

309 Fall of Japan

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Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* featuring historians Dr. Gerhard Weinberg and Colonel Allan Millet, United States Marine Corps Reserve Retired for a discussion about the implications of the fall of the Japanese Empire. I'm your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it's sponsored by BMO Wealth Management, Tyrone and Anne Fainer, Jann LLC, Reed Smith, the Sadr Foundation, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. Japan's militarism and imperialistic ambitions began to grow in the years 1853 to 1942, particularly with the occupation of parts of China and Korea. With the Allies occupied with Germany in Europe, Japan saw an opportunity to expand its territory with an attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor. After Germany surrendered in May of 1945 Allied attention focused on its war with Japan. Six days after the bombing of Nagasaki Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945. Thus began seven years of US military occupation of Japan. During the occupation the United States military under general Douglas MacArthur enacted numerous military, political, economic, and social reforms, guiding Japan into a democracy. This ran counter to the young communist countries trying to take Japan's place of power and the rise of nationalist movements in the region. This history continues to shape the region today. Here to discuss the topic are Doctors Allen Millet and Gerhard Weinberg. Dr. Allen Millet, a retired colonel in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, is an acclaimed military historian, award winning author and internationally recognized authority on the Korean War and United States Marine Corps. He is the Ambrose professor of history and the director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans and as the Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Professor Emeritus of History at the Ohio State University. Sr. Millet has earned numerous awards for his writings and his teachings, including the 2008 Pritzker Military Museum and Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing and the Smauel Elliot Morrison Prize for the Society of Military History, which also named their doctoral research fellowship in his honor. Dr. Gerhard L. Weinberg is professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where he has served on the faculty since 1974. A German expatriate and WWII veteran who served in the US army during the occupation of Japan, Dr. Weinberg is an internationally recognized authority on the origins and course of WWII, earning the 2009 Pritzker Military Museum and Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing for his writings on the subject. Among his

most notable works are *A World At Arms: A Global History of WWII*, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight WWII Leaders*, and *Germany, Hitler and WWII*. Please join me welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Doctors Allen Millet and Gerhard Weinberg. Gentleman.

(Applause)

Weinberg: Before we look at Japan's fall, I think a word needs to be said about what the Japanese had been at in wars with China and Russia. They had--the Japanese had seized what was sometimes called Formosa, now usually is called Taiwan. They had seized Korea, Manchuria. In the years 1937 to 1942, they were fighting first the Chinese and then everybody else in order to take over all of China, all of Southeast Asia including India, Burma, Southeast Asia, the Dutch East Indies, Australia, New Zealand, all the British, French, and American islands in the Pacific, Alaska, the westernmost part of Canada, the state of Washington, all of Central America, the islands in the Caribbean, Ecuador, Colombia, western Venezuela, Peru, and Chile. When Japan surrendered as was just mentioned, Japanese troops in the parts of this huge empire, which they still in portions controlled, were captured in--by the Americans and British, sent home relatively quickly. The Russians however kept a substantial number for years, and that both at the time and in memory created some problems. They were forced to cede to the Soviet Union the Kuril islands off the northern part of Japan, and the Soviet's, while they were at it in 1945 also took over a couple of small islands, whether they're in the Kurils or part of Okinawa is a matter of opinion and it's not just a matter of opinion. It is still today an argument between Russia and Japan, and it is why Russia has never signed the--and Japan have never agreed to a formal peace. At the end of the war there was a big problem getting American and British POWs back to their country. Many of them had been killed by or worked to death by the Japanese. There is an interesting difference in statistics of the American and British prisoners of war held by the Germans approximately four percent died or were killed as POWs. Twenty-eight percent were killed or worked to death by the Japanese, so there were issues. And since so many of the American POWs were held in Japanese camps in China, the American troops had to go in there to get them out. And as you probably know there was then a civil war in China. The Japanese forces driven by the Red Army out of Manchuria left Manchuria except for Port Arthur for a while to China. But because the Russians looted most of the industry in Manchuria, this would not only annoy the Chinese nationalists who first formally inherited it, but in the long run contributed to the Sino-Soviet arguments and difficulties because the Chinese communists did not appreciate the looting of Manchuria anymore than the nationalists had. Japan itself because it was surrendered before the home islands were occupied, was not divided into zones the way Germany and Austria were, and the capital of Tokyo was not divided into sectors the way Berlin and Vienna were. There were in the

