question that the Allies' superior military power and determined spirit defeated Japan. But it was the Allies' communication network that provided war information directly to the Japanese people and an unprecedented response by the Emperor that pushed Japan to accept this defeat. What follows is the story of the US Office of War Information (OWI) and the dramatic role it played in the surrender of the Japanese empire.

### The Office of War Information

The contributions of the Office of War Information at the end of the war in the Pacific have been cited briefly in many publications, but the full story has never been told<sup>1</sup> OWI was responsible for using information warfare to promote distrust of Japanese military leaders, lower Japanese military and civilian morale, and encourage surrender. Information was disseminated by radio and leaflet both to the Japanese mainland

<sup>1</sup> The Office of War Information was established by President Roosevelt on 13 June 1942, under Executive Order 9182, "in recognition of the right of the American people and of all other peoples opposing the Axis aggressors to be truthfully informed about the common war effort." Subsequent Executive Orders empowered OWI to conduct such propaganda abroad as would contribute to victory. For additional information, see: "Statement of Secretary of State Byrnes to the House Appropriations Sub-committee," *Congressional Record*, 19 February 1946

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and to enemy forces hidden on Allied-occupied Pacific islands.

OWI was manned by civilians and supported by military liaison personnel. The Director, Elmer Davis, reported to Secretary of State James Byrnes. Policy decisions were subject to the approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, coordinated by Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Edward Barrett managed the Overseas Branch; Bradford Smith was chief of Central Pacific Operations in Honolulu; and Richard Hubert, the author's father, headed the forward area on Saipan.

The communication network was complex. OWI monitored Radio Tokyo broadcasts through its offices in San Francisco, where they were summarized and relayed to Washington. Response and new copy were composed and coded in Washington, then relayed through Honolulu to OWI's printing presses and radio station on Saipan. Printed text was paraphrased to avoid breaking the code.

Saipan, one of the Mariana Islands, had been controlled by Japan since 1918. It was captured by the 2nd and 4th US Marine Divisions and 27th US

Army Division on 7 July 1944 in one of the costliest battles of World War II. In 29 days of fighting, more than 3,000 US soldiers and almost 30,000 Japanese lost their lives. It was a decisive battle—Saipan's location, 1,200 miles southeast of Tokyo, put Japan and China within range of Allied bombers, provided a staging area for invasion of the Japanese homeland, and allowed direct transmission of radio broadcasts to the Japanese people.

After securing the island, US forces remained on Saipan, guarding Japanese prisoners of war, constructing a huge airbase, staging bombing runs, and supporting the civilian OWI psychological warfare effort. From Saipan, OWI bombarded Japan with radio messages through its 50,000-watt standard-wave station on Saipan, Radio KSAI. The station also picked up 100,000-watt short-wave transmissions from the OWI station in Honolulu and relayed them to Japan. Japanese language broadcasts consisted of news on the status of the war, bombing warnings, and messages from Japanese prisoners of war on Saipan urging surrender. KSAI radio transmissions served many purposes: to Japan's civilian government, they were a vital source of news, received at a time when the fanaticism of the Japanese militarists denied civilian leaders access to information about the status of the war; to hidden Japanese soldiers on occupied Pacific

islands, they tempted surrender by promising fair treatment as prisoners of war; and to Allied flight crews, the around-the-clock OWI radio transmissions beamed home the B-29s, saving planes and lives.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, newspapers and leaflets in the Japanese language were printed on Saipan. From there, Air Force B-29s flying at 20,000 feet dropped 500-pound M-16 fire bomb containers converted into leaflet casings. These opened at 4,000 feet to deploy millions of leaflets, effectively covering a whole Japanese city with information. In just the last three months of formal psychological warfare, OWI produced and deployed over 63 million leaflets informing the Japanese people of the true status of the war and providing advance warning to 35 cities targeted for destruction.<sup>3</sup> Postwar surveys showed that the Japanese people trusted the accuracy of the leaflets and many residents of the targeted cities prepared

