
Gekokujo

1.

The sky over Tokyo on the afternoon of February 25, 1936, was dark and foreboding. A thick blanket of snow already covered the city and there was threat of more to come. Three nights earlier more than a foot had fallen, breaking a record of fifty-four years, and causing such a traffic snarl that some theaters had to be turned into temporary hotels for audiences unable to get home.

Even under its white cloak of snow, Tokyo looked almost as Western as Oriental. Japan had left much of its feudal past behind to become by far the most progressive, westernized nation of Asia. A few hundred yards from the Imperial Palace with its traditional tile roof was a modern four-story concrete building, the Imperial Household Ministry, where all court business was conducted and the Emperor's offices were located. Just outside the ancient stone walls and moat surrounding the spacious Palace grounds was the same *mélange* of East and West: a long line of modern structures, including the Imperial Theater and the Dai Ichi Building, as Occidental as the skyline of Chicago, while a few blocks away, in narrow cobblestone streets, were row upon row of geisha houses, *sushi* stands and kimono stores, and assorted little ramshackle shops, gay even on that cloudy day with their flapping doorway curtains and colorful lanterns.

Next to the Palace on a small hill was the not quite completed Diet Building, constructed mainly of stone from Okinawa and looking quasi-Egyptian. Behind this commanding edifice was a cluster of spacious houses, the offi-

cial residence of government leaders. The largest was that of the Prime Minister. It was two buildings in one, the business part Western in the early Frank Lloyd Wright style, the living quarters Japanese with paper-thin walls, tatami floors and sliding doors.

But beneath the peaceful exterior of Tokyo seethed an unrest which would soon spill violently into the snow-covered streets. At one end of the Palace grounds were the barracks of the 1st (Gem) Division. Here authorities were already prepared for trouble after a tip about a military insurrection from a major in the War Ministry: he had learned from a young officer that a group of radicals planned to assassinate several advisers to the Emperor that day. Suspects had been put under surveillance, and important public figures were given emergency bodyguards. The doors of the Prime Minister's official residence were reinforced with steel, iron bars installed in the windows, and a warning system connected directly to police headquarters. But the *kempeitai* (military police organization) * and the regular police felt they could easily handle the situation. After all, what real damage could a handful of rebels do, however strongly motivated? And by now they were wondering how reliable the information was that the uprising was at hand. The day was almost over.

It seems strange that they were so complacent, since the spirit of rebellion was high among elite troops charged with defense of the Palace grounds. Their defiance was so apparent that they were on orders to be shipped out to Manchuria in a few days, and their contempt for authority so open that one unit, ostensibly on maneuvers, had urinated in cadence at metropolitan police headquarters. Fourteen hundred of these unruly officers and men were preparing to revolt. Just before dawn the next morning, attack groups would strike simultaneously at six Tokyo targets: the homes of several government leaders, as well as metropolitan police headquarters.

While intricate preparations for these attacks were proceeding, pleasure seekers roamed the darkening streets in search of entertainment. Already the Ginza, Tokyo's Broadway-Fifth Avenue, was teeming. To young Japanese it had long been a romantic symbol of the outside world, a fairyland of neon lights, boutiques, coffee shops, American and European movies, Western-style dance halls and restaurants. A few blocks away, in the Akasaka section, where the kimono was common for both men and women, the old Japan also anticipated a night of pleasure. Geishas looking like something out of antiquity in their theatrical make-up and resplendent costumes were pulled in rickshaws through the winding, willow-lined streets. Here the lights were more muted, and the traditional red lanterns carried by the police gave off a soft, nostalgic glow. It was a charming woodcut come alive.

These insurrectionists were not motivated by personal ambition. Like half a dozen groups before them—all of which had failed—they were about to

* *Kempei* were soldiers acting as armed policemen, with some authority over civilians. (In Japanese, one form serves for both singular and plural; there is no suffix to indicate number.)

try once again to redress the social injustices in Japan through force and assassination. Tradition had legitimized such criminal action, and the Japanese had given it a special name, *gekokujo* (insubordination), a term first used in the fifteenth century when rebellion was rampant on every level, with provincial lords refusing to obey the shogun,* who in turn ignored the orders of the emperor.

The crumbling of autocracy in Europe after World War I, followed by the tide of democracy, socialism and Communism, had had dramatic impact on the young people of Japan, and they too set up a cry for change. Political parties emerged and a universal manhood suffrage bill was enacted in 1924. But it all happened too fast. Too many Japanese looked upon politics as a game or a source of easy money and there was a series of exposés—the Matsushima Red-Light District Scandal, the Railway Scandal, the Korean Scandal. Charges of bribery and corruption resulted in mob brawls on the floor of the Diet.

The population explosion which accompanied Japan's westernization added to the confusion. Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku (her four main islands, comprising an area scarcely the size of California) already burst with eighty million people. The national economy could not absorb a population increase of almost one million a year; farmers who were close to starvation following the plunge of produce prices began to organize in protest for the first time in Japanese history; hundreds of thousands of city workers were thrown out of work. Out of all this came a wave of left-wing parties and unions.

These movements were counteracted by nationalist organizations, whose most popular leader was Ikki Kita,** a nationalist as well as a fiery revolutionary who managed to combine a program of socialism with imperialism. His tract on reform, "A General Outline of Measures for the Reconstruction of Japan," was devoured by radicals and worshipers of the Emperor alike. His words appealed to all who yearned for reform. "The Japanese are following the destructive examples of the Western nations," he wrote. "The possessors of financial, political and military power are striving to maintain their unjust interests under cover of the imperial power. . . ."

"Seven hundred million brethren in India and China cannot gain their independence without our protection and leadership."

"The history of East and West is a record of the unification of feudal states after an era of civil wars. The only possible international peace, which will come after the present age of international wars, must be a feudal peace. This will be achieved through the emergence of the strongest country, which will dominate all other nations of the world."

He called for the "removal of the barriers between nation and Emperor"

*De facto ruler in feudal Japan; a sort of generalissimo. Until the reign of Meiji, the present ruler's grandfather, the emperor had for centuries been little more than a figurehead, a puppet of the shogun.

**In Japan the family name comes first but is reversed in this book for easier reading.

—that is, the Diet and the Cabinet. Voting should be restricted to heads of families and no one would be allowed to accumulate more than 1,000,000 yen (about \$500,000 at the time). Important industries should be nationalized, a dictatorship established, and women restricted to activities in the home “cultivating the ancient Japanese arts of flower arrangement and the tea ceremony.”

It was no wonder that millions of impressionable, idealistic young men, already disgusted by corruption in government and business and poverty at home, were enthralled.* They could battle all these wicked forces as well as Communism, free the Orient of Occidental domination and make Japan the leading country in the world.

In the West these young men could have found an outlet for action as unionists or political agitators, but in Japan many, particularly those from small landowning and shopkeeping families, found they could serve best as Army and Navy officers. Once in the service, they gained an even more profound understanding of poverty from their men, who would be weeping over letters from home—with their sons away, the families were on the verge of starvation. The young officers blamed their own superiors, politicians, court officials. They joined secret organizations of which some, like Tenkento, called for direct action and assassination, while others, like Sakurakai (the Cherry Society), demanded territorial expansion as well as internal reforms.

By 1928 this ferment came to a head, but it took two extraordinary men operating within the military framework to put it into action. One was a lieutenant colonel, Kanji Ishihara, and the other a colonel, Seishiro Itagaki. The first was brilliant, inspired, flamboyant, a fountain of ideas; the second was cool, thoughtful, a master organizer. They made a perfect team. What Ishihara envisioned, Itagaki could bring to pass. Both were staff officers in the Kwantung Army, which had originally, in 1905, been sent to Manchuria to guard Japanese interests in a wild territory larger than California, Oregon and Washington combined.

The two officers felt that Manchuria was the only answer to poverty in Japan. It could be transformed from a wilderness into a civilized, prosperous area, alleviating unemployment at home and providing an outlet for the overpopulated homeland, where more than two thirds of all farms were smaller than two and a quarter acres. Manchuria could also supply Japan with what she so desperately needed to remain an industrial state—a guaranteed source of raw materials and a market for finished goods. But all this could not come about, Ishihara and Itagaki reasoned, until the Japanese

*The song of Nikkyo (the All-Japan Council for the Joint Struggle of Patriots) indicated the peculiarly Japanese spirit of such young rebels:

Daily we submit to hypocrisy and lies,
While national honor lingering dies.
Arise ye! O patriots, arise!
Onward we march, defying death!
Come prison bars! Come gory death!

ters were arrested on October 17, 1931. The leader of the conspiracy was sentenced to twenty days' confinement and his assistant got half that. Their accomplices were merely reprimanded. It was the old story: amnesty for any actual or planned violence if it was done for the glory of the nation.

