

# TERROR *in* JAPAN

BY MARK GAYN

For ten consecutive days this spring, Japan got a furious foretaste of disaster. It found her unprepared. Here, from official sources, is a detailed report of what happened

**O**N a stormy morning last March, terror sneaked up on Japan. When it took its unhurried leave ten fearful days later, her people had had their first bitter foretaste of defeat. Up to then, it had been a remote and leisurely war. Here and there, in Japan's teeming cities, shelters were being built. Along some streets, shallow trenches had been dug. There had also been rehearsals, with some people pretending they were hurt, and others pretending they knew how to take care of the injured.

Of warnings there had been plenty. A dozen big raids had left ugly blotches on Japan's map. In February, an American task force had prowled dangerously along her coast. But mostly the attacks had been nuisance raids by lonely Superforts—250 of them in 216 forays in 120 days. Fear flew in on their wings, but the damage was slight and the fear evaporated.

Then, at midnight on March 10, 1945, a group of Superforts crossed Japan's coast line. Behind them came another group, and another in a line stretching far back toward Saipan. In a long, thin file they roared over Tokyo. They flew low, and out of their open bellies spilled bombs of jellied gasoline. When they hit, they burst, spewing out billowing, all-consuming fire. The flames leaped across fire lanes, swallowed factories, destroyed skyscrapers.

The last of the 300 Superforts left Tokyo at 2:40 A.M., but the fires blazed on for many hours, eating hungrily into the city's heart, with its war plants, department stores, railroad terminals, and the countless thousands of homes in which women and children were making the small parts and gadgets without which no modern war machine can function.

"The city burned like straw," said a Nazi eyewitness, in an intercepted message to Berlin. "Entire districts were burned down to the ground. As soon as the first incendiaries fell, the night was lighted up. The Superforts flew incredibly low above the spreading fires. One B-29 exploded almost over the very heart of Tokyo."

That night, he added, more people had been bombed out of their homes than in the heaviest raid ever endured by Germany.

The fires spread so rapidly, a Russian correspondent reported to Moscow, that the fire brigades never had a chance. The burden of fighting the flames thus fell on the ill-trained, ill-equipped *Tonari Gumi*, or neighborhood groups. The water mains failed, and bucket brigades vainly splashed water against the walls of fire.

Driven by a storm, flames leaped across the narrow, winding streets. Crowds seeking escape found themselves trapped. For once, the arrogant policemen fled together with the mobs, and together perished.

Those who could rushed to the bridges and the parks. The imperial grounds were opened to the refugees, but there, too, a fire was burning. The high and low suffered alike. Generals and cabinet ministers lost their homes. A dozen members of the Diet died, or were made homeless.

Few doctors were available to treat the victims. What was more important, vast stores of food were destroyed in the warehouses, and it became necessary to rush food into the city. Crowds fought their way into the departing trains. Helpless, the police gave up asking for tickets or travel permits. The exodus went on for days, for even those whose homes survived now wanted to flee. Before the ten days were done, three million people of Tokyo's seven million joined the flight.