<sup>2</sup> Bradford Smith reported that "During the first week of operation, four B-29s which otherwise would have been lost were returned to base through the use of the station. By April, more than 20 had been saved." Personal papers at the University of Vermont Library, p. 18. See also, letter of 12 August 1945 from Nathan F. Twining, Lt Gen US Army, to R. S. R. Hubert, OWI Chief, Saipan. "Your staying on the air throughout the entire day has served a two-fold purpose—first, the long range radio homing facility has greatly facilitated navigation on our combat missions and, secondly, the programs have been a great help to the morale of combat crews participating in these operations."

<sup>3</sup> Richard S. R. Hubert, "The OWI Saipan Operation," *Official Report to US Information Service*, Washington, 1946, charts pp. 88-89.



Allied B-29 bombers pass Mt. Fujiyama on course from Saipan to deliver OWI leaflets over Japanese cities

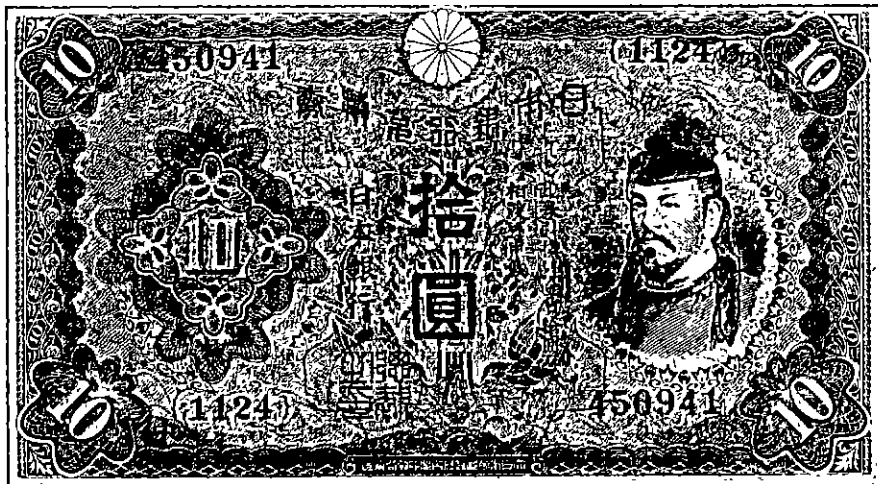
immediately to leave their homes.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese government regarded the leaflets with such concern that it ordered the arrest of those who kept or even read the leaflets and did not turn them in to their local police stations. Outside Japan, leaflets promoting the surrender of individual Japanese soldiers and civilians were dropped near cave and tunnel hideouts on islands that had been captured by the Allies.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bradford Smith, "Propaganda and Counter-Propaganda in Japan," pp. 21-22. Personal papers at the University of Vermont Library.

### Japan's Internal Frictions

Japan had two governments in 1945: one was a military government determined to fight to the last; the other was a civilian government that had long recognized the need to surrender. The military clearly held the upper hand, rendering the civilian leaders impotent through political intimidation and threats of imprisonment.

<sup>5</sup> The effectiveness of the leaflets was indelibly established in the minds of Company B of the 381st Infantry on Okinawa when a pretty young girl surrendered to them stark naked. She had misinterpreted the wording, which instructed men to come out stripped to the waist and women to "come as they are." *Stars and Stripes*, 29 June 1945.



**日本人諸君！**

銀行や債券に入れた金は何の役に立ちますか。今日の必需品又は将来使用する様な物は今の中に買つて置きたい。理品は少くなりました。空爆の爲、多くの店は閉ぢ、或は短時間しか開けられていない様になります。この困難なる時期を凌げる様食物、着物、日用品等を買ひ給へ。お金は飢を癒やしたり、着物としては使用出来ません。債券で泣く幼児をなだめる事は出来ません。賢者であれば、今金を貯めず、品物を買ふでせう。今はお金の時代ではありません。物の時代です。

NO 2017

Propaganda leaflet designed like Japanese money to attract attention. Message on the back links deteriorating purchasing power to the military's domination of the government.