That evening the War Minister radioed the Kwantung Army a limp reproach:

1. THE KWANTUNG ARMY IS TO REFRAIN FROM ANY NEW PROJECT SUCH AS BECOMING INDEPENDENT FROM THE IMPERIAL ARMY AND SEIZING CONTROL OF MANCHURIA AND MONGOLIA.

2. THE GENERAL SITUATION IS DEVELOPING ACCORDING TO THE INTENTIONS OF THE ARMY, SO YOU MAY BE COMPLETELY REASSURED.

As if this wasn't enough, the War Vice Minister added these conciliatory words:

WE HAVE BEEN UNITED IN MAKING DESPERATE EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE EXISTING DIFFICULTY . . . TRUST OUR ZEAL, ACT WITH GREAT PRUDENCE. . . . GUARD AGAINST IMPETUOUS ACTS, SUCH AS DECLARING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE KWANTUNG ARMY, AND WAIT FOR A FAVORABLE TURN OF EVENTS ON OUR SIDE.

Rather than being appeased, the Kwantung commander indignantly denied that his army was seeking independence, and though admitting it had "tended to act overpositively and arbitrarily," claimed it had done so "for the country."

The abortive Brocade Flag Revolution did achieve one of its purposes: in the next few years it assured the success of the Manchurian adventure. It also convinced many Japanese that politics and business were so corrupt that a military-led reform had to be supported. At the same time it engendered such bitterness that the two wings of the reform movement began to split. One, nicknamed "the Control" clique by newsmen, believed it was not enough to take Manchuria, since security against a possible attack by the Soviet Union could be forestalled only by control of China itself. The Kita followers, known as "the Imperial Way" clique, were convinced this new expansion would be folly; an industrialized Manchuria would be a sturdy enough fortress against Communism.

The younger, more idealistic officers belonged to the latter faction, while field-grade officers as well as key men in the War Ministry supported the Control clique. The more radical nationalists turned immediately to assassination. Each member of the Blood Brotherhood, for example, was pledged to kill at least one "corrupt" political or financial leader on or about February 11, 1932, the 2,592nd celebration of the ascension to the

throne of Jinmu, the first human emperor of Japan, the fifth in line of descent from the Sun Goddess, according to legend. Those marked for death included Finance Minister Junnosuke Inoue, a forthright man who often opposed the mounting Army appropriation. The conspirator assigned to kill Inoue practiced shooting on a deserted beach, and four days ahead of schedule put three bullets into Inoue right on the sidewalk. Less than a month later, the second murder took place under similar circumstances. As Baron Takuma Dan, president of Mitsui, stepped out of his car, a young assassin jabbed a pistol in his back and pulled the trigger.

Once again the trials provided the citizens of Japan with melodrama and propaganda. The assassin in Japanese history had often been a more sympathetic figure than the victim. Wasn't there some lack of virtue in a man who let himself be killed, and wasn't an assassin who murdered for lofty purposes merely defending the common people against tyranny? Overwhelming evidence of guilt notwithstanding, the two killers were not executed but given life imprisonment, from which it was obvious they would be paroled in a few years.

On Sunday, May 15, only two months after the death of Dan, a pair of taxis pulled up at the side entrance to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, a Shinto temple dedicated to all who have died in Japan's wars. Nine Navy and Army officers alighted from the cabs and bowed toward the Sun Goddess; then, armed with charms bought from a priest, returned to the taxis and headed for the Prime Minister's official residence. Here they forced their way past a police sergeant and into the room of Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai, a diminutive man of seventy-five with a goatee. The old man calmly led the would-be assassins to a Japanese-style room, where they politely removed their shoes and sat down. At that moment a comrade who had got lost in the corridors entered, dagger in hand, and cried out, "No use talking! Fire!" Everyone began shooting at the courageous little man who had opposed the conquest of Manchuria and steadfastly refused to recognize the puppet government of the province now going under the manufactured name of Manchukuo ("State of Manchu"). The assassins left by taxi for police headquarters to launch an attack, but it was Sunday, and except for a few duty officers there was no one to fight. Before surrendering they heaved a grenade at the Bank of Japan. Other conspirators scattered handbills in the streets, and threw bombs which shattered a few windows.

The coup itself—named the 5/15 (May 15) Incident—had fizzled out, but it brought forth even more sensational trials. There were three in all—one for civilians, one each for Army and Navy personnel. As usual a large segment of the public sympathized with the assassins, and there was general applause when one defendant declared that he and his comrades only wanted to sound an alarm to awaken the nation. The people had heard so much about "corruption" that little sympathy was shown the

memory of gallant little Inukai. His death was a warning to politicians.

Feeling ran so high that 110,000 petitions for clemency, signed or written entirely in blood, inundated officials of the trial. Nine young men from Niigata asked to take the place of those on trial, and to show their good faith enclosed their own nine little fingers pickled in a jar of alcohol.

One of Inukai's assassins did express regret but said that the Prime Minister had to be "sacrificed on the altar of national reformation." Another declared, "Life or death does not count with me. I say to those who bemoan my death, 'Do not shed tears for me but sacrifice yourselves on the altars of reform.'"

The results of the trials could have been predicted. No one was sentenced to death, and of the forty to receive sentences almost all were free in a few years. To the people they were martyrs, their own champions. Who else called for such drastic methods to end the crippling depression? * Who else would lead the farmers and workers out of poverty? Who else dared publicly assail leading politicians, court officials and financial barons for corruption? And since so many people believed in this so implicitly, the power of the militarists and rightists continued to grow.

For three years the idealistic young officers, chafed by the corruption surrounding them, bided their time. Only their reverence for the Emperor prevented them from supporting a Communist revolution. But one of them, driven by "an impulse from on high," took matters into his own hands. It was a bloody and bizarre action even for a country with one foot planted in feudalism. One morning in August 1935, Lieutenant Colonel Saburo Aizawa, after visiting the Meiji Shrine for advice, entered the back door of Army General Staff headquarters, a decrepit two-story wooden building just outside the Palace grounds. Like so many other idealistic, radical officers of the day, he had become incensed when their idol, General Jinsaburo Mazaki, was dismissed from his post as Inspector General of Military Education.**

Aizawa strode unannounced into the office of another general, Tetsuzan Nagata, chief of the Military Affairs Bureau and one of Mazaki's most outspoken foes. "I feel an impulse to assassinate Nagata," Aizawa had recently told the Sun Goddess at the Ise Shrine. "If I am right, please help me succeed. If I am wrong, please make me fail." Nagata, at his desk, did not even look up as Aizawa pulled his sword, lunged and missed. Slightly wounded on the second thrust, the general lurched for an exit but Aizawa stabbed him through the back, pinning him momentarily to the door. Aizawa

* Poverty in Japan had increased in the wake of America's depression. The price of raw silk, Japan's main export, had dropped more than 50 percent.

**The three most important posts in the Japanese Army were the Chief of the General Staff, the War Minister and the Inspector General of Military Education (referred to as "the Big Three"). This triangular system dating from 1878 had been recommended by a Prussian major, Jacob Meckel, on loan to Japan from the Kaiser.

slashed his neck twice, then walked to the office of a friend to say he had just carried out Heaven's judgment and went off to buy a cap—he'd lost his in the fracas. When a military policeman arrested him, Aizawa thought he'd be examined briefly and allowed to return to duty. Instead he found himself the star of a sensational trial that was shaking the foundations of the Army and became the rallying point of all the young superpatriots who wanted to reform the nation overnight.

At his trial Aizawa was treated gingerly by the five judges and was allowed to use the witness stand to attack statesmen, politicians and the *zaibatsu* (family business combines such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi) for corruption. Pleading guilty to the charge of murder, he claimed he had only done his duty as an honorable soldier of the Emperor. "The country was in a deplorable state: the farmers were impoverished, officials were involved in scandals, diplomacy was weak, and the prerogative of the Supreme Command had been violated by the naval-limitation agreements," he declared in the stilted prose of reform.* "I came to realize that the senior statesmen, those close to the Throne, powerful financiers and bureaucrats, were attempting gradually to corrupt the government and the Army for their own selfish interests." These conditions had inspired him to murder—to commit *gekokujo*.

"If the court fails to understand the spirit which guided Colonel Aizawa," his defense counsel said ominously, "a second Aizawa, and even a third, will appear."

2.

These prophetic words were uttered on February 25, 1936, in snowbound Tokyo, even as the leaders of the most ambitious coup in the history of modern Japan were ready to strike. Their principal target the following morning would be Prime Minister Keisuke Okada, a retired admiral. Okada was hosting a banquet at his official residence on the evening of the twenty-fifth, in celebration of the victory of the government party (Minseito) in the general election for the House of Representatives five days earlier. He was a politician by request, not choice. The previous fall the Emperor had asked him to form a new cabinet after a scandal involving Finance Ministry officials forced the resignation of his predecessor, Viscount Makoto Saito, also a retired admiral.