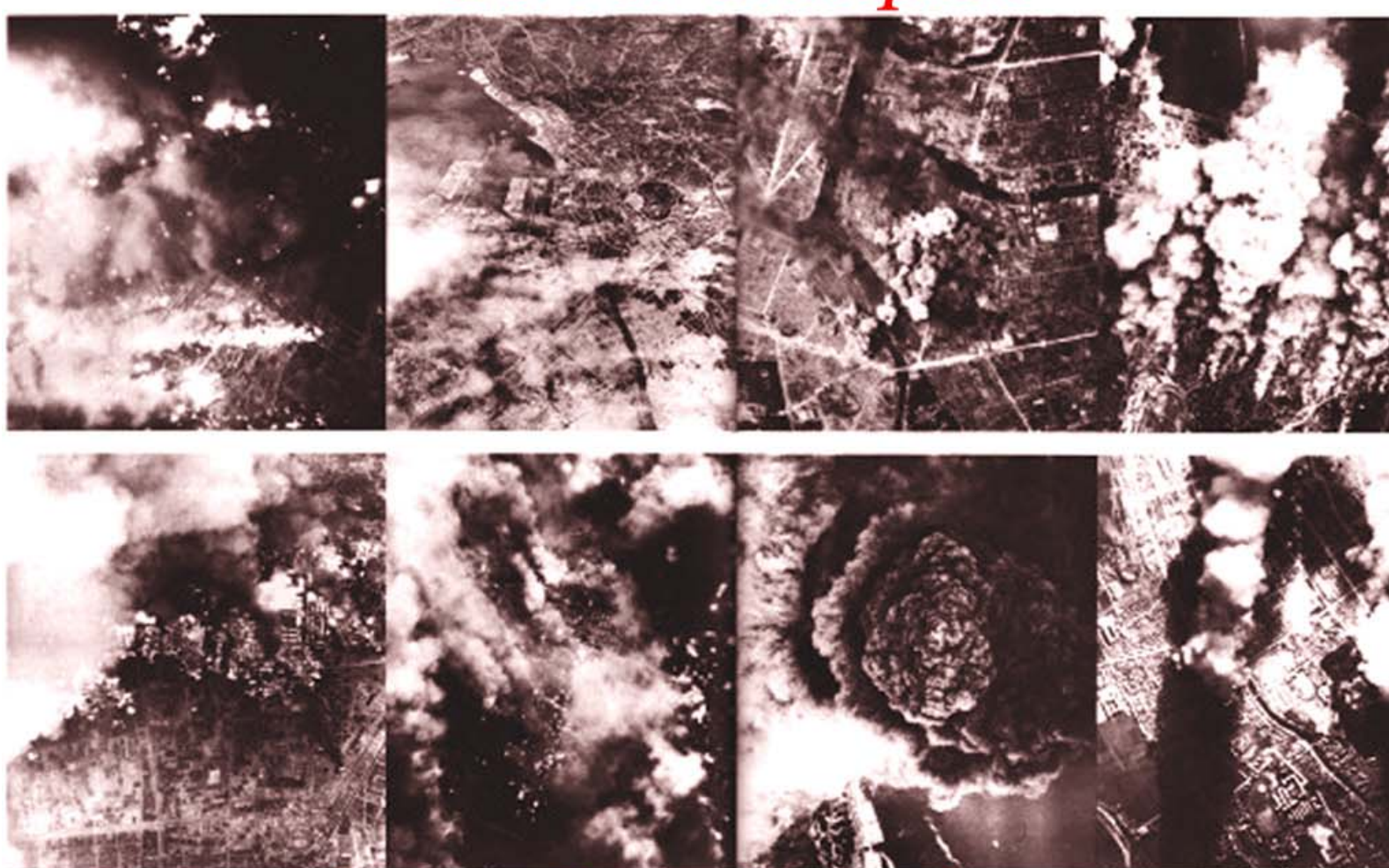
Long lines stretched before first-aid stations and hospitals. Community kitchens were set up in the blackened streets. With many public bathhouses burned down, private homes were compelled to open their

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*Assorted images of the American attacks on Japan.*

bathrooms to the refugees. So many people had lost their ration books that after the early days of confusion, food was issued stamp-free to the victims. Evacuees were given five days rations.

On the roads leading from Tokyo, evacuees streamed out, on foot or bicycle. In the neighboring areas, officials sought empty barns, stocked up food, made arrangements to put the refugees to work in war factories.

Until their damaged plants could be repaired, the five Tokyo newspapers issued a joint daily. In it, men found orders, pleas to be calm, bitter abuse heaped on the American "savages and barbarians."

Embers were still hot on the ground when the Cabinet met to consider relief and defense. Before it dispersed, it had, in the typical way of Japanese bureaucracy, created a handful of committees with high-sounding if vague titles.

In the Diet that day, the Premier dodged charges of inefficiency by angry members bombed out of their homes. "The people are very much concerned," cried the members. "Have any steps been taken in regard to food? Will firemen be released from the army?"

Unhappily, the Premier pleaded guilty. "The people are caught in a feeling of restlessness and anxiety. . . . A plan will soon be made public. . . . The people will be asked to conform. . . ."

The wheels of government were beginning to turn again. The post office announced it would carry only short messages from the raid victims to their friends and relatives. What food stocks remained in the city were hastily dispersed, in fear of another raid. A "National Defense Mobile Bicycle Repair Shop" had gone into action.