Civil-military friction, disagreements within political factions, and intergenerational tensions resulted in a bewildering array of conflicting reports on current conditions being disseminated to the Japanese people. The job of the US Office of War information was to cut through the confusion in Japan and its occupied territories, and to

convince the Emperor, the politicians, and the civilians that victory was already in the hands of the Allies.

There is little doubt that Japanese government agencies, military and civilian alike, realized by mid-summer 1945 that their country could not win the war. Japan's cities were being

destroyed almost at will. Although attempting to avoid the Emperor's palace, the Allies had devastated the capital in only six hours of bombing on 9-10 March 1945, leaving 100,000 dead and over 1,000,000 homeless, an even worse toll than from the later atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The Japanese military maintained a defiant stance, even as they recognized the need to shift from aggression to defense of their homeland.<sup>6</sup> They were well prepared, both psychologically and technically, for this final stand. The Allies never underestimated (as we, perhaps, sometimes do today) the desire of Japan's military leaders to preserve their honor by fighting literally to the last man, woman, and child.

#### Broadcasting the Surrender Offer

On 26 July 1945, the heads of state of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, meeting in Potsdam, Germany, agreed to give Japan an opportunity to end the war.<sup>7</sup> Their terms called for the disarmament and abolition of the Japanese military; elimination of military influence in political forums; Allied occupation of Japan; liberation of Pacific terri-

<sup>6</sup> As early as 10 March 1945, Japan's War Minister Sugiyama Gen had declared that, "The enemy invasion of our homeland is imminent." Daily Digest of Tokyo Radio, OVI Overseas Branch, San Francisco.

<sup>7</sup> China's Chiang Kai-shek participated in the Potsdam discussions by wire communication.

ories gained by Japan since 1914; swift justice for war criminals; maintenance of non-military industries; establishment of freedom of speech, religion and thought; and introduction of respect for fundamental human rights. The final section demanded that the government of Japan "proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces." The alternative for Japan was "prompt and utter destruction."<sup>8</sup>

By 7:00 p.m. on the very day of the Potsdam Proclamation, OWI's station KSAI began broadcasting the surrender terms to the Japanese nation at regular intervals. OWI also printed the full text of the offer in the Japanese language and dropped over 3 million leaflets by B-29 aircraft. Thus Japanese officials learned of the Potsdam conditions a day ahead of the official communication sent through diplomatic channels.

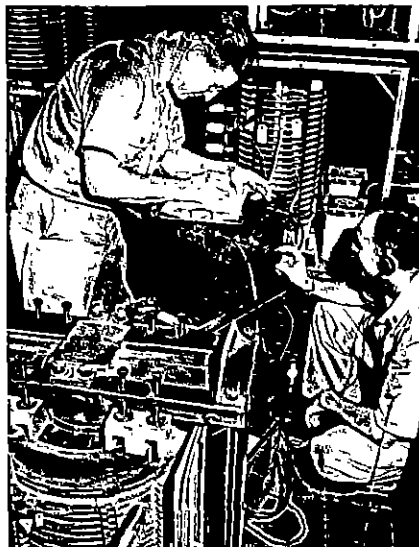
Japan's Cabinet and the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War were immediately called into joint session. They met almost continually from 26 July through 14 August. Arguments over whether, when, and under what conditions Japan should surrender continued right through the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On

<sup>8</sup> *World War II Surrender Documents: Japan Surrenders 1945*, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, DC, 1976

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OWI personnel adjusting the KSAI radio transmitter to new frequencies to avoid jamming by Japan

27 July, after a routine meeting not attended by Japan's civilian Foreign Minister, the militarists released notification to the world's media that Japan rejected the Potsdam offer.<sup>9</sup>