*His last charge referred to the naval disarmament conference held in Washington (1922), which adopted a 5-5-3 ratio as to capital ships belonging to America, Britain and Japan. The Japanese (particularly the young radicals) were still incensed at the big-power curtailment of their naval strength. The lower ratio for Japan implied a stigma of national inferiority.

While Okada's guests toasted the election results as a resounding triumph for the admiral's policies and a blow to fascism and militarism, his private wish was that he could resign. He was weary from the struggle, and it seemed to him that despite the victory at the polls, the militarists and chauvinists were as strong as ever.

Two other men marked for assassination were at a party several blocks away at the American embassy, where Ambassador Joseph C. Grew was giving a dinner for thirty-six in honor of the recently cashiered prime minister, who had been made Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. Among the guests was still another retired admiral, Kantaro Suzuki, Grand Chamberlain to the Emperor.

Grew was a tall, courtly man with black bushy eyebrows, mustache and gray-white hair. Born in Boston's Back Bay, as was his great-grandfather, he had attended Groton and Harvard with Franklin D. Roosevelt. An aristocrat with democratic instincts, he had already distinguished himself as a diplomat in Europe. He was particularly qualified to serve in Tokyo, since he had a rare understanding and affection for Japan and all things Japanese, as well as a wife who had previously lived in the country, spoke the language and was a descendant of Commodore Perry.

That evening Grew had gone to the trouble of providing special entertainment for his guest of honor: a private showing of *Naughty Marietta*, starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. He had chosen the film because "it was full of lovely old Victor Herbert music, beautiful scenes, a pretty, romantic story and no vulgarity whatever. . . ." After dinner he escorted former Prime Minister Saito to a comfortable armchair in the salon. Grew knew the old gentleman had never attended a sound movie and if he was bored he could take a nap. But Viscount Saito was too enraptured to sleep; and though it was his custom to leave parties promptly at ten o'clock, not only did he stay for refreshments at the end of the first half of the film but remained until the end. The other guests must also have been moved by the romantic story, for when the lights went on, the eyes of all the Japanese ladies "were distinctly red."

It was half past eleven when the Privy Seal and his wife got up to leave. The Grews saw them to the door, pleased that the admiral had enjoyed himself so much. Scattered flakes of snow drifted down gently as the Saito car drove off.

At four o'clock in the morning on February 26, Captain Kiyosada Koda and the other rebel leaders routed out their enlisted men, who still knew nothing of the plot; they thought they were going out on another night maneuver. A few were told there would be killing that night.

"I want you to die with me," Lieutenant Kurihara told Pfc. Kuratomo. Completely taken by surprise, Kuratomo nevertheless answered im-

mediately, "Yes, sir. I'll die." A superior officer's order was absolute, never to be disobeyed. "This," Kuratomo later recalled, "was the first time I realized something very serious was taking place."

Snow was now falling steadily in huge flakes, and it reminded several of the insurgent officers of the incident of "the forty-seven *ronin*." In the seventeenth century a provincial lord was so disgraced by Kira, the chief minister of the shogun, that he committed suicide. Oishi, a samurai warrior serving the dishonored man, vowed to avenge his death, and for the next seven years he pretended, in the tradition of samurai sacrifice, to be a dissolute drunk while secretly planning revenge. Early one morning in a snowstorm, the forty-seven *ronin* (samurai who had lost their master and were forced to become wanderers; they might be compared to America's drifting cowboy heroes) raided the Kira home, not far from the Imperial Palace. They assassinated the chief minister, cut off his head and brought it to the temple where their master's ashes were enshrined. Then, in true *bushido* style, all forty-seven committed hara-kiri. A factual story, it represented an ideal of samurai behavior and was a favorite theme in Japanese movies and the kabuki theater.

The groups headed for their various destinations: one, led by Koda himself, would seize the War Minister's official residence and force high-ranking officers to support them; another would occupy police headquarters; four other groups would assassinate the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and the Grand Chamberlain. The killers of the Privy Seal would then proceed to the suburban home of the Inspector General of Military Education and murder him while two other units raced out of town as well, to kill Count Nobuaki Makino, former Privy Seal and counselor to the Emperor, and eighty-seven-year-old Prince Kinmochi Saionji, the Emperor's closest adviser, the nation's most honored elder statesman, the last *genro*.*

Lieutenant Kurihara and a military police officer approached the front gate to the Prime Minister's official residence. A police officer on guard inside the gate asked what was going on. The *kempei* said, "Open the gate quick." The guard didn't think anything of it because they were a colleague and an Army officer. As they came closer to the gate Lieutenant Kurihara's hand grabbed the police guard, and poking his pistol at him with the other hand, ordered, "Open up!"

Kurihara and other officers broke in ahead of their men and disarmed the sleeping policemen in the guardhouse by the gate. Kurihara pushed past them into the residence, which was in total darkness. He turned on the hall light, got his bearings and snapped it off. Suddenly the corridors reverberated with deafening gunfire. This was the signal the rebels outside

*The *genro* were important statesmen who had helped Emperor Meiji draw up the Imperial Constitution in 1889 and afterward became advisers to the Emperor. In 1916 Saionji had been added to the group, and by 1936 he was the only surviving *genro*.

had been waiting for; they opened up with heavy machine guns. The chandelier in the hall shattered and plummeted to the floor.

Just before five o'clock young Hisatsune Sakomizu, one of Prime Minister Okada's secretaries, had been wakened by a muffled commotion outside his house, which was across the street from the rear gate of the official residence. They have finally come! he thought, for he had long anticipated an attack on his employer, and jumped out of bed. His ties to the old man were close; he was married to Okada's daughter, and his father's younger sister was Okada's wife.

Sakomizu softly opened the window and in the whirling snow saw the policemen who were guarding the rear gate mill around in confusion. He phoned police headquarters.

"We just heard the minister's alarm bell ring," replied a voice. "One platoon is already on the way. Reinforcement units are just leaving." Reassured, Sakomizu started to go back upstairs, when he heard the clop of boots in the street. He looked out expecting to see either the police reinforcements or the special Army troops detailed to protect the Prime Minister, but a rifle shot cracked and he saw one policeman fall and others retreat before a group of soldiers with glittering bayonets. There was a shattering burst of fire—it sounded like rifles and machine guns—and the secretary finally realized that Army troops were attacking the residence. He hastily dressed so he could help the admiral. As he rushed into the street he could hear shots inside the Japanese section of the ministry. Soldiers at the gate came forward brandishing their rifles. They forced Sakomizu back into his own house and followed him without taking off their wet boots. Frustrated, Sakomizu paced up and down. What had happened to the special Army troops or the police reinforcements? The police had already come and been driven off; the troops were among the rebels.

Sakomizu again called police headquarters. "This is the insurgent unit," said a voice. About five hundred rebels were occupying the building. Sakomizu hung up and called the Kojimachi *kempeitai* station nearby. "The situation is out of control" was the sheepish answer. "What can we do?"

A few blocks from the Prime Minister's official residence 170 men, commanded by a first cousin of Sakomizu's, stormed into the official residence of War Minister Yoshiyuki Kawashima. With them was Captain Koda. He routed out Kawashima and began to read off a list of demands: political and social reforms; the arrest of leaders of the Control clique; the assignment of Imperial Way clique officers to key positions (the insurgents were against expansion into China); the assignment of General Araki* as commander of the Kwantung Army "for the purpose of coercing Red Russia." Koda also insisted that martial law be proclaimed and that the

* General Sadao Araki had long been the idol of the reformists and had figured prominently in the 1932 insurrection, when he was war minister. He was known throughout the world for his outspoken remarks and ferocious handlebar mustache.

War Minister visit the Palace at once to convey the rebels' intentions to the Emperor.

While the argument was going on, Captain Teruzo Ando and 150 men were bursting into the official residence of Grand Chamberlain Kantaro Suzuki, who, like Viscount Saito, had so enjoyed the private showing of *Naughty Marietta* a few hours earlier. The elderly admiral, wakened by a maid, rushed to a storage room for a sword. He couldn't find it. Hearing footsteps in the corridor, he stepped into the next room—it would have been a disgrace to die in a closet. In moments he was hemmed in by a score of bayonets. One soldier stepped forward and asked politely, "Are you His Excellency?"

Suzuki said he was and raised his hands for quiet. "You must have some reason for doing this. Tell me what it is." Nobody answered and Suzuki repeated the question. Silence. The third time he asked, a man with a pistol (he looked to the Grand Chamberlain like a noncom) said impatiently, "There's no more time. We're going to shoot."