home islands of Japan, American and British Commonwealth occupation troops, but the Japanese administration continued. And since the British Commonwealth forces were in the occupation of the western part of the main island of Honshu, they had symbolic, in my opinion, somewhat humorous representation in Tokyo just to make sure of this. Another very important difference between the occupation of Japan and the occupation of Germany was that American troops in Germany for years had to carry weapons. There were incidents in Japan that was not the case. It wasn't just that the Japanese had been told by their emperor to behave, but the people very quickly realized that what they had been told about the Allies eating Japanese babies for breakfast was a bunch of nonsense, and while I can in discussion give you some examples, the reality was that American troops did not carry weapons in the occupation. Of course the military police had a revolver as a part of their uniform, but I'm talking about the ordinary soldiers in the occupation. And as my brother, who is a year and a half older and was in the occupation from the very beginning told me, they weren't carrying the weapons then and getting along. There was a relationship of informal and occasionally more formal friendliness, I would call it, between the occupation forces and the occupied. Furthermore, Japan was being restructured as had been promised or threatened, whichever word you prefer, under a new constitution. They got to keep their emperor, but under a new system. On the one hand there was a series of literally thousands of war crimes trials, not just in Tokyo but all over East Asia, but the Japanese got a new constitution and began to be accustomed to what I suppose we would call a parliamentary democracy. And a factor I would suggest in this was that the supreme commander for the Allied Powers, always abbreviated as SCAP General MacArthur, whatever his problems in other respects had it turns out one great advantage. Unlike the vast majority of his contemporaries in American military leadership, MacArthur did not have the racist attitudes towards Orientals. And as a historian, I am convinced that this made it much easier for him and the Japanese leaders he worked with to make the transition from a system which was nominally democratic but had been subverted into a dictatorship in the 1930s into something different. And the Japanese people, I would suggest, relatively quickly became accustomed to this. There was and remains unfortunately one very important difference where the situation in Europe was better. Unlike the Germans, who for the most part faced up to their past, the Japanese still have not. And as a result of this, and we can discuss incidents that I could talk about--as a result of this there has not been an East and Southeast Asia, a kind of reconciliation of peoples. I'm not talking about governments now, I'm talking about people, ordinary people, which has taken place dramatically in Europe and the Middle East. That has not taken place in East and Southeast Asia, where because of the failure or refusal--whichever term you prefer--of the Japanese to face up to their