Transportation remained disorganized. Repair crews worked on burned-out stations and twisted tracks. Express trains had been canceled. In their stead, all passenger cars were mobilized to move evacuees. Freight trains were doing double duty, taking out war plants and bringing in food. Because of transportation snags, the cigarette ration had been cut from seven a day to three. ("The best thing is to stop smoking altogether," said the Tokyo radio.)

Belatedly, government experts announced that 3,000 new air-raid shelters would be built in Tokyo. "Model shelters" for individual families were put on display, but for lack of nails and wood, the people were told to use salvaged building material.

In fear of raids it knew would come soon, the government charted 100 new firebreaks, 160 to 650 feet wide, around factories and railroad stations. Special agents then chalked the single, ominous word "Evacuate" on tens of thousands of doomed one-story matchwood buildings, and their residents were told to move out. Once the houses were vacated, thick ropes were put around their supports, and tractors or teams of men pulled the buildings down.

### **The Emperor Views the Ruins**

On the morning of the eighth day, the emperor expressed a desire to see the damage. This had happened only twice since the great



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earthquake of 1923, and the Japanese propaganda machine took care to publicize it. With his retinue, the emperor spent an hour in the damaged area.

Wherever he went, the people knelt before him in the rubble and apologized for "causing him anxiety" and thanked him for "taking compassion on the privations of his subjects." A multimillionaire many times over, he had given the victims ten million yen (about \$2,300,000 at the prewar exchange rate), and the official news agency at once reported that "the people responded like scorched grass revived by seasonable rain."

The newspapers carried the emperor's picture under a banner headline. The nation's network carried a passionate speech by a famous commentator: "This evening my friend visited me. He opened a newspaper and told me to worship it. I looked at the gracious figure of His Imperial Majesty, and could not speak for a while. 'We're going to win. We are going to win for certain!' I shouted."

This was Tokyo, stunned and scorched. Briefly the eyes of Japan were on it. But Japan's terrible lesson was only beginning. On the night of March 11th, the Superforts returned to her skies, to attack Nagoya, where airplanes are made. On the 14th came the turn of Osaka—huge and ugly and busy making guns. On the 17th, neighboring Kobe, where men-of-war are built, was hit. By luck, Nagoya escaped much damage. Thus, on the night of the 19th, the Superforts were back, for a second, fiercer strike. It was as if New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Washington, D. C., had been devastated in a tragic ten-day period.

And as if that was not enough, the famed Task Force 58 sailed boldly to Japan's shores on March 18th. At 6 o'clock that morning, 1,400 carrier planes took off to blast airfields, factories and railroads. The following day, 1,100 planes returned to finish off the targets which still survived.

Now all Japan lay naked and in fear, and none bothered to conceal the hurt. "This," said her radio, "marks the outset of the war's final and grimmest phase."

"Nippon can take it!" boasted Tokyo. "National resolve is strengthened rather than weakened by the rain of death." But if the truth be told, her people and leaders took the blow with no greater moral strength than the hapless people of the lands she had devastated. There were fear and confusion. There were fumbling, charges, recriminations.

Seventy-one generals were reshuffled. The governor of Tokyo, an empire builder with a vicious record, was angrily assailed for talking to the Japanese the way he had earlier talked to the Chinese. Much too late, two billion yen was appropriated for air defense.

In all the big cities, the government urged the people to leave, but transportation was inadequate, and for many, there was no place to go. "There is no time to think of such things," said Tokyo sternly. "Walk if need be to the near-by prefectures. . . ."

And it had finally totaled up the losses of those fearful ten days. More than three million people, it reported, had been killed, injured or left homeless. More than three quarters of a million houses had been destroyed in four cities. Tokyo fared worst, with 510,000 buildings burned down or demolished, and 2,100,000 victims.

Nor was this the end. Before the ten days had ended, the sense of terror had been compounded by the loss of Iwo. The papers bravely called it a "moral victory" and spoke of its garrison joining the "army of ghosts" defending Japan. The terror was all the greater because it was superimposed against the background of wartime scarcity, shabbiness, exhaustion.

In the face of the blockade, Japan slashed the monthly rice ration from 30 to 20 pounds. (At the risk of a year in jail, many promptly rushed to claim "ghost relatives.") Fish, the second food staple of Japan, is scarce, and what there is of it is often rotten. The vegetable ration dropped to a pound a week.