Suzuki supposed they were acting under orders from a superior and didn't know why. "Then it can't be helped," he said stoically. "Go ahead and shoot." He drew himself erect as if facing a firing squad. Just behind him hung the pictures of his parents. Three pistols erupted. One bullet missed, one hit him in the crotch, and the third went through his heart. As he fell, still conscious, bullets struck him in the head and shoulder.

"*Todome* [*Coup de grâce*]!" someone shouted repeatedly. Suzuki felt the muzzle of a pistol pressed against his throat, then heard his wife say, "Don't do it!" At that moment Captain Ando entered. "*Todome*?" asked the man with the pistol.

Two years earlier Captain Ando had come to Suzuki with a program for reform; the admiral had refuted his arguments so forthrightly that Ando still secretly admired him. Now he said that *todome* would be "too cruel," and ordered the men to salute His Excellency. They all knelt by the fallen admiral and presented arms.

"Get up! Leave!" Captain Ando told his men. He turned to Mrs. Suzuki. "Are you *okusan* [madam]?" She nodded. "I have heard about you. I am particularly sorry about this." He said they had no ill feeling toward the admiral. "But our views on how to bring about reformation in Japan differ from His Excellency's, and so we had to come to this."

The captain left, burdened by a sense of guilt and certain Suzuki was dying (one of the maids heard him say that he was going to commit suicide). But miraculously Suzuki would survive to play a leading role in Japan's last days as an empire.

A lieutenant led his men to the large sprawling home of Finance Minister Korekiyo Takahashi. They broke down the door of the inner entrance, and while one group seized half a dozen police guards and servants, the

rest roamed through the house, kicking down the doors of room after room looking for their victim.

Minister Takahashi was alone in a spacious ten-mat bedroom. He was a remarkable man who had started as a footman, turned Christian and become president of the Bank of Japan and a member of the House of Peers. The young officers loathed him for having fought the previous year's huge military budget.

Finally the lieutenant entered the minister's room brandishing a pistol. He kicked the quilt off Takahashi, crying "*Tenchu!*" (Punishment of Heaven!). Takahashi looked up unafraid and shouted "Idiot!" at the lieutenant, who hesitated before emptying his pistol into the old man. Another rebel officer leaped forward and with a shout swung his sword with such force that it cut through the padded coat Takahashi was wearing for extra warmth and severed his right arm; he then stabbed the minister through the belly and slashed him viciously right and left.

Mrs. Takahashi burst from her room in the attached Western-style section, and at the sight of her disemboweled husband, cried out in anguish. As the lieutenant shouldered through the crowd of servants gathered horrified in the corridors, he said, "Excuse me for the annoyance I have caused."

Prime Minister Okada had been awakened by the sound of the alarm bell just before five o'clock and moments later his brother-in-law, Denzo Matsuo, a retired colonel, pushed into the bedroom with two police officers.

"They've finally come," said Okada, adding fatalistically that there was nothing anyone could do about it.

"It's no time to talk like that!" shouted the sixty-one-year-old Matsuo. An energetic, dogmatic man, he had insisted on serving his brother-in-law, whether Okada liked it or not, as unofficial factotum without pay. He pulled the reluctant Okada, clad in a thin nightgown, across the corridor toward a secret exit, but on hearing the rebels break down doors, one of the policemen shoved Okada and Matsuo into a bathroom which was used primarily as a storeroom, and closed the door. A moment later they heard shouts from the corridor, several shots, a scuffle, then silence.

"Stay here," said the impetuous Matsuo and left. The Prime Minister tried to follow but in the darkness bumped into a shelf, knocking down several *sake* bottles. He stiffened with fear. Silence. Okada moved again, this time stumbling noisily over the *sake* bottles.

"Don't come out yet!" one of the policemen called weakly from the corridor, so Okada quickly returned to the bathroom. When he heard a voice shouting, "There's someone in the courtyard!" he looked through the window and saw his brother-in-law standing pressed against the building and half a dozen soldiers watching him from inside.

"Shoot him!" yelled their leader, but the soldiers hesitated. "You men

will be in Manchuria soon! What are you going to do, if you can't kill a man or two now?"

Reluctantly the men stuck their rifles through the windows and fired into the courtyard.

"*Tenno Heika banzai* [Long live His Majesty the Emperor!]" cried Matsuo and slumped down on a doorstep, bleeding profusely. Painfully he straightened his shoulders, as if on parade, but could not keep from groaning.

Lieutenant Kurihara, followed by Pfc. Kuratomo, pushed their way through a wall of soldiers, rigid with shock. They told Kurihara that it was Prime Minister Okada. The lieutenant hesitated, then turned to Kuratomo and ordered, "*Todome!*"

Kuratomo was reluctant; all he had was a pistol. "Use it!" said Kurihara impatiently.

Against his will Kuratomo leveled the weapon and fired one bullet into Matsuo's chest, another between his eyes. The colonel toppled forward, dyeing the snow red.

Kurihara, who had taken the Prime Minister's photograph from his bedroom, knelt beside the body and compared it with Matsuo's face. "Okada!" he said without hesitation. "*Banzai!*" shouted the soldiers and carried the body to the Prime Minister's bedroom, laying it on a thin mattress.

To find out what had happened, Okada crept out of the bathroom into the corridor. One of the police guards was lying there unconscious, his left arm slashed off; a few yards away the other was jackknifed over a chair, dead. Okada bowed his head in tribute and continued on to his bedroom. Seeing Matsuo's body on the mattress, he sobbed and flung himself down. Finally he rose and began putting on a kimono. As he was tying the strings on an outer garment he heard footsteps and went out to the corridor.

"What's that?" a soldier called out and Okada lurched to a dark corner.

"I just saw something strange," the soldier told several comrades. "It was an old man. But he disappeared like a ghost."

Death seemed to be everywhere and yet by a miracle Okada was alive. Until that moment he had been sure he would die. For the first time he began to think of the future. Had the rebels seized the Palace? Were the *jushin** assassinated? He decided it was his responsibility to stay alive, and once the uprising was suppressed, enforce discipline on the Army. But where could he hide in a house overrun with rebels? The answer was solved for him when he suddenly came upon two maids in the corridor. They hustled him to their room, pushed him into a large closet and covered him with a pile of soiled laundry.

By now two of the attack groups assigned to out-of-town missions had reached their destinations. Lieutenant Taro Takahashi and thirty men

* Former prime ministers were referred to as *jushin* (senior statesmen); their main duty was to recommend prime ministers to His Majesty.

broke into the suburban home of Mazaki's successor, Inspector General Jotaro Watanabe. Mrs. Watanabe and a maid tried to stop Takahashi, but he pulled free and broke into the bedroom where the general lay on a *futon* with his young daughter. Takahashi fired a pistol at Watanabe, then drew his sword and slashed at his head.

The other group was ranging through a resort in the mountains in search of Count Nobuaki Makino, whom Saito had succeeded as Privy Seal and who still was one of the Emperor's closest advisers. Unable to find him, the rebels set fire to the hotel to drive him into the open. The old man was led out through the rear of the hotel by his twenty-year-old granddaughter, Kazuko. They struggled up a steep hill, but the soldiers were at their heels and loosed a fusillade. Ignoring the bullets, Kazuko stepped in front of her grandfather and spread out her kimono sleeves. One of the rebels, perhaps moved by the girl's heroism, shouted "Success!" and persuaded his mates to leave.

The third group, the one assigned to kill Prince Saionji, never left Tokyo. At the last moment the officer in charge refused to go; he could not bring himself to do any violence to the last *genro*.

At his home in Okitsu, the aged prince had just wakened from a horrifying dream—he was surrounded by decapitated heads and a heap of bloody bodies. Once news of the uprising was received from the capital, the local police arrived in force and took Saionji to a nearby cottage. Then came a telegram announcing that a large automobile filled with young men in khaki uniform was heading for Okitsu. The prince was wrapped up like a mummy and transferred from place to place to fool the assassins—who turned out to be patent-medicine salesmen.

At the War Minister's official residence, Captain Koda found continued vacillation among the hierarchy. The generals were still reluctant to either join the uprising or confront the rebels. Major Tadashi Katakura, a brilliant, impetuous career officer, was one of the few showing any resolve. The rebels infuriated him. He was not so much against their aims as against disorder and insubordination. The Army, he believed, could only exist through stern discipline and absolute loyalty to the Emperor.

Katakura was in the courtyard of War Minister Kawashima's residence assailing a group of rebels for misusing the power of His Majesty's Army. The Emperor alone had the right to mobilize troops, he shouted, and demanded to see the minister, General Kawashima.

