

twenties began a vigorous campaign for Japanese expansion and a fascist type of state. He was also an incorrigible conspirator who found in Hashimoto, leader of the Young Officer Group with its special organization known as the Cherry Society, a collaborator congenial both for his hatred of democracy and his ruthless readiness to assassinate any figure who might block their path. Both Okawa and Hashimoto were judged by the court to be among the ringleaders of the Manchurian Incident of September, 1931; they were also deeply implicated in abortive coups d'état in 1930 and 1931 and afterwards in political assassinations.

What will come perhaps as a surprise to some students of Japanese political affairs is the Tribunal's estimate of Hirota's role. Hirota became Foreign Minister in the Saito Cabinet in September, 1933; he continued in that post in the succeeding Okada Government of August, 1934. Following the army mutiny in February, 1936, Hirota became Prime Minister in March of that year. The army by vetoing other candidates, were in effect supplanting Saionji in his traditional function of nominating a premier to the Emperor; by this act they revealed also their confidence in Hirota. Under his cabinet the army scheme, a New Order in East Asia, became a settled policy. His government accelerated the tempo of re-armament; it brought Japan into the Anti-Comintern Pact. Yet Hirota was a subtle and skillful diplomatist who preferred to subject China to Japanese domination if possible by means short of war, but he willingly assisted in the creation of a great striking force as a threat by which Japanese diplomacy might carve out an empire in East Asia, perhaps without recourse to war. At the end of his government, the course of Japanese aggression in China was charted and set. Hirota's principles and policies were inherited and further developed in the first Konoye Cabinet which took office in June, 1937, with Hirota as Foreign Minister. Thus Hirota appears as the teacher and Konoye as the willing pupil.

Contending Factions

The court record reveals the extraordinary complexity of Japanese politics and the difficulty in finding a centre of gravity within the state machine. There are different factions contending for power not only as between the armed services and other branches of government but within the army itself and between different leaders of ultra-nationalist societies. Conspiracies are hatched on comparatively low levels; the results are accepted by the higher authorities. Incidents such as the Manchurian Affair of 1931 were exploited not only as an excuse for deploying Japanese armed forces on the continent, but also to work radical changes within the Japanese Government. There is thus a continual action and reaction as between extremists on the one hand and the government on the other, until by 1941 the government has adopted practically the full programme of the extremists. Yet all these great changes within Japanese politics went on without a constitutional revolution so that it is dangerous to be dogmatic as to the particular date or event when Japan became a fascist or aggressive state.

Decision For War

The court record is of material assistance to the historian in searching for the mechanism by which vital issues are decided. It is perhaps impossible to give a precise answer to the question: when did the Japanese leaders finally decide to wage war against the Western powers? Insofar as a simple answer