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### *B-29 Superfortress*

But even this hungry diet is irregular. Graft, red tape, disrupted communications play havoc with distribution. One village has to stretch a two-week supply of rice over a month. A locality lives on tomatoes for a week. A prefecture (equivalent to one of our states) goes along without sugar for a month.

The people are hungry. Once the first animal fear is gone, food replaces even the air raids as the main topic of conversation, and the people's anger finds an echo even in the regimented press. Cries a daily: "One red radish is given each person in Tokyo every two days. This is probably enough for a horse, but too little for a human being." Another reports that 60 per cent of the children are undernourished, 30 per cent have dysentery, and "in every classroom daily, there are, on an average, one student vomiting and two being sent home with dizziness."

Hunger and fatigue go hand in hand. Apathetically, a worker reports that sleep does men no good "because we are worn out." When, however, the ten days of terror had ended, the government canceled even the meager two days of rest a month granted until then.

But nothing gives a truer picture of Japan's distress than the broadcasts and private radiograms which fill her air. In them are exposed the worries, the hopes and secrets of her little men and her leaders. By the thousands, these messages flash between Japan and every corner of her crumbling empire to be intercepted by our watchful monitors.

A gendarmerie chief on a dinky, local Japanese station: "Some people have become listless. We must hold firm to our faith, we must keep our heads."

A station in Tokyo: "Until further notice, service is suspended on the following street-car lines . . ."

An unidentified station in Japan: "Travelers planning trips on the Tokaido and Chuo lines are warned communications have been blocked."

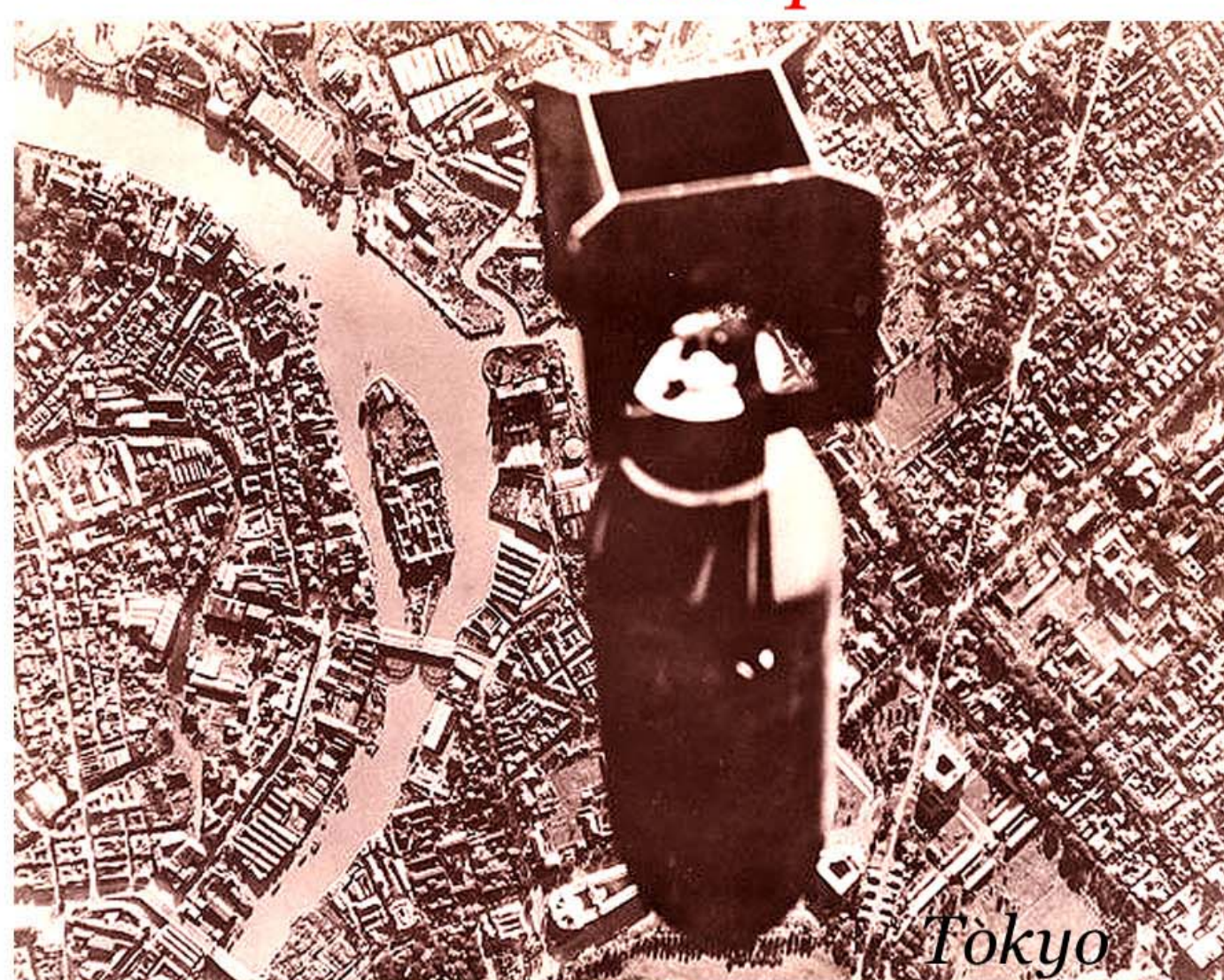
A station in Korea: "Pamphlets dropped by the enemy must not deceive us. Surrender them to the nearest police station at once. . . . Enemy broadcasts must be studiously avoided. . . . The Americans and the British cheated the Italians with their broadcasts. . . ."