"The Showa Restoration * is what we are all thinking of," he told a crowd

* The present ruler, Hirohito, had named his reign Showa (Enlightened Peace). On Japanese calendars the current year, 1936, was Showa 11, the eleventh year of his reign. Only after his death, however, will he be referred to as Emperor Showa. His father, Yoshihito, took the name of Taisho (Great Righteousness). His grandfather, Mutsuhito, chose Meiji (Enlightened Rule); his era saw the greatest reforms and development in Japanese history and was known as the Meiji Restoration. The young reformers of the moment wanted to emulate the achievements of their fathers with the Showa Restoration.

that gathered around him. "I feel as you do about the reforms. But we must continue to revere the Emperor and honor the Supreme Command. Don't make private use of the troops."

A rebel commander emerged from the building. "We cannot let you in to see the minister," he said.

"Did the minister himself tell you that?"

"No, Captain Koda gave the order. The minister is just getting ready to go to the Imperial Palace. Please wait awhile. The situation will soon clear up."

Katakura assumed the rebels were using violence to force the War Minister to help them set up a military government. He started toward the entrance, where General Mazaki was standing aggressively with his legs apart, like one of the *deva* kings that guard Buddhist temples. Katakura had an impulse to rush at Mazaki and stab him—Mazaki must be behind all this; he probably wanted to be prime minister. Katakura controlled himself; first he would find out more what was going on. Just then the Vice Minister came out of the building. Katakura accosted him and asked to have a few words. As the other put him off, the War Minister himself came out of the door buckling on his sword.

Something crashed against Katakura's head and he noticed a peculiar odor. He instantly put his left hand to his head. "You don't have to shoot," he yelled. A pale-faced captain (it was Senichi Isobe, another of the leaders of the uprising) advanced with drawn sword.

"We can talk! Sheathe your sword!" Katakura cried out. Isobe slid it back in its scabbard, then changed his mind and pulled it out again.

"You must be Captain Koda," Katakura continued. "You can't mobilize troops unless you get an imperial order." Faintly he heard someone, perhaps Mazaki, say, "We must not shed blood like this."

He staggered, and several officers helped him to the War Minister's car. As it was passing through the main gate, he dimly saw several *kempei*. "Get the *kempei* in the car," he exclaimed. They did. Someone suggested they take him to the Army Hospital or the Army Medical College, and again he forced himself to speak: "No . . . some private hospital in the city." He didn't want to be assassinated in bed.

3.

William Henry Chamberlin, chief Far Eastern correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, first heard of the rebellion from a Japanese news agency. In town he encountered a rash of conflicting rumors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was open and unoccupied by rebels, but no one was there to tell the foreign correspondents what was going on. Troops

were posted at the main crossings in the center of Tokyo. Chamberlin didn't know whose side they were on. Was any government in existence?

The office workers throughout the city had no idea this was anything but an ordinary day until police detoured their buses around the Imperial Palace and government offices. By now the violence was over. The rebels occupied a square mile of central Tokyo—the Diet Building and the entire area around the Prime Minister's residence—and were using the Sanno Hotel as a temporary headquarters. They commandeered tablecloths from the Peers Club dining room, paid for them, and made them into banners reading in black ink, "Revere the Emperor—Restoration Army," and hoisted them over the Prime Minister's residence.

When General Rokuro Iwasa, head of the *kempeitai*, learned of the revolt he got out of bed, half paralyzed from palsy, and drove to the rebel area. Here he was stopped by guards. "Is this the Emperor's Army?" he asked and wept in mortification.

The rebels were distributing their "manifesto" to all newspapers and news agencies. The police impounded almost every copy, but correspondent Chamberlin managed to get one. To most Westerners it seemed further proof of the inscrutability of the Orient, but to Chamberlin, a student of Japanese history, it made frightening sense.

The national essence [*kokutai*] of Japan, as a land of the gods, exists in the fact that the Emperor reigns with undiminished power from time immemorial into the farthest future in order that the natural beauty of the country may be propagated throughout the universe, so that all men under the sun may be able to enjoy their lives to the fullest extent. . . .

In recent years, however, there have appeared many persons whose chief aim and purpose have been to amass personal material wealth, disregarding the general welfare and prosperity of the Japanese people, with the result that the sovereignty of the Emperor has been greatly impaired. The people of Japan have suffered deeply as a result of this tendency and many vexing issues now confronting Japan are attributable to this fact.

The *genro*, the senior statesmen, military cliques, plutocrats, bureaucrats and political parties are all traitors who are destroying the national essence. . . .

It is our duty to remove the evil retainers from around the Throne and to smash the group of senior statesmen. It is our duty as subjects of His Majesty the Emperor.

May the gods bless and help us in our endeavor to save the land of our ancestors from the worst that confronts it.

Near the edge of the rebel zone at the American Embassy, Ambassador Grew cabled the first news of the revolt to the State Department:

THE MILITARY TOOK PARTIAL POSSESSION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND CITY EARLY THIS MORNING AND IT IS REPORTED HAVE ASSASSINATED SEVERAL PROMINENT MEN. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AS YET TO CONFIRM ANY-

THING. THE NEWS CORRESPONDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SEND TELEGRAMS OR TO TELEPHONE ABROAD. THIS TELEGRAM IS BEING SENT PRIMARILY AS A TEST MESSAGE, TO ASCERTAIN IF OUR CODE TELEGRAMS WILL BE TRANSMITTED. CODE ROOM PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT.

The German embassy was also in range of rebel fire. Here the unofficial correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and secretary to the military attaché was writing his preliminary report on the revolt—one copy for the German Foreign Ministry and a duplicate for the Red Army's Fourth Bureau, Intelligence. This was Dr. Richard Sorge, born in Russia of a German father and Russian mother and raised in Germany. Sorge was flamboyant and resourceful. He had managed to gain the complete confidence of the German ambassador, General Eugen Ott (who unwittingly supplied Sorge with some of the most devastating intelligence material which he sent to Moscow), and their business relationship had grown into a warm personal friendship. He was irresistible to women and was at the time writing love letters to his first wife in Russia, living with a second in Tokyo and carrying on several love affairs. He could not resist alcohol in any form and often shocked his fellow countrymen by drunken bouts which were sometimes staged. He was a Communist of bohemian bent (his great-uncle had been friends with Marx and Engels) who had joined the Nazi party as a cover for his role as head of the Red Army spy ring in the Far East. It had taken him almost two years to set up his organization in Japan, and this rebellion was his first genuine test.

The coup, he later wrote, had "a very typical Japanese character and hence its motivations required particular study. A discerning study of it, and, in particular, a study of the social strains and internal crisis it revealed, was of much greater value to an understanding of Japan's internal structure than mere records of troop strength or secret documents." Once the report was dispatched to Moscow, Sorge ordered his ring to find out all possible details of the uprising. Then he induced the German ambassador and the military and naval attachés to make independent investigations and share their findings with him.

At the Palace the War Minister had just informed the Emperor about the rebellion. Ordinarily, if His Majesty spoke at all, it would be in vague terms, but today he was so distressed that he replied directly. "This event is extremely regrettable regardless of the question of spirit. In my judgment this action mars the glory of our national essence." Later he confided to his chief aide-de-camp that he felt the Army was going "to tie its own neck with floss silk"—that is, no more than gently admonish the rebels.

The role the Emperor played was difficult if not impossible for foreigners to understand. His powers and duties were unlike those of any other

monarch in the world. His grandfather, Meiji, a man of strong will and conviction, had led the nation from semifeudalism to modern times under the slogans "Rich Country, Strong Army" and "Civilization and Enlightenment"; in his reign the welfare of the nation took precedence over that of the individual. Meiji's heir, Taisho, was an eccentric who once rolled up a speech he was to make to the Diet and used it as a telescope; his antics and tantrums became so exaggerated that his heir, the crown prince, was named regent in 1921. Five years later, on Christmas Day, Taisho died and his twenty-five-year-old son became emperor.

Since childhood Hirohito had been trained for this role principally by Prince Saionji, who himself had been influenced by the French Revolution and English liberalism. Time and again the last *genro* would tell the young man that Japan needed a father figure, not a despot, and that he should therefore assume a position of responsibility in all affairs of state, yet never issue any positive order on his own volition. He should be objective and selfless.

Theoretically the Emperor had plenary power; all state decisions needed his sanction. But according to tradition, once the Cabinet and military leaders had agreed on a policy, he could not withhold his approval. He was to remain above politics and transcend party considerations and feuds, for he represented the entire nation.

All these restrictions notwithstanding, he exercised prodigious influence since he was in the unique position of being able to warn or approve without getting involved. More important, every Japanese was pledged to serve him unto death. This moral power was so potent that he used it sparingly and then only in vague terms. Those reporting to the Throne had to divine his wishes, since he almost always spoke cryptically without expression.