### Stepped-Up Bombing

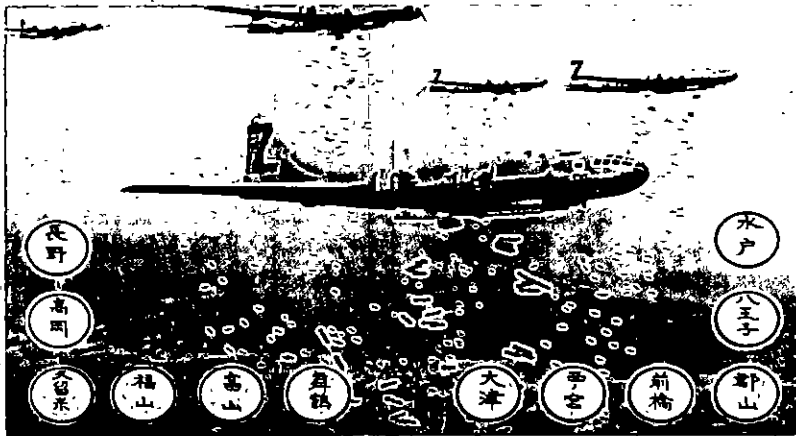
By noon on 28 July, OWI's presses on Saipan were rolling with notices warning civilians to evacuate 35 Japanese cities scheduled to be bombed within

the next few days. About 1 million leaflets fell on the targeted cities whose names appeared in Japanese writing under a picture of five airborne B-29s releasing bombs. Given the extent of the effort, it is extraordinary that many Americans are not aware that Japanese cities were warned prior to being bombed. Even today, members of the B-29 crews recall their fears that the warnings would make them easier targets for Japanese planes and anti-aircraft artillery. However, they concurred with Gen. Curtis LeMay's proposal at the time.<sup>10</sup> Military newspapers featured the unprecedented action under such headlines as "B-29 Command Now Calling Its Shots" and "580 B-29s Follow Up Leaflet Warnings With 3800 Tons Of Fire And Explosives."<sup>11</sup> Visualize what it must have been like for people in the targeted cities to look up and see more than 100 B-29 "Superfortresses" overhead. The image lends understanding to the Allies' decision to warn civilians, even at their own risk.

<sup>9</sup> As reported by Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori in his book, *The Cause of Japan* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. 313. Japanese broadcasts, apparently in response to the leaflet campaign, contrasted Germany's alleged lack of resolve under aerial siege with that of Japan, noting that, "Orientals are made of sterner stuff." As quoted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer & Public Ledger*, 5 August 1945

<sup>10</sup> *Newsweek*, 6 August 1945, p. 25

<sup>11</sup> *The Daily Target*, Saipan, vol. II, no. 92, 7 August 1945



Front side of OWI notice #2106, dubbed the “LeMay bombing leaflet,” which was delivered to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and 33 other Japanese cities on 1 August 1945. The Japanese text on the reverse side of the leaflet carried the following warning. “Read this carefully as it may save your life or the life of a relative or friend. In the next few days, some or all of the cities named on the reverse side will be destroyed by American bombs. These cities contain military installations and workshops or factories which produce military goods. We are determined to destroy all of the tools of the military clique which they are using to prolong this useless war. But, unfortunately, bombs have no eyes. So, in accordance with America’s humanitarian policies, the American Air Force, which does not wish to injure innocent people, now gives you warning to evacuate the cities named and save your lives. America is not fighting the Japanese people but is fighting the military clique which has enslaved the Japanese people. The peace which America will bring will free the people from the oppression of the military clique and mean the emergence of a new and better Japan. You can restore peace by demanding new and good leaders who will end the war. We cannot promise that only these cities will be among those attacked but some or all of them will be, so heed this warning and evacuate these cities immediately.” (See Richard S. R. Hubert, “The OWI Saipan Operation.” *Official Report to US Information Service*, Washington, DC 1946.)