past, hatreds are passed from generation to generation. and this is an unfortunate and sad situation. I've already mentioned the Japanese getting out of Manchuria and not being returned to China. They had to get out of Korea, and as you know we and the Russians decided to divide it into two countries at the thirty-eight parallel. and if you look very carefully at a map today, you will see that the armistice at the end of the Korean War in 1953 is a teeny bit above at one end and a teeny bit below at the other end, but is essentially similar to the original division, and what has happened is that eventually under American auspices and models if you will but encouraged locally, something of a parliamentary democracy has developed in the southern Korea, and something much more modeled on the Stalinist Soviet Union has developed in the north. In reality for you in the audience, you are very likely either to drive or to see on the roads of Chicago a Kia automobile made in South Korea. You are not, as far as I can tell, in the foreseeable future likely to see an automobile made in North Korea. The Japanese forces left China and other parts and of course in China a civil war followed, which the Communists won. and there is an ironic aspect to this which is not generally mentioned, so I will call it to your attention. The last big Japanese successful offensive of WWII was in the summer of 1944 against the Nationalist China, the Ichiko Offensive, which largely destroyed Jean Kaysheck's army, in that way indirectly unintentionally but actually paved the way for the Chinese Communists to take over that country. The realities of course in the rest of the former Japanese empire, I think Professor Millet will talk about briefly, but in the other areas that the Japanese planned to control, there is to the best of my knowledge no real sense of liberation. I have always wondered what Fidel Castro thought or would have thought of Cuba being a part of the greater East Asia coprosperity sphere and of being rescued from that fate by the Yankees. It's worth thinking about. When I was in New Zealand they welcomed Japanese tourists to play golf there because that's easier and cheaper there than in Japan itself, but that they were to be a part of the Japanese empire is not widely known. and when a year and a half ago I lectured in the state of Washington at two universities, those people are really convinced they live in the western hemisphere and were not aware that they too were going to be in greater East Asia. Those areas and those things are so far now in the past that I don't see people even seriously thinking about them. The only part of the vast Asian wars Allied and especially American success was the turn of Australia and New Zealand to the United States for defense when their nominal superiors, the British were unable to do so. and therefore there is this continued military connection between Australia and New Zealand and the United States which after all fought the longest battle in its history on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Those are some at least of the issues out of the defeat of Japan and the continuing ones I would argue are two that I just alluded to, the population in Japan becoming accustomed

to living in a parliamentary democracy. they just had another election. whatever you think of the outcome, it is now considered a normal part of Japanese life. and the other is the unfortunate continuation of hatreds because of the failure, the refusal, the deliberate refusal of the Japanese government, and not all but much of it, society to face up to its horrendous records and the public hatreds which remain as a result.

Millet: I think one of the things that's really ironic is that the occupation of Japan was pretty peaceful, and yet the liberation of all the other places where the Japanese armed forces has been was anything but peaceful. and the huge challenge at the time was to get almost five million Japanese, both the military and civilian, back to the home islands as an essential part of occupation policy was that we would show--the Allied Powers would show a certain amount of understanding of the requirements of creating a new Japan by getting back as much of the Japanese armed forces and the civilians who were Indonesian, Malayan, and so forth, to get them home and safely so, because what we didn't want to have happen was a huge war of revenge against the Japanese. for example the policy of bringing home the Japanese army required them to carry weapons to the very time they got on the ship to go home because of the fear of retaliation by the Chinese and Indonesians and others. there was in fact one incident in Hong Kong where the Chinese had been oppressed everywhere. you know, mob scene, they attacked I think it was a Kippie Thai battalion and ripped them apart with their bare hands. well, that could have happened a lot of other places as well. and you have this situation where the expectation-- the nationalist movements that flourished in the 1920s and 30s and then had been oppressed in the 30s turned into resistance movements whose loyalty was questionable. I mean, you find out that, well, some of them cooperated with the Japanese, some of them opposed the Japanese, but there were some real problems sorting out just who was gonna take charge of these various countries when the Japanese left. and so even disarming the Japanese armies and sending them home opened up this vacuum in practically every country where the Japanese armed forces had been present and unleashed all kinds of latent hostility and had really--you find civil wars breaking out all over Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Burma. In India for example the Congress Party was already restive. they were very unhappy about the famines of 1944. the jewel of the crown was sinking already when the war ended. and so you have this very strange situation where largely Commonwealth forces were the Indian army, Australian army sort of rushed in first to rescue POWs and to exchange the Japanese and then sort of held the gates while colonial troops came back, in the case of the--of Indochina, the French came back in 1946. the Dutch go back to Indonesia and immediately become involved in a war of liberation in Indonesia. the Philippines was somewhat different because the United States had already promised them independence in 1946, but there we did our best to make