*The Cockpit of a Boeing B-29 Superfortress (N529B)*



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A station in Formosa: "Most of our contacts with the homeland have been severed since the enemy landed on Okinawa. Formosa must struggle alone. . . ."

And another: "Due to the change in war conditions, items such as kitchen pots, electric bulbs, umbrellas can no longer be issued. . . . Several families must now use a common pot for cooking, thus saving fuel and making other pots available to the state."

From Nanking, a commercial radiogram to Tokyo: "Business impossible."

From the Mitsubishi supertrust in Tokyo to Saigon: "For lack of transportation, your 1,000 cases deteriorated. Only way is to cancel contracts. Excuse."

From Indo-China to Tokyo: "Cancel the contracts, since there is no hope of shipping out the ordered jute."

And from every corner come grisly tidings of personal grief. From a town in Japan to Wuhu, in China: "Aiko dead." From Peiping to Japan: "Kiyoko's ashes sent by air. . . ." From Shanghai to Numagi: "Passenger boat full. Must wait another three months." From Takayama to a worried rubber trader in Rangoon, himself already menaced by the approaching British: "Your mother evacuated. . . ." From Bangkok to Osaka: "Am in favor of evacuation. . . ."

And, as the only note of comic relief, a message from the German Minister in Bangkok to Reichsminister Reichsfuehrer S. S. Himmler: "In faithful loyalty I think of you on your birthday with best wishes. Heil Hitler!"

Air raids, hunger, weariness, evacuation, the sense of defeat, the collapse of Japan's allies, all these intertwine into a pattern of flesh and spirit in acute distress. Less than a fortnight after the fall of Iwo comes the invasion of Okinawa, still closer home. The ten days are followed by other days and nights of terror.

To keep the spirit up, the government resorts to the familiar totalitarian devices: police terror, scare campaigns, skillfully guided mass hysteria, and lies without limit. When Americans advance on Okinawa, the Jap navy blandly claims it has sunk or damaged 21 American carriers, 19 battleships, 55 cruisers and 16 "battleships or cruisers."

But all such claims are only a drug which can give Japan momentary hope, but cannot save her. It does no good any more to boast of victories, or to conceal the imminence of American invasion. Thus Japan's leaders let out some of the terrifying truth.