### Advertising the Destruction of Hiroshima

At 2:45 a.m. on 6 August, the Allies’ B-29 “Enola Gay” left the island of Tinian near Saipan. Its primary target was Hiroshima, where the 2nd Japanese Army stood poised to defend against an expected Allied invasion of their homeland. At 8:15 a.m., the “Enola Gay” destroyed Hiroshima with a single atomic bomb.

Back on Saipan, the OWI presses were turning out leaflets that revealed the special nature of Hiroshima’s destruction and predicted similar fates for more Japanese cities in the absence of immediate acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam agreement. By 9 August, more than 5 million leaflets about the atom bomb had been released over major Japanese cities. The OWI radio station beamed a similar message to Japan every 15 minutes.

### Indecision in Tokyo

Japanese officials dispatched scientists and military personnel to Hiroshima to assess damages from the atomic bomb, but they remained paralyzed by disagreement over whether to surrender. The Supreme Council for the Direction of the War, composed of four military and two civilian members, was deadlocked, unable to present the Cabinet and the Emperor with its customary unanimous decision. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Umezo Yoshijir, Navy Chief of Staff Adm. Toyoda Soemu, and War Minister Gen. Anami Korechika maintained that any surrender agreement had to guarantee the Emperor’s continued power as sovereign ruler, prevent occupation of major cities such as Tokyo, and place responsibility for disarmament and dealing with war criminals in Japan’s own hands. The trio opposing them (Premier Suzuki Kantar, Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori, and Navy Minister Adm. Yonai Mitsumasa) viewed the Potsdam agreement as an ultimatum. In their view, the only negotiable ambiguity was the official position of the Emperor—the Potsdam agreement had applied the term “unconditional surrender” exclusively to the enemy’s armed forces.

The Supreme War Direction Council met from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on 9 August. The Japanese Cabinet—which included four members of the Supreme Council—was convened from

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2:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. that night. Neither meeting proved decisive. The heated argumentation throughout these meetings must surely have reflected the grim realities around them. Not only Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but *all* of Japan's major cities had been destroyed, with the exception of the historic temple area of Kyoto. Japan's Air Defense General Headquarters reported that out of 206 cities, 44 had been almost completely wiped out, while 37 others, including Tokyo, had lost over 30 percent of their built-up areas.<sup>12</sup> Almost 2 million military personnel and civilians had been killed. Another 8 million were wounded or homeless. The destruction was so complete, historian Edwin Reischauer reminds us, that Japan, experiencing total military and industrial defeat for the first time in its history, took over 10 years to regain its pre-war productive capacity.<sup>13</sup>

The spreading awareness of the destructive power released at Hiroshima and Nagasaki increased the urgent atmosphere at these meetings in Tokyo. Nonetheless, it took an unprecedented action by the Emperor, and the extraordinary effort of OWI to publicize his action, to break the Japanese military-civilian deadlock.

<sup>12</sup> *OWI Daily Digest*, series 7, no. 46, 23 August 1945.

<sup>13</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Japanese* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 103.

Half an hour after the 9 August Cabinet meeting ended, Premier Suzuki Kantaro and Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori called members of the Cabinet and the Supreme Council, and Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma, President of Japan's Privy Council, into an Imperial Conference. For several hours in a hot, airless bomb shelter, the Emperor listened to the opposing arguments. His political role usually consisted of passively endorsing Cabinet decisions. But at 2:00 a.m. on the morning of 10 August, in a deeply moving speech, Japan's Emperor Hirohito called upon the power of his moral and spiritual leadership and directed that Japan should accept the terms of the Potsdam agreement.

There are indications that the Emperor had long wished for an end to the war for practical and emotional reasons. Ascending to the throne in 1926 at the age of 25, Hirohito was an intelligent man, a distinguished marine biologist, and a rather quiet, shy individual. He remained in Tokyo throughout the war, witnessing personally the destruction that he knew to be indicative of what was happening to the rest of his country. According to various historians, he found the

arguments of the militarists to be self-seeking and born of false pride.<sup>14</sup> No doubt pressure from the civilian members of his Cabinet and other government officials strengthened his resolve to end the devastation.

