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THE JAPANESE EMPEROR AND THE WAR

In recent months the Japanese Government has sought to associate the Emperor's name more and more closely with the war in the Pacific. While helping to increase popular participation in the war effort, this policy also serves to reassure the people that the sacred nature of the war and the Emperor's divine destiny will insure victory. More fundamentally, however, the increasing use of the Emperor's name tends to make him share with the militarists the responsibility for the war. A firmly established popular identification of the Emperor with the present war would frustrate any Allied propaganda attempts to dissociate the Emperor from the military group. To protect and strengthen their own position, the military extremists are apparently willing to run the risk that defeat will discredit imperial rule and possibly dissolve the traditional political structure of Japan.

Conflicting theories of the Emperor's constitutional position have played an important part in the long struggle for power between civilian parliamentary politicians and the extremist military groups. The Japanese Constitution states that the Emperor, as head of the Empire, is the source of all power, but also sets forth certain limitations on the use of the power. He must exercise his power with the consent of the other branches of government, and all measures must be countersigned by his ministers. The parliamentarians interpret this to mean that the Emperor is a limited monarch at the head of a constitutional monarchy. Although often motivated by a desire to maintain their own power rather than by altruistic aims, they have sought to adapt to Japanese social patterns a political structure essentially Western in origin.

The extremist groups, which are composed of certain high military men, young officers, and leaders of the ultra-nationalist secret societies, advocate the return of the Emperor to active participation in political affairs. This program is known as the Showa Restoration. They hold that since the Constitution is the gift of the Emperor to his people and the expression of his willingness to limit his own prerogatives rather than a response to popular demand, it can be revoked at the Emperor's pleasure. Knowing that power in the hands of the parliamentarians was a constant threat to their position, the military group in the Government has unofficially sponsored the extremist theory of the Emperor's powers.

Under the stress of war the civilian branches of the Japanese Government have been subjected to complete military domination. Including

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within its ranks some of the radical elements who have long propagandized for military dictatorship as the salvation of both the Emperor and the nation, the military group appears determined to strengthen its own place. The position of the Emperor is vital to this military philosophy. Deriving its authority directly from the Emperor, the military group is concerned not only with maintaining his position but with increasing his direct participation in important decisions.

In the past the Emperor's influence on governmental structure and policy depended largely on his own personality and activities. The present Emperor's role will probably be determined by the needs of this ruling group rather than by his own efforts. Thus at the inception of the present war, the Emperor issued the conventional Imperial Rescript declaring war in his name, and continued to follow his usual pattern of keeping out of politics. However, as it became evident that victory would not be easily won, the ruling group found it necessary to use the Emperor's name as an incentive for greater effort. The people were reminded more often of the Emperor's "deep concern" with the progress of the war. Imperial representatives visited war factories, military schools, and the fighting front. The Emperor himself publicly prayed for victory, and references to his other wartime activities steadily increased.

With the Allied advance in the Pacific, the Emperor was called on to furnish even stronger incentives to the Japanese people, and he thus became more entangled in the activities of the dominant military group. Imperial Rescripts opening Diet sessions, usually short and formal messages, have been used increasingly to point out the seriousness of the war situation, and to urge unity of spirit, greater effort, and the passage of measures presented by the Government. A recent Rescript reads: "It is expected of you that you will understand our wishes and deliberate upon them in harmony, thereby fulfilling your duties under the total war."

From February 1944 to the fall of the Tojo Cabinet, all Cabinet meetings were held in the Imperial Palace—a rare event in contemporary Japanese history—instead of at the Premier's residence or in the Diet building. Such meetings, ordinarily the direct result of important developments on the home front, have been utilized to impress the public with the seriousness of the situation as well as to give Imperial Sanction to emergency measures. They indicate the Government's desire to use the position of the Emperor to strengthen its own hand. At the present time the Koiso Cabinet has reversed this new practice and meets only in the Premier's official residence.

Japanese propagandists have constantly played up Japanese naval victories, both real and imaginary, and they turn to the Emperor to give greater veracity to their statements. In November and December 1943 the Emperor issued two Imperial Rescripts honoring the Navy for completely fictitious "victories" off the Solomon and Gilbert Islands—an unprecedented mortgaging of the Imperial dignity for the purpose of restoring popular faith in the naval conduct of the war.

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The term "the Emperor's War" has been used with increasing frequency, especially in current articles expressive of views held by extremist groups. The magazine *Fuji* for June 1943 published an article entitled "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian" (the slogan of the Meiji and now of the Showa Restoration), by Kazunobu Kanokogi, long prominent in Japanese secret societies. Abandoning the former conception of the Emperor as one who assumes no responsibility for the actions of his Government, this article states specifically that "it is neither the State nor the people that declare war . . . the Emperor himself declares war. . . . Accordingly the war will continue until the Emperor says 'Cease!'"

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