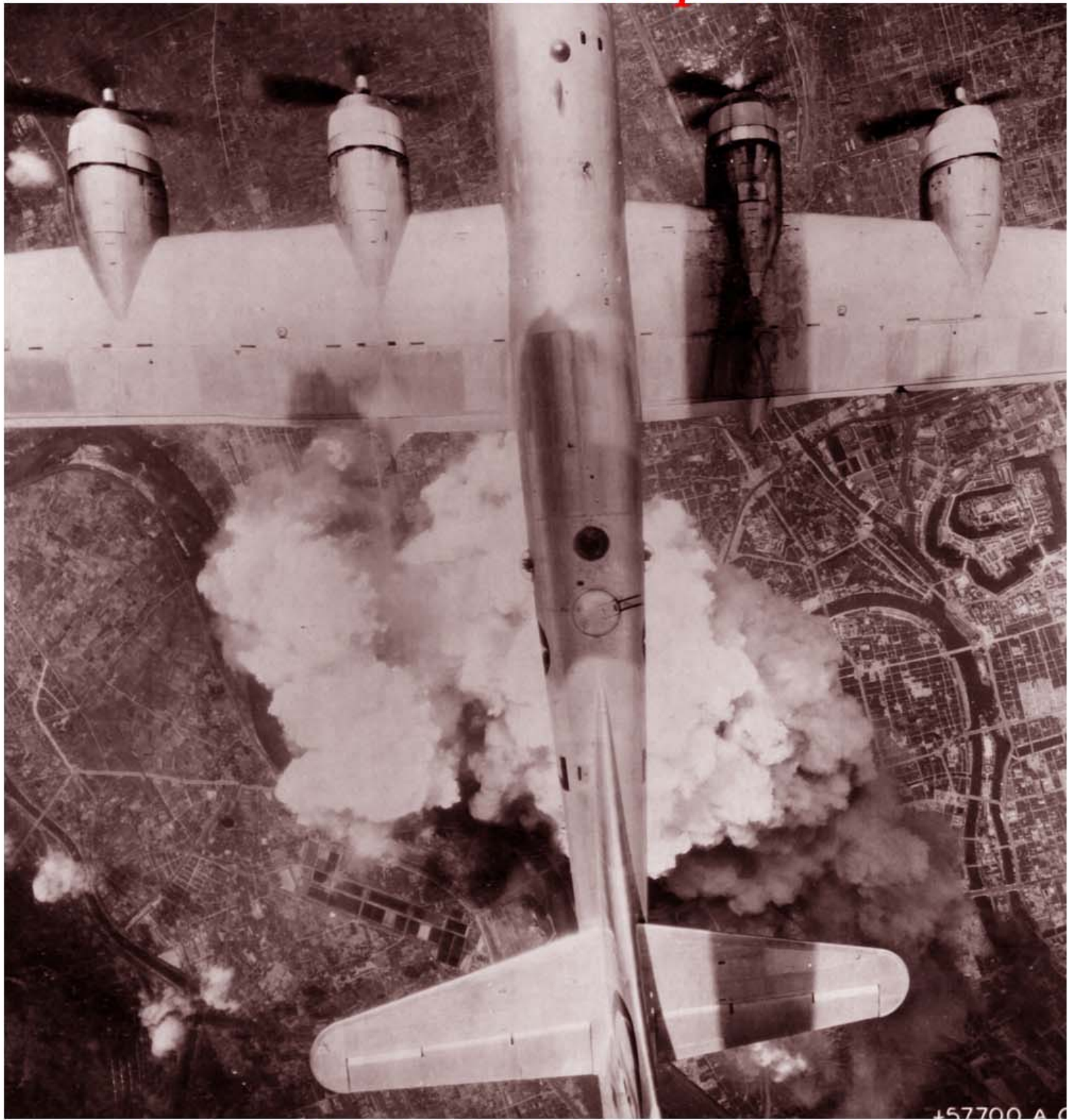
The Premier himself issues the warning: "We must be prepared for the conversion of our homeland into a battlefield. . . ."

The people of Japan are called on to arm themselves. "The bamboo spear is an excellent weapon," declares a broadcast. "Our warriors have fought with it in all their battles. Select a bamboo cane, sharpen it, dab the point with vegetable oil. Such a spear would easily stab through the bellies of our foes."

But even more drastic action is needed. On the last of the ten days of terror, the government introduces a bill to create a "Fortress Japan." Under this bill, the army



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*Bomber over Osaka, June, 1945*

can take over property, direct production freeze labor.

Japan's toughest generals, who once carved the map of Asia, are called back to defend her own soil. The Home Defense armies are split in two, to permit continued resistance in one half of Japan if the other falls. Government and economy are decentralized, to avert paralysis should Tokyo be lost. The premier talks of "area by area" defense.