A more positive emperor, like his grandfather, might have consolidated his power; by the Meiji Constitution he was Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. But Hirohito was a studious man who would rather be a scientist than a monarch. His happiest days were Monday and Saturday when he could retire to his modest laboratory and study marine biology. Neither did he have the slightest wish to be a despot. From his trip to Europe as crown prince he had brought back a taste for whiskey, Occidental music and golf, along with an abiding respect for the English version of constitutional monarchy. He could also defy tradition and court pressure when principle was involved. After the Empress Nagako had given birth to four daughters he refused to take a concubine or two so he could sire a male heir—and within a few years was rewarded with two sons by Nagako.

He was an unlikely-looking emperor, slouching around the Palace in frayed, baggy trousers and crooked tie, dreamily peering through glasses as thick as portholes, so oblivious of his appearance that occasionally his jacket would be fastened with the wrong button. He disliked buying new

clothes, on the grounds that he couldn't "afford" them. He was so frugal that he even refrained from buying books he wanted, and he wore down every pencil to a stub. He was completely without vanity, a natural and unaffected individual who looked and acted like a village mayor. Yet this small round-shouldered man had some of the qualifications of a great one: he was pure, free of pride, ambition and selfishness. He wanted what was best for the nation.

His subjects regarded him as a god, and children were warned that they would be struck blind if they dared look at his face. If a public speaker mentioned the word "Emperor" the entire audience would sit at attention. If a reporter had the temerity to ask a personal question about the Emperor, he was icily told one should not pose such queries about a deity.

But "god" did not mean in Japan what it meant in the West. To a Japanese the emperor was a god, just as his own mother, father and teacher were lesser gods. His reverence for the monarch was not only a feeling of awe but also of affection and obligation, and no matter how low his station, each subject felt a family kinship to the emperor, who was the father of them all. As Meiji lay on his deathbed, all Japan prayed for his recovery and multitudes remained in the Palace plaza day and night; the entire nation grieved his death as a single family. For Japan *was* one great family, a modernized clan which had evolved from a number of warring tribes.

Every child was taught *kodo*, the Imperial Way: that the basis for Japanese morality was *on* (obligation) to the emperor and one's parents. Without the emperor one would be without country; without parents, homeless. For centuries the Japanese ruler had been benevolent, never attempting to exert his authority. Just as a parent loved and guided his children, he loved and guided his people with compassion. The imperial line had once gone 346 years without sanctioning a single execution throughout the land.

Out of the present Emperor's vague status evolved an almost autocratic power for the Army and Navy Chiefs of Staff. They had become, in essence, responsible to themselves alone. Only once had the Emperor challenged the military and that was in 1928 upon learning of the assassination of old Marshal Chang Tso-lin by the Ishihara-Itagaki group. His fury was such that he forgot his rigid training and sharply criticized the Prime Minister. Prince Saionji, who was the influence behind the Emperor's distrust of the military, was just as angry—but his target was the Emperor. He spoke out as a teacher, not as a subject, and accused Hirohito of acting like a tyrant. The old man's rebuke so shook the Emperor that with three exceptions, he would never again fail to follow the last *genro*'s primary rule: "Reign, not rule." *

* Prince Mikasa, the Emperor's youngest brother, was convinced that the assassination of Chang was the basic cause of war with America. It not only actuated the Manchurian Incident but was the turning point in his brother's role as emperor. Prince Mikasa revealed this in an interview on December 27, 1966.

4.

Okada's secretary, Hisatsune Sakomizu, had returned to the Prime Minister's official residence with the rebels' permission, and when he found his father-in-law safe in the closet he whispered, "I'll come back; keep up your spirits," and returned to his own home to plan a rescue. Shortly before ten o'clock an official of the Imperial Household Ministry phoned, with polite condolences on the Prime Minister's demise. He said the Emperor wished to send an imperial messenger to the family; should the messenger go to the ministry or to Okada's home?

Fearing the phone was tapped, Sakomizu put him off; the truth had to be reported in person to the Emperor, and Sakomizu changed into a morning suit, with a bulletproof vest underneath. Armed with an umbrella, he walked across the street to the official residence, and after an argument got authorization from the rebels to pass through their lines. He took a taxi to the Hirakawa Gate of the Imperial Palace grounds, and struggled on foot through the deep snow to the concrete headquarters of the Imperial Household Ministry.

Household Minister Kurahei Yuasa began to express his condolences, but Sakomizu interrupted to tell him Okada was still alive. Startled, Yuasa dropped something, said he must relay the good news to His Majesty and disappeared. He must have run all the way to the Emperor's wing of the rambling building and back, for he returned in minutes to tell Sakomizu in a solemn voice, "When I reported that Prime Minister Okada was alive, His Majesty was most pleased. He said, 'That is excellent,' and told me to bring Okada to safety as soon as possible."

Sakomizu suggested that they get help from the commander of the 1st Division, who could send troops to rescue Okada. Yuasa disagreed; it would be too risky because the commander would have to get clearance from his superiors. "And you never know which way *they* are looking."

This made sense and Sakomizu decided to seek help from a more independent source. He went into a room filled with high-ranking officers. They all looked worried, as if they were about to be reprimanded. Many expressed regrets at Okada's death, but a few rudely remarked that something like this was bound to happen, since the Prime Minister ignored the Army's suggestions.

The rebels' manifesto was being passed around and hotly debated but nobody seemed to be in charge. War Minister Kawashima appeared to be completely perplexed; he certainly couldn't be depended on. Sakomizu surveyed the gathering in dismay. This was the hierarchy of the Army and it was a mob—vacillating, undependable, opportunistic. There was not one he felt he could trust with his secret, so he elbowed his way out of

the crowd. He went into another room where the Cabinet was convening and found just as chaotic a scene. The ministers were apprehensive and truculent and doing nothing until the arrival of their senior member, Minister of the Interior Fumio Goto. They descended on Sakomizu, deluging him with questions about the Prime Minister. How had he died? Where was the body? Who killed him? While Sakomizu gave evasive answers, he caught sight of someone he could trust—the Navy Minister, who was an old friend of Okada's and a fellow admiral. Picking his words carefully in case someone was eavesdropping, Sakomizu said, "Mr. Minister, we'd like to claim the body of a senior member of the Navy. Will you send a landing force unit to the Prime Minister's residence to give us protection?"

The admiral failed to see through this charade and said, "Impossible. What if it ends in a skirmish between the Army and Navy?"

Sakomizu lowered his voice. "I'm going to tell you something important. Now, if you don't accept my proposal, I would like you to forget everything I say." Sakomizu informed the puzzled minister that Okada was still alive and should be rescued by naval troops.

"I haven't heard a thing," said the embarrassed admiral and drifted away.

There didn't seem to be anyone else to turn to and Sakomizu began to dream up wild schemes. He thought of imitating the dramatic balloon escape from Paris of French President Gambetta during the Franco-Prussian War, until he realized there were only advertising balloons in Tokyo. What about spiriting Okada and Matsuo's body out of the residence in one coffin? No, that would take a suspiciously large coffin. It was already past noon and every moment counted. Desperate, he wandered restlessly from room to room, at a loss as to what to do.

By midafternoon there was a semblance of normalcy in the streets outside the square mile held by the rebels. Boys on bicycles pedaled through the snow with groceries. Shopkeepers near the edge of the action came out in their aprons and quizzed the young soldiers manning the barricades. Nobody seemed to know much about anything.

The Army leaders still vacillated. Though they were all repelled by the seditious actions of the rebels, so many agreed in principle with their aims that no decision could be reached. They couldn't even agree on an appeal to Captain Koda and his comrades, not until it was watered down and hopelessly vague. Labeled an "admonition," it failed to call them what they were—rebels:

1. The purpose of the uprising has reached the Emperor's ears.
2. Your action has been recognized as motivated by your sincere feelings to seek manifestation of the national essence.
3. The present state of manifestation of *kokutai* is such that we feel unbearably awed.

4. The War Councilors unanimously agree to endeavor to attain the above purposes.
5. Anything else will be subject to the Emperor's wishes.

This was published at three o'clock in the afternoon, along with a ridiculous emergency defense order placing the center of Tokyo under the jurisdiction of the 1st Division, the unit that had revolted. It was an attempt at expediency; with orders to guard the area they had seized, the rebels supposedly would regard themselves as loyal government troops.

Neither the conciliatory "admonition" nor the emergency order had the desired effect; they merely convinced Koda's group that a large segment of the military hierarchy was on their side. Koda's answer was: "If our original demands are granted, we will obey your orders. Otherwise we cannot evacuate the territory we have occupied."

That night reinforcements arrived from Kofu and Sakura to take up positions opposite the barricades. At the American embassy, observers on the roof could see the rebel banner waving from the Prime Minister's residence and the Sanno Hotel. Mrs. Grew was so nervous that she insisted on sleeping in a different room, even though the ambassador assured her that the last thing the insurgents wanted was trouble with the United States.

