

Rival Cliques in the Japanese Army

At a time when unity in the prosecution of the Greater East Asia war would seem essential to Japan, the elimination of an extremist military clique (*Kodo-ha*) from prominent administrative posts under Premier Koiso has subjected the Japanese Government to the political stress of Army factionalism. Military leaders advocating Japanese expansion in the Far East by use of armed force have strongly influenced Japanese policy for a number of years, and the Army continues to dominate the Koiso Cabinet. However, the most uncompromising militarists have been supplanted since the fall of former Premier Tojo by members of the less extreme Army clique (*Tosei-ha*), who have formed a coalition Government including non-military political careerists and industrialists. When in the past a Cabinet coalition of non-militarists and comparatively conservative Army leaders has been formed, the extremist military group has attempted to upset the Government rather than to tolerate leadership which they consider likely to temporize with private political and financial interests at the expense of Japanese imperialist aims.

The Japanese Army has long contained rival cliques, differing primarily on the methods of achieving their common imperialist aims, on the internal structure of the state, and on the role various other political elements — big business, the bureaucrats, and officials close to the Throne — should be allowed to play in the government.

On the one hand, the radical *Kodo-ha*, including former Premier Tojo, Itagaki, and Mazaki, and a large group of young officers, thinks in terms of "the patriotic Japanese spirit" and decisive military action. It advocates internally a corporative state, with nationalization of the major industries. Young officers within this group proclaim undying loyalty to the Emperor, and desire army rule of the state under his leadership. Within the Army they oppose the conservative Army "bosses" who, they charge, compromise with conservative civilian elements to insure their own position. Radical young officers have been involved in almost every organized act of terrorism against the government in recent years, and the *Kodo-ha*, while not advocating it, is sympathetic to terrorism in a way emotionally impossible for the more conservative group.

The more conservative *Tosei-ha*, on the other hand, led by men like Koiso, Sugiyama, and Ugaki, thinks in terms of discipline, control, organization, and calculation. It is more willing to work through and with other political forces like the finance-capitalists to achieve its ends. It would maintain the status quo at home, but follow a course of expansionism abroad.

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While these two groups have long been rivals for control of the army and the government, neither group has ever been in a position of domination so complete as to eliminate the other. The *Kodo-ha* leaders, when in power, before the war, were able to gain the cooperation of the *Tosei-ha* in a policy moving toward their common ends. However, when out of power, they refused to be held in check by a more cautious *Tosei-ha* policy. Between 1931 and 1944 the government was generally dominated by the *Kodo-ha*, who diligently sought an all-out imperialist, anti-Western war. This group came into undisputed power in 1941 with Tojo's appointment to the premiership. Since the fall of Tojo, as from time to time in the 1930's, the *Tosei-ha* has been in the ascendancy.

The political situation in Japan under the Koiso regime bears a marked resemblance to that of the summer of 1935. Then, as now, conservative elements within the Army were in power and attempted to restrict the radical *Kodo-ha*. The results were a mutiny and a series of assassinations which seriously threatened national unity.

For several months radical officers in the Army had been restive. Early in 1935, Minister of War Hayashi, a conservative, attempted to lessen Army factionalism and promote discipline by transferring the unruly *Kodo-ha* adherents to division commands away from the center of power. Inspector General of Military Education Mazaki, a *Kodo-ha* leader and one of the men whose approval of the periodic transfer lists, was required, opposed Hayashi's plans. In order to carry out the proposed shifts, Hayashi therefore had to force Mazaki to resign. He was supported in this move by Sugiyama, Vice Chief of Staff, and General Nagata, Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, among others. General Watanabe, a moderate, took over the post of Inspector General. Hayashi then put through a comprehensive transfer program involving such officers as Generals Tojo and Shinji Hata, men believed to be close to the *Kodo-ha*. Some were outright supporters of General Araki, a military chauvinist who shared with Mazaki the admiration of the radical young officers.

Almost immediately after the institution of the transfer program, General Nagata, who had backed up Hayashi, was assassinated by Lieutenant Colonel Aizawa. Assuming the responsibility for this breach of army discipline, Hayashi resigned as Minister of War, and his successor Kawashima did not actively oppose the radical faction.

Aizawa's trial began in late January 1936. The young officers used it as a forum through which to voice their philosophy, air army factionalism, and present their own position in a favorable light. Aizawa was presented as a patriot and a hero. In his defense statement, Aizawa cited Nagata's part in the retirement of Mazaki, his opposition to the young officers movement, and his connection with conservative elements within the army and close to the Throne.

While the trial of Aizawa was still in progress, the uprising of 26 February took place. Radical young officers who sympathized with

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Aizawa and hoped to seize control of the government led a series of assassinations. Among those assassinated were the recently appointed Inspector General of Military Education, General Watanabe, whose replacement of General Mazaki had caused so much opposition among the radical army elements; the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Admiral Saito, who was criticized as a conservative influence on the Throne; and Finance Minister Takahashi, who had opposed increasing the army's budget and who was connected both with political parties and the financial world. Attempts were made on the lives of the Elder Statesman Prince Saionji, the Grand Chamberlain Admiral Suzuki, and Premier Okada. Then the extremist leaders barricaded themselves with their troops in a section of Tokyo and held out for several days against all entreaties to surrender. Although the insurrection failed, it achieved partial success by discrediting the conservative army personnel policy and forcing the government to adopt some of the measures favored by the radicals.

While assassinations and violence have not figured in the latest internal rivalry within the Army as they did in the period 1935-6, the recent cabinet change has again brought a shift in the balance of power away from the radical and toward the more conservative group.

Tojo represented the Araki-Mazaki faction which espoused the ideas of the *Kodo-ha* and the young officers and which started on its way to power after the uprising of 26 February, 1936. With Tojo's rise to power in 1941, this group gained temporary dominance over all political elements, enforced virtual state control of industry, and eliminated bureaucrats, ex-political party leaders, and more conservative elements from the Government.

The radical clique reached the height of its power in February 1944 when influential but moderate Sugiyama lost the important post of Chief of Staff. Tojo personally assumed the job. Sugiyama had served under both army factions in the past, but had never espoused the ideas of the young officers and had often been under attack by *Kodo-ha* sympathizers. Nevertheless Sugiyama had powerful connections within the Army, and he reappeared in the new Koiso government as Minister of War.

When Tojo's government fell in July 1944, the radical *Kodo-ha* lost its power and was replaced by a conservative coalition of the *Tosei-ha*, elder statesmen, and business interests. As in the coalition governments of the 1930's, all elements of Japanese political life are represented in the new cabinet. The *Kodo-ha* and young officers have constantly attacked this type of cabinet, and want to pursue their own course uncompromisingly. The *Kodo-ha*, now in a minor political position, can be expected to disapprove of any limitation on an all-out war policy and all further compromise with non-military elements in Japan. Whatever course it follows, the Koiso Government must operate under the threat that this bitter clique rivalry within the Army will result in a critical lack of unity in support of its policy.