So it was that on 10 August, at 3:00 a.m., the Cabinet and the Supreme Council complied and voted in reluctant unanimity to accept the Potsdam offer, but with the stipulation that the Emperor remain the sovereign ruler of the country. By 7:00 a.m., the Foreign Minister had dispatched an announcement of the decision to the United States and China through Japan's Minister Shunichi Kase in Switzerland, and to Great Britain and the USSR through Minister Suemasa Okamoto in Sweden. Japanese officials tensely awaited the Allies' response.

### **Turmoil in Washington**

Washington hotly debated Japan's request for modification of the Potsdam accord. Historian Robert Butow details the opposing arguments: one side was convinced that acceding to Japan's proviso would inspire prolonged fighting; the other side held that assuring the Emperor's continued status as

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Robert Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Hoover Library Publication, Stanford University Press, 1954).

head of state would strengthen post-war reformation.<sup>15</sup>

In the end, Secretary of State Byrnes prevailed and prepared the Allied nations' reply, stipulating that the Emperor could remain as a sovereign ruler, but that "from the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied powers." With the concurrence of the United Kingdom, China, Australia and, ultimately, the USSR, the reply was forwarded to Japan through Switzerland.<sup>16</sup>

### **Getting the Word Out**

OWI now played its most dramatic role.

Technically, Japan had not yet surrendered. The war was not yet over. President Truman had ordered the continuation of Allied bombing runs over Japanese military installations. The people of Japan knew *nothing of their government's plan to surrender*. Radio Tokyo still exhorted all Japanese to prepare defenses against an enemy invasion.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 189 ff

<sup>16</sup> The USSR briefly withheld approval, hoping to gain veto power over the designation of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

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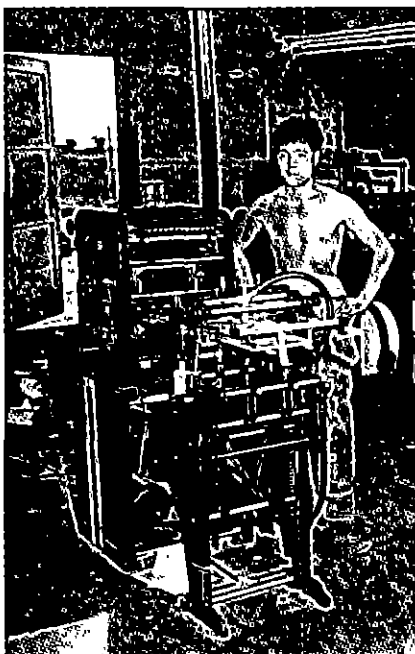
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In a race to save the lives of soldiers still fighting, the Allies' acceptance of Japan's modification of the Potsdam surrender terms was radioed to OWI in

Honolulu and Saipan at the same time that it was forwarded to Switzerland. The US War Department sent an urgent dispatch ordering OWI to inform the Japanese people directly, by leaflet and radio, that their government had offered to surrender and that the Allies had accepted the offer. The order, which originated from the White House, threw OWI personnel into high gear. The text for the message was prepared in Washington and dictated by telephone to Honolulu, where it was transcribed, translated into Japanese, lettered, and transmitted to Saipan by "radiophoto" within two hours.

The 17 members of the OWI staff on Saipan were challenged to a previously unmatched degree. By midnight on 11 August, less than 48 hours after Japan's message was received in Washington, three-quarters of a million leaflets giving notification of the surrender offer had been printed on OWI's three Webendorfer highspeed presses running continually. By the next afternoon, production of OWI leaflet #2117 totaled well over 5 million copies.