A few blocks away a car drove up to *kempeitai* headquarters and three spruce military figures stepped out—Captain Koda and two other rebel leaders. As they marched through the entrance to continue negotiations with the Army, two sentries smartly presented arms.

"*Bakayaro* [Idiot!]" shouted a noncom leaning out of a window. "Saluting rebel officers! They aren't the Imperial Army!"

The three spent the next thirty minutes listening to Generals Mazaki and Araki urge them to end the rebellion, but again conciliation only made them more steadfast.

At the Imperial Household Ministry, Interior Minister Goto had finally arrived after a curious six-hour delay to get himself appointed "temporary and concurrent prime minister." A few minutes later he was listening to demands for martial law by War Minister Kawashima. Goto and the other civilians in the Cabinet feared this might degenerate into a military dictatorship and argued that since this was strictly an Army insurrection which had nothing to do with the public, it should be settled within the Army itself.

Kawashima replied that there must have been instigators from the outside and it was therefore necessary to take extraordinary measures to ensure the nation's safety. Feeble as this retort was, it swayed the undecided members and at a meeting held at midnight in the presence of the Emperor it was agreed that martial law should be declared at once.

By this time a *kempei* sergeant had been told of Okada's whereabouts: one of his men, permitted to bring out the dead and wounded police of-

ficers, had chanced to open the closet where the Prime Minister was sitting resigned like a Buddha. The startling news about Okada was reported to their commander, who decided not to relay the information to his own superiors—if it was a mistake, he'd be ridiculed, and if true, some *kempei* sympathetic to the rebels would tell them and Okada would be killed. But to the sergeant, Keisuke Kosaka, this was dereliction of duty. On his own initiative he and two volunteers stole through the rebel lines late that night and just before dawn of February 27 boldly marched into the Prime Minister's residence. Kosaka went directly to the maid's room, opened the closet, assured Okada he would soon be rescued, and crossed the street to get help from a secretary of the Prime Minister's named Ko Fukuda who lived next door to Sakomizu.

The secretary and the sergeant cautiously sounded each other out as they sipped black tea until Kosaka finally revealed that Okada was alive. Only then did Fukuda admit that he and Sakomizu also knew and hoped to smuggle Okada out of the ministry in a crowd of mourners that would soon arrive to pay their respects.

In the next half-hour the resourceful sergeant and his two men spirited a suit of Western clothes for Okada from the bedroom and commandeered a car in the courtyard. They were just in time. Two black sedans pulled up and a dozen condolence callers filed into the ministry. Fukuda led them to the bedroom, where one of the sergeant's men was waiting to make sure they wouldn't get close enough to the corpse to realize it wasn't the Prime Minister.

While the callers burned incense and honored the dead, Fukuda and Kosaka practically carried the cramped Okada, his face half hidden behind a germ mask, to the rear. A group of rebels stood at the door and Kosaka called out authoritatively, "Emergency patient! He shouldn't have taken a look at the corpse."

The rebels stepped aside and the trio was in the courtyard. But there was no car waiting, and curious to see what was going on, the commander of the guard approached. Suddenly the commandeered car drew up. Fukuda opened the door, pushed the exhausted Okada into the 1935 Ford and climbed in after him. Kosaka watched with pounding heart as the car drove slowly through the gates and disappeared. Tears flowed down his face and he remained standing there as if in a trance.

So Okada had escaped, but there was still the problem of getting rid of Matsuo's body before someone discovered the deception. This was Sakomizu's task but he felt it would be best to do nothing until Okada was in a secure hiding place. Hour after hour he sat in lonely vigil next to the corpse. At last the phone rang. His wife reported that her father was safe in a Buddhist temple. Now Sakomizu could act. First he phoned the Imperial Household Ministry to tell of Okada's escape, then called the Okada

home to ask that a coffin be sent to the official residence as soon as possible. The answer was that a ready-made coffin wasn't proper for a Prime Minister, and it would take several hours to make one.

The delay began to unnerve Sakomizu: he'd be found out and murdered. As his terror grew he recalled that in his father's day boys used to hold a contest of courage called *shibedate* (standing a rice stalk on end). One boy would put some object on a grave; the next would retrieve it; a third would stick a rice stalk on the grave. This went on and on until someone lost his nerve. The boys believed that fear came only if their testicles shrank, so when they walked toward the grave they would pluck at them to stretch them out. Sakomizu discovered that, sure enough, his testicles had contracted to almost nothing. He managed to stretch them and to his amazement found his own fear disappearing. People in the old days were clever.

It was dark by the time the coffin finally arrived. Sakomizu dismissed the pallbearers, wrapped Matsuo's body completely in a blanket and got it in the coffin. As the cortege slowly left the ministry, the rebel in charge saluted and said a few courteous words of farewell. The funeral carriage moved quietly through the gate, and after a harrowing trip, safely reached the home of the Prime Minister. A crowd had already collected for services. A tombstone was placed on the coffin along with a large photograph of Okada, framed in black ribbon.

Sakomizu gave strict orders not to open the coffin and was off for the Imperial Household Ministry, where Cabinet members had again gathered. Now he told them that Okada was still alive, and while they were recovering from the shock, proposed that the Prime Minister see the Emperor as soon as possible. To Sakomizu's amazement, Acting Prime Minister Goto protested: Okada was responsible for the rebellion and should resign on the spot. Goto refused to listen to any explanations—apparently he liked being prime minister—and Sakomizu was compelled to phone influential men for support.

He found none. The consensus was that if the rebel troops learned that Okada was on the Palace grounds they might fire toward the Palace. And that would be "too appalling." In resignation Sakomizu phoned Fukuda not to bring Okada there and returned to the Okada home to see that the prefuneral ceremonies went off without discovery of the deception—otherwise the rebels would start a manhunt.

Mrs. Matsuo sat silently in front of the coffin. As the hours passed and she asked no questions about her husband, Sakomizu felt such pity that he could no longer hold back the truth. He gathered the Prime Minister's close relatives, including three of his four children and three of Matsuo's four children, and controlling his emotions, told how Colonel Matsuo had sacrificed his life so that the Prime Minister could escape.

"I am very pleased if my husband could be of service," said the widow softly. She was the daughter of a samurai.

5.

By now the mutiny had a name, the 2/26 (February 26) Incident, and though the attitude of the military leaders was beginning to harden, it took the Emperor himself to get them into action. Exasperated by their dallying, he stepped out of his role for the first time since the murder of Marshal Chang and spoke out clearly: "If the Army cannot subdue the rebels, I will go out and dissuade them myself."

This forced the Army to issue an edict at 5:06 A.M., February 28. It ordered the rebels, in the Emperor's name, to "speedily withdraw" from their present positions and return to their respective units. Inhabitants in the danger zones would be evacuated; if the rebels had not withdrawn by 8 A.M. the following day, they would be fired on.

This order split the rebels into two camps: one wanted to obey the Emperor; the other insisted it was not truly the wish of the Emperor but the result of pressure from the Control clique.

During the day Sakomizu met with more disappointment. Goto still opposed Okada's visit to the Emperor, and in any case, the police refused to provide an escort for the Prime Minister to the Palace—it was "too grave a responsibility." Fearing that Okada might commit *hara-kiri*, Sakomizu ignored Goto and the police and brought the Prime Minister to the Imperial Household Ministry.

Shortly before seven o'clock in the evening the old man was escorted to the Emperor's wing of the building. In the corridors they passed Household officials who stared in terror at the grim-faced Okada, imagining they were seeing a ghost. A few ran off as the rest crouched in fright.

Once in the imperial presence, the Prime Minister humbly apologized for the mutiny, as if it had been his fault, and offered his resignation. "Carry on your duty for as long as you live," the Emperor replied and added that he was very pleased.

Okada was too awed to speak or stop the flow of tears but finally managed to say, "I am going to behave myself from now on." This time the Emperor did not reply.

Okada slept that night in the Household Ministry but Sakomizu returned to the Prime Minister's home, which was still crowded with mourners. A group of irate admirals hemmed him in. "As a samurai, how dared you surrender the castle?" one shouted. "Even with the Prime Minister dead, you should have stayed to protect his body and defend the official residence to the death. How can you be so irresponsible as to run off to the Imperial Household Ministry for what business I don't know!"

They were disgusted with the way Sakomizu was handling the funeral arrangements and said they were taking the body to the Navy Officers Club

the next day for a proper service. Sakomizu begged them to be patient, but was immediately set upon by yet another admiral: "Your father was a fine military man. I arranged your marriage for you because, since you are his son, I thought you'd be a reliable man. But you've proven by this case to be a miserable fellow, a weak-kneed man unable even to manage a funeral. Okada must be weeping for having given his daughter to such a fellow. Your father is weeping too. Pull yourself together!"