A rigorous campaign is begun against *yamitorihiki*, the black market or "bargaining in the dark." The government admits the failure of its rationing program and estimates the army of "black marketeers" at one million. They are rounded up by the thousand and tossed into jails already overflowing with men and women arrested for "dangerous thought."

In Tokyo, over a ten-day period, 18,500 people are hauled off to police stations. Of these, 6,500 are vaguely accused of sabotage and 3,900 of "wicked behavior."

Old parties, which failed to drum up popular enthusiasm, go into the discard. In their stead comes a new outfit, headed by the 70-year-old flabby-fleshed jingoist, General Minami, who in 1931 engineered the rape of Manchuria. In a beer hall, a group of paunchy men, once known as "moderates," launches a "Party for a Twenty-Year War."

"Invasion!" warns the press. "Invasion!" cries the radio. Foreign Ministry officials solemnly tell the people mass castrations are being planned by the invaders. A commentator declares: "If we ever surrender, we'll be treated like the Rumanians."

But nothing gets more fanfare than Kamikaze, which means Divine Wind, or the tempest which centuries ago dispersed an armada of Mongol invaders. The word caught Japanese fancy when it was attached to the "suicide fliers" trying to crash into American men-of-war. When, with proper guidance, Kamikaze took hold of the susceptible Japanese mind, Japan's leaders channeled the hysteria into new fields.

Japanese submarines, one of the spectacular failures of this war, now boast of ramming Allied warships in true Kamikaze style. In factories, Kamikaze brigades work 16 to 18 hours, in an effort to increase production. In the country, Kamikaze teams drain swamps or till wastelands hitherto thought useless. Throughout the land, Kamikaze units are being formed for unspecified tasks beginning the day of the invasion. Thus, through terror, false hope and skillfully guided hysteria, Japan's rulers mobilize the nation's strength for the next great battles. And Americans must not underestimate the fury and determination with which the com-



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### **Tokyo, 1945**

ing battles will be fought. Japan is hard hit but not by any means fatally hurt. Her morale is still firm, her hatred for us is still unquenched, her punch still painful. Our admirals and generals want you to give a lot of hard, sober thought to the facts below. Each of them means time, stubborn effort, American lives.

First, the Japanese war machine is still powerful. Nowhere is it near the bottom of the reserve barrel. The army still has 3,000,000 men, with 2,000,000 more in reserve. Most of these can be expected to fight with skill and fury in the defense of their own land.

Our airmen have helped to send thousands of Japan's best pilots to their end. But her air force still packs a powerful wallop, and despite the heavy pounding, her airplane factories were still turning out a thousand planes a month in May.

### **The Jap Navy Lies in Wait**

Shorn of its best ships and ablest admirals, Japan's navy is still a constant menace. It has the twin advantage of being close to home bases and knowing tomorrow's weather ahead of us. Under cover of a storm, it can still sneak up for a painful blow. Even more than the army, the navy is tough, resolute, fanatical.

Second, we have only begun to destroy Japan's industry. As we have found out in Germany, this takes time and much more muscle than we have yet been able to supply. Some of Japan's industry has already burrowed deep into the ground; some has been decentralized; some shifted to Korea and Manchuria. Much of Japan's war output comes from the one-family "factories," working as subcontractors. It takes time to bomb them out.

Third, Japan's morale as yet remains solid. If we have learned any lesson in Europe, it is that air blitz does not knock peoples out of war. There is no reason to believe the Japanese will be any softer than the British, the Russians, the Germans or the Chinese.

Fourth, Japan now fights in her front yard, while we have to cart all our supplies nearly halfway around the world. Each man we land on Japan's beaches will need five to ten tons of supplies in the first month. U. S. Army supply chiefs figure that a force of 250,000 men, small as invasion forces go, will need in the first thirty days 700,000 different items, from buttons to bridges, for the total weight of 1,900,000 tons. This, too, means time.

Fifth, despite the blockade, Japan has had two years to accumulate stock piles of supplies she needs to wage war. She still probably has enough aluminum and copper for a year, gasoline for eighteen months, rubber for five years, and tin for eight.

The Americans whose business it is to weigh all these factors, both material and intangible, are not sanguine over the prospects of a quick knockout.

Maybe this is one reason why Washington, while hoping for fate's favors, soberly girds itself for a war that might not end until the distant spring of 1947.

# **Collier's**

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