OWI did not have to work alone in this important effort. Saipan's naval base designated two 15-member Navy crews to pack the leaflets into bomb casings for delivery. All bombing of Japan ceased while the Air Force loaded the leaflets onto the B-29s of its 73rd Wing. Even



Japanese prisoners helped turn out leaflets and newspapers on OWI's presses on Saipan

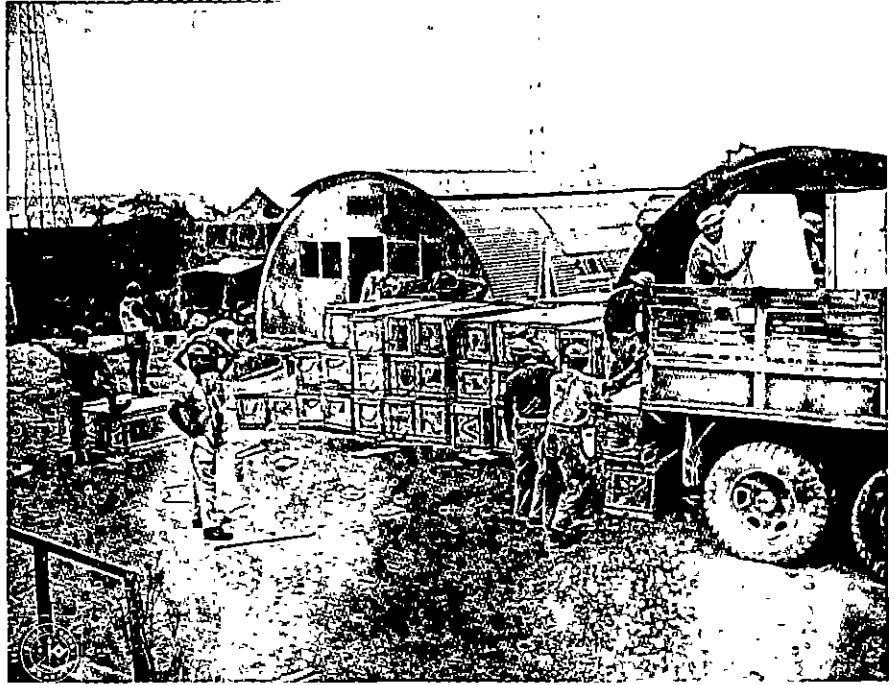


Japanese prisoners of war on Saipan volunteered. Realizing that the Japanese military regime was on a suicidal course, some prisoners helped run the presses for the leaflets in order to give accurate information to the Japanese people. Eventually, they even offered to write copy, under OWI supervision, for Allied newsprint distributions to Japan.

On 12 August, aircraft runs departed Saipan at 1:30, 4:30, 7:30 and 11:30 p.m., delivering to the people of Japan the news of their government's surrender offer. The 4" x 5" leaflets rained down by the millions, telling the Japanese people:

*These American planes are not dropping bombs on you today. American planes are dropping these leaflets instead because the Japanese Government has offered to surrender, and every Japanese has a right to know the terms of that offer and the reply made to it by the United States Government on behalf of itself, the British, the Chinese, and the Russians. Your government now has a chance to end the war immediately. You will see how the war can be ended by reading the two following official statements.*

Two paragraphs then gave the Japanese surrender offer verbatim and the Byrnes response indicating the Allies' willingness to accept that offer. OWI repeated the same message continuously over station KSAI.



Loading OWI leaflets for transport to the US air field on Saipan. 1945.

The significance of this information barrage cannot be overstated. For the first time the Japanese people became aware that their government was trying to surrender. And it was the first that Japanese officials knew of the Allies' acceptance of their surrender offer, because the OWI notification preceded, by about 72 hours, the receipt of the official diplomatic reply sent through Switzerland.

### **The Emperor's Next Steps**

Copies of the leaflet that fell on the palace grounds were immediately taken to the Emperor by Marquis Kōichi Kido, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. The

Emperor realized that Japanese civilians now knew of the surrender attempt and, more significantly, so did ordinary Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

Fearing a military coup to ensure continuation of the war, the Emperor decided to take additional action to bring the conflict to an end. On 13 August, when the Cabinet was called into immediate session, members Anami Korechika, Umezo Yoshijiir, and Toyoda Soemu unexpectedly dissented anew, saying that an item in the original Potsdam proposal stipulating that postwar Japan would ultimately be governed by the will

of the people was against Japanese tradition and therefore compliance was impossible. This reversal precipitated another Imperial Conference at which the Emperor stopped all argument by forcefully declaring that Japan would accept the Potsdam conditions as modified in the 11 August message from US Secretary of State Byrnes on behalf of the Allied nations.

In an action without precedent, the Emperor decided to issue an Imperial Rescript announcing the capitulation, to be delivered both to the Allies through diplomatic channels and to his subjects in his own voice via radio broadcast. The enormity of this decision must be understood in context, the Emperor was considered a deity—no one was allowed to look upon him from above, few citizens had seen him at all, and the Japanese people had never before heard his voice. Hirohito well understood the powerful effect his broadcast would have.

On 14 August, the Emperor made two recordings of the Rescript for broadcast the next day. Aware that such a powerful communication would doom efforts to continue the war, the military sent soldiers from a Tokyo garrison to attack the Imperial Palace at night, imprison the Emperor, and seize the recordings. They failed to turn up the recordings, however, which had been secured at the radio station.

Later that night, War Minister Anami Korechika, having failed to promote his views and control his soldiers, committed suicide, the first of many such actions in the days that followed.

### **The Surrender Announcement**

At noon on 15 August, a stunned population listened to Emperor Hirohito's high, shaking, unfamiliar voice announcing the final surrender of the Japanese nation.

The world was jubilant. In New York, Times Square erupted in a sea of celebrating humanity. In Naples, a USO Andrews Sisters show was completely disrupted as the war-weary soldiers, about to embark from Europe for the Pacific, heard the announcement and realized that their trip would be cancelled. In a prison camp near Tokyo, an American, expecting yet another beating, was handed a paper cup of sake wine and his smiling captor informed him that the war was over.

On Saipan, OWI staff members had little time to savor the moment. They were already hard at work producing leaflets of instruction for the surrendering Japanese on the homeland islands and subsequently in Manchuria, China, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

### **Washington's Gratitude**

Secretary of State Byrnes lost no time in thanking the OWI staff in Honolulu and Saipan. A dispatch from Washington dated 17 August 1945, sent through OWI's Bradford Smith in Honolulu, reads:

*I have been requested by Secretary Byrnes to send appreciation to everyone concerned for the magnificent work done in lettering, translating, printing, sending, and distributing the important leaflet directly before the surrender of Japan. It is the belief of Secretary Byrnes as well as we in this office that the factor which helped to bring about the final surrender was this leaflet. We would appreciate your passing this along to everyone concerned including Hubert [Chief of the Forward Area], Air Force personnel, Psychological Warfare and all those in the OWI who are well deserving of congratulations for the superb job.*

On 2 September, formal instruments of surrender were signed by Japanese officials on behalf of the Emperor and by Allied officials on behalf of the governments of the United States, the Republic of China, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Dominion of Canada, the Provisional Government of the French Republic, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Although OWI continued to handle its national affairs through its headquarters in Washington until 12 March 1946, its overseas operations began to wind down after Japan's surrender. On 7 September 1945, oversight of the forward area on Saipan was transferred to the United States Information Service; OWI's Honolulu office closed on 31 October 1945. Chief of the Forward Area, Richard Hubert, returning to Washington,

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**‘It is the belief of Secretary [of State] Byrnes ... that the factor which helped to bring about the final surrender was [OWI's] leaflet.’**

”

reflected the sentiment of many on his staff:

*It is an honor and privilege to have served with the Office of War Information, which agency*

*deserves more credit than public opinion may ever realize. Operating abroad in secrecy, it is undoubtedly so that the Axis know more about the OWI operations than our own citizens.*

These words rang true for years, but finally the story of OWI's important role in the final days of the war in the Pacific can be told.