Despite the Emperor's edict, all but a few of the rebels refused to withdraw. As more Army reinforcements invested Tokyo from outlying cities, the Combined Fleet steamed into Tokyo Bay and landing forces took positions outside the Navy Ministry and other naval installations. The younger men were itching for action and revenge: three of their senior officers—Admirals Saito, Suzuki and Okada—had been assassinated or gravely wounded by the Army. One young officer, whose ship's main guns were trained on the Diet Building, was "tempted by an impulse" to blow off the tower but controlled himself.

At six o'clock in the morning on February 29—it was leap year—the Army announced: "We are positively going to suppress the rebels who caused disturbances in the neighborhood of Kojimachi in the imperial capital." For the first time the word "rebels" was officially used. It was a cloudy day with a threat of more snow. Except for soldiers, it was a dead city. Schools were closed; there were no streetcars or trains. It was impossible to make a phone call or send a telegram. Tokyo was isolated. All civilian traffic in the city was suspended while the Army marshaled its forces for the attack, but even as tanks were brought to assault positions, other tanks clanked up to rebel barricades, their sides placarded with messages invoking the insurgents to "respectfully follow the Emperor's order" and withdraw at once. Fully loaded bombers droned overhead while other planes dropped leaflets addressed to noncommissioned officers:

1. Return to your units. It is not yet too late.
2. All those who resist are rebels; therefore, we will shoot them.
3. Your parents and brothers are weeping to see you become traitors.

An advertising balloon was raised above the Aviation Building, its long trailer in large characters reading: IMPERIAL ORDER ISSUED. DON'T RESIST THE ARMY FLAG. Loudspeakers were brought up to strategic places, and Chokugen Wada, the noted announcer of radio station NHK, began reading a plea to the rebel enlisted men in a choked voice: "You faithfully and sincerely obeyed your officers, trusting their orders to be just. But the Emperor now orders you to return to your units. If you continue to resist, you will be traitors for disobeying the Emperor's order.

You believed you were doing the right thing but now that you realize you were wrong, you must not continue to revolt against His Majesty and inflict upon yourselves eternal disgrace as traitors. It is not too late. Your past crime will be forgiven. Your fathers and brothers, as well as the entire nation, sincerely pray that you do this. Immediately leave your present positions and come back."

The rebellious soldiers began to look at one another questioningly. Still each waited for the other to act first. By midmorning the solidarity of the ranks began to crack. Thirty noncoms and soldiers walked away from their positions with rifles and machine guns. By noon almost all enlisted men had returned to their units except for small detachments at the Prime Minister's official residence and the Sanno Hotel. At two o'clock the banner flying over the Prime Minister's residence came down and an hour later Army headquarters announced by radio that the rebels had surrendered without a shot being fired.

The leaders of the insurrection were still at the War Ministry and the Sanno Hotel, but the loyal troops made no attempt to capture them; they were giving the rebels a chance to act like samurai. General Araki, who admired their spirit and sympathized with their motives, asked them to commit *hara-kiri*, since they had performed an outrageous, reckless act that grieved the Emperor. The young officers considered mass suicide, but finally decided to submit to a court-martial where, like Aizawa, they could alert the nation to the corruption besetting Japan.

One officer, however, refused to surrender. Captain Shiro Nonaka went off by himself and wrote a final statement regretting that his division hadn't seen action for over thirty years while other units were shedding their blood in glory. "In recent years the sins of the traitors at home have been redeemed by the blood of our comrades in Manchuria and Shanghai. What answer can I give to the souls of these men if I spend the rest of my days in vain here in the capital? Am I insane or am I a fool? There is but one road for me to take." He signed the declaration, then took the road: *hara-kiri*.

At four-thirty that afternoon the weary Sakomizu assembled the mourners at Okada's home to read a prepared statement revealing the details of Matsuo's death and Okada's escape. The listeners were stunned to silence. Finally someone shouted "*Banzai!*" All the others joined and the news was spread throughout the neighborhood.

The 2/26 Incident was over. What violence there was had been incredibly bloody; yet only seven people had been killed and the mutineers had surrendered peacefully. The most outstanding feats of courage had been performed by women, and the vacillation by generals. To most foreigners the mutiny was no more than another ultranationalist bloodbath, and few

realized its significance. The Soviets did, largely because of Richard Sorge, who correctly guessed that this would lead to expansion into China.*

It was over, but like a stone tossed in a millpond, its ripples were already spreading across the Pacific.

* Dr. Sorge's detailed report to Moscow included an analysis of the deep social unrest that had inspired the rebellion. Sorge also sent photographs of the cream of the material gathered by the German military attachés, including a secret pamphlet written the previous year by two of the rebel leaders, entitled "Views on the Housecleaning of the Army." The Fourth Bureau was pleased with its new secret agent and requested additional information: Would it affect Japanese foreign policy? Would it make Japan more anti-Soviet or less?

With the help of a highly connected journalist and an artist turned Communist, Sorge answered all these questions, as well as observing that the 2/26 Incident would result in either social reforms or a policy of permanent expansion. And expansion would go in the direction of China. He was careful to be circumspect and objective, since he was aware that unlike Berlin and Washington, "Moscow knew China and Japan too well to be fooled easily."

To this day a number of informed Japanese believe the meeting was inspired by Communist agents. They claim that General Mazaki secretly conferred with left-wing leaders prior to the rebellion, and point out that not only the young officers but Ikki Kita and other civilian nationalists were unwitting tools of the Communists, whose plan it was to communize Japan through the action of idealists who preached socialism and the Imperial Way simultaneously. Realizing the power of emperor worship, the Communists intended to utilize the imperial system, not do away with it. This theory was somewhat shared by Sorge himself, who later told a friend that Japanese Communists may have had some connection with the uprising and that it was possible to have a Communist Japan ruled by an emperor.

To the Marco Polo Bridge

1.

Uneasy relief hung over the five million people of Tokyo, as it had after the great earthquake of 1923. During the mutiny they had shown little sympathy for the young rebels. For the first time public condemnation of mutineers was almost unanimous and there was criticism of the unruly streak running throughout the Army.

At the time of the 5/15 Incident the people had been confident that the militarists and nationalists would smash corrupt party politics and right social wrongs by direct acts of force. But corruption and social injustice had persisted and now, after the past four wild days, the public had lost its blind faith in force and wanted a return to orderly ways—at almost any cost.

And although every performance at the Kabuki Theater of that paean to revenge, violence and bloody self-sacrifice, *The Forty-seven Ronin*, was still packed, there was increasing support for the group in the Army that seemed the answer to chaos—the Control clique. Its very name stood for the need of the hour, discipline, even though what it really advocated was control of China. Civilian leaders, swayed by this same desire for law and order, began a move to crush the Imperial Way clique; and inadvertently jarred open the door to the gradual weakening of their own power by the military.

On the surface it looked as if the civilians had won new power when a new cabinet was formed by Foreign Minister Koki Hirota. Ambassador Grew informed the State Department that Hirota would “curb the danger-

ous tendencies of the Army in China and Manchuria," and wrote in his diary that he was pleased at the choice "because I believe that Hirota is a strong, safe man and that while he will have to play ball with the Army to a certain extent, I think that he will handle foreign affairs as wisely as they can be handled . . ."

Hirota made a promising start by selecting the openly pro-American diplomat Shigeru Yoshida as his foreign minister, but the Army's protest was so violent that Hirota dropped him. This was only the first of a series of conciliatory moves, climaxed by the new Prime Minister's acceptance of a demand that all future war ministers be approved by the Big Three of the Army. Apparently an innocent move, this return to the old system meant that the policies of the country were now at the mercy of the Army. If the military disapproved of a cabinet, the war minister could resign and the Big Three would simply refuse to approve anyone else, thereby bringing about the fall of the cabinet. The Army could then refuse to provide a minister until a cabinet to their liking was selected. It meant the voluntary abandonment of one of the last civilian controls over the affairs of state.

Although the Army leaders were gaining political control, this was not their primary goal. They were striving above all to prevent another "2/26." They realized that no amount of discipline could control idealistic young officers passionately dedicated to wiping out poverty and corruption. The solution was to eradicate the causes of discontent, which could only be done by correcting what the insurgents considered to be the evils of free economy. Already the settlers of Manchuria were demanding that their planned economy, which had brought such rapid material progress, be applied to the homeland. But who would carry out such a sweeping economic reform? The capitalists were busy defending their interests, and their servants—the politicians—were not only unsuited for the job but had lost the confidence of the public. And since the Army could not openly enter into politics without being corrupted itself, there was but one course left: to "propel reform" without too much involvement.

To forestall public hostility, the Army leaders placed Araki, Mazaