

# A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN:—

The leaders of your military machine have thrown you against us in a war which will be the most devastating conflict of history. It is not a war of your making; from the years I have lived among you I know that you, the people of Japan, did not want this war. Many of you, it was reported, wept in the streets when you heard of it.

For you know what war is. You have borne your years of short rations and long hours, and clothing that dissolves in the rain. Your sons have gone away and only the ominous white boxes containing their ashes have returned to you. But because you have not known how to override the military clique that controls you, the worst of your suffering is ahead.

Since war abridges those human rights which we Americans cherish, our free people will do anything to avoid war - and anything, once we are involved, to win. We have something to fight for; you have nothing. We have the liberties we have fought four times to gain or to extend; you have only another attempt at conquest pressing you into still greater misery.

We Americans would have been less amazed by the treachery at Pearl Harbor had we understood your nation and its history better.

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Bradford Smith's years in Japan were spent as professor of English at St. Paul's University in Tokyo, as lecturer in English at Imperial University, and in editing English works for Japanese authors and institutions. His novel 'To The Mountain', dealing with Japan, was a best-seller.

Your militarists opened the Sino-Japanese war by sinking a troop ship without warning; they began the Russo-Japanese war by firing treacherously upon the fleet at Port Arthur.

For centuries you, the people of Japan, have had to endure a military dictatorship. In the feudal period from 1185 to 1868, you had to support with your labor the private armies of the samurai. To support them the farmers starved. What we call fascism is no new thing to you. You were brought up to believe in the supremacy of the state over the individual. And whenever you imported a democratic notion from abroad your rulers perverted it to fascist ends.

More than thousand years ago they made a pretense of adopting the democratic Chinese system of examination by which the poorest boy might through merit become a high official. Then they barred all but influential clan members from the schools in which one could prepare for the examinations.

After your long seclusion was brought to an end by Commodore Perry you seemed for a time to be headed for modern democratic government. But again the old pressure worked. Liberals who urged the formation of a representative government were forbidden freedom of press. In 1884 the liberal political party was suppressed. When the new constitution was promulgated in 1889 it gave your army and navy a power almost independent of the civil authority. The attacks on Korea, on China, and on Russia followed, without warning.

But you kept struggling for a liberal form of government. You almost won it in the '20's, when rising trade and prosperity left your army little excuse for action. But the world depression brought them another opportunity. They assassinated the liberal premier, Hamaguchi; then, against the desire of the civil government, they

invaded Manchuria. When conquest failed to relieve the troubles at home they resorted to terrorism to silence every opposing voice. Inouye, a former finance minister; Baron Dan, important head of the Mitsui banking and industrial interests; and Premier Inukai were murdered in 1932.

You as a people repudiated the gangsters who claimed to represent you, when in 1936 a general election showed overwhelmingly the popularity of the liberals. So the fascist overlords decided to act again. I remember well that day in February when we heard that in downtown Tokyo the murderers were at work. Militarists assassinated the finance minister, Takahashi, and Admiral Saito, a former premier. They planned also to kill the Premier, and Prince Saionji, and a long list of Japan's greatest men. For three days they occupied the new Diet building. They had in the end to give themselves up, but their sentences were light.

Again in 1937 you, the people, repudiated militarism. Out of 466 members of the Diet you elected less than 50 supporters of the fascist clique. But now the ingenuity of your constitution became clear. The Diet's power could amount to nothing so long as a determined army clique, with direct access to the Emperor, could overrule it. And the army's imperialistic answer to you that time was the war with China which, forced upon the people, put an end to all pretense of parliamentary government.

Is it true that a people deserve the government they get? Do you deserve yours, which has blackened your name as a nation before the world? What has been lacking in you that would have overthrown your unwanted military masters? Not liberal sympathies, for you have shown these repeatedly at the polls and in private conversation

I remember many of you, from gardener to professor to nobleman, who spoke against the regime which had you in its clutches, and by whom a war with America was regarded as the worst conceivable catastrophe. I remember your kindness as individuals; your courtesy your honesty, your love of little children.

I know that many among you are ashamed of the bestial, unprovoked attacks made on other peoples by your self-appointed masters. You are a people whose life is built around the family and who ask for little - a house the size of a Western living room, a table, a roll of bedding. I have seen how out of that little you make living an art, your simplest acts based on a code of courtesy that lends dignity to daily life. How can you - who are as individuals so civilized - act as a nation with such perfidy and brutality?

Perhaps one reason is that your military rulers have taught you from childhood to believe in the divinity of your Emperor. By pretending to fight in his name and by keeping him virtually a prisoner to its wishes, the army has led you to think its mission has his sanction. Thus you have been too confused and too fearful to revolt. And now we in America too must suffer from the depredations of the overlords you could not control. It is our tragedy that during your ten years of aggression we in this country tried to believe that peace was more important than liberty, and that encroachments on the other side of the world could never touch us. But now we recognize the magnitude of your task, which is nothing less than the saving of our civilization itself; we realize that the liberties so precious to us - liberties which you have never known - may be lost by us also if your militarists are not defeated.

The surest reason why we shall defeat them is that we, as a people have united to accept the challenge of this war. For us it is no war of a military clique. We enter it with the knowledge that we have done our best to avoid it, and with the desperate conviction that all we value most depends upon our winning it. But you, the people of Japan - you who by a large majority have voted against your military machine - must come to know that victory would only perpetuate your enslavement. And those of you who want to see your country really free for the first time in its history must realize that you have more to fear from your overlords than from us. For in their defeat and our victory lies the only hope of final freedom for you.

End.