sure that the group, you might call them the America-nistas--you know, those pro-america factions within the resistance, called the SCAP guerillas or the southwest pacific guerillas--emerged as the dominant political power and the HUC, HUC bal hop communist movement was suppressed. Philippine constabulary switched sides. they'd been workign for the japanese. they then started to go back workign for the americans, and their pricniple misssion was to disarm the HUCKS, not jsut to get the japanese out. im sure that people forget that the first conflict between americna mariens and chinese communsits took palce in manchuria and china, you know, in 1946 and 1947. and the marines were in china until 1949. so that this period is one rich with complexities. when you look at a lot of the records from teh OSS for example or miltiary missions, you find that the people on the spot had a pretty good idea of what was going on. and that they were going to--choices had to be made soempelce, you knwo, in wahstogn. it was unclear whterh the war deparmtent wanted to make them or the state department wanted to make them. if it was messy, nether wanted to. if it was a litle less than messy, then usually it fellt ot he occuaption offcie in the pentagon to sort of sort this out, because if there werent americna troops on the gorund as there were in Korea and japan--tehr were commonwealth or indian troops. Ho CHI Mihn, and I have no reason to doubt this, as saying that he didnt midn having vietnam occupied by commonwealth troops, the indian army, because he thoguth they'd leave. and he didnt even midn the frnech comign back because he figured, well, why take a thirty-year war but then get rid of them too. but he sure as hell wanted the chinese out becasue they'd had--(chuckles) they'd had them aorudn for a thousand-year period at one time. and he was reallye ager to make sure that evne if it wa sth tfrnehc that was better than ahving the chisene nationalist amry sitting on top of the Red River Delta. it really is fascinating to watch all this interplay in the emmergence into people like Tecono, (27) for example, and Ong San in Burma and others popping upa s these occuaptiosn advance. I think he alst seniroy offcier int he Indain amry was killed, I think it was, late '45, early '46 fightng in Achay in Indoneshia. so a lot of thes eplaces, much liek the middle east after WWI, the war didnt really end. It changed. in some cases, member sof the japanese amry stuck around. We foudn japanese troops in CHina, you know, all the way up to 1949, 1950. many of them in fact ended up in the Red Amry in the People's Liberation Amry. so it looks a lot more cmplciated and tazinxg to our policy elite, much mroe cmplciated than dealin wihth the reform in japan. I think it's be interesitng to have you comment about the occuaptinin japan and how it looked to you as a young soldier when you were there.

Weinberg: WHen I arrive, I was glad--coming in those days into japan through the th replacment depot in Zarma, Japan, and Zarma is about twenty-five, thrity miles south of Tokyo. and I was put into depot

supply, and on the first day the warrant officer told me that the emergency supply, you are going to have--I was going to have a convoy of trucks, and it would take all day, and I was to go to the mess sergeant and tell him to draw lunch and tell him how many trucks I had. and needless to say, I didn't. I said, "Yes, sir," but asked the other soldiers, "What is the connection between my lunch and the number of trucks?" the answer turned out to be that all the drivers of trucks and all the loading helpers were Japanese former members of the Imperial Japanese Army who were now working for the Americans. The 4th Repair Depot fed only GIs, but among the thousands of GIs there were two who had this very unusual malady of varying lunch appetites. So at lunchtime we stop in the Japanese countryside, and I would pass out lunch to all of the drivers and helpers. That was the day obviously on which I had a very big lunch appetite and would occasionally notice but never say a word of one of the men putting some of his lunch in the pocket obviously to take home to someone. The other side of the same thing was when I was able to get transferred to Yokohama and to teach at the Army Education Program school. I was in information and education of headquarters 8th Army, and all of those enlisted people were--we were all in a hut area that the Americans had built in a portion of Yokohama leveled during the war. These were all rows of quantset huts. And I noticed very soon when I moved from Zama to Yokohama that there were always in this barbed-wire surrounded area Japanese hanging in the garbage cans. Nobody saw. The MPs would walk right by them. And one day I was back from the school in the quantset hut for the Army people a bit early, and the word was out that the command general--this was General Eicherberger, the commander of the 8th Army, the Army of Occupation--was taking the BCOF, British Commonwealth Occupation Force, general on a tour of the hut area. Needless to say I rushed in to get out of my footlocker my camera, and there are the two generals--Major Hope, who was in charge of the hut area--taking them through.

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(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

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