

Army Extremists Appeased

One example of the way in which the Saionji-Harada memoirs throw light on Kido's own political behaviour will have to suffice for this brief article. One dominant characteristic of Kido's policy was his fear of any internal disturbance. His policy may be described as limitless appeasement of army extremists for fear that resistance to them would precipitate civil disorder. Accordingly he used his influence with the Emperor to give way to the army expansionists and their allies on matters of vital issue. As early as July, 1933, Kido remarked to Harada, "it is disturbing to hear the Emperor taking such pointed action", referring to a rebuke the Emperor had given Itagaki over army intrigue. Later Kido remarked to Harada, "the present Emperor is a scientist and very much of a liberal as well as a pacifist; therefore, if the Emperor's ideas are not changed there will exist quite a gap between His Majesty and the Army and rightist groups". Harada was infuriated at this attitude, feeling that it was Kido's responsibility to exert pressure on the army to comply with the Emperor's wish when it was not in accord with prevailing army views. Thus the prosecution in the trial made effective use of Harada's opinions when it stated, "Kido was always prepared to let the military have their way and in later years at length to make it easy for them rather than risk the possibility of civil war or revolution in Japan".

Emperor Quoted

One example from Kido's diary will be given to illustrate its value. This example incidentally will tend to qualify the impression gained from the quotations from the Saionji-Harada memoirs relating to Kido's influence on the Emperor. In the late autumn of 1941 when the fateful decision to launch the Pacific war was being made, Kido himself was so disturbed that he went to the Emperor to inform him that the navy was reluctant to go along with the plan for an attack and there appeared to be a danger of a deadlock between the two services on this vital issue. Here are Kido's own words on this matter:

"I visited the Emperor at 3:30 p.m. in response to his request. He said that Prince Takamatsu had told him that the Navy's hands were full and it appeared that he wished to avoid war, but did not know what to do. I advised the Emperor to ask the opinions of the Navy Minister, the Chief of the Naval General Staff, and the Premier, for the situation was really grave. We could not be too prudent in the matter. At 6:35 p.m. I again visited the Emperor in response to his request. He said that he had ordered the Premier to act according to program on account of the affirmative answers of the Navy Minister and the Chief of the Navy General Staff concerning the question as to the success of the war."

In this instance then the matter seemed to lie not in Kido's hands but with the Emperor himself, and it is for the historian to decide whether the Emperor was the mere puppet that some interpreters of the Japanese political scene before the war have maintained.

Record's Historical Value

In assessing the value of the court record and judgment one must be aware of the unavoidable shortcomings of a Tribunal as a writer of history. The mantle of the historian is not cut to fit the judge. The judge is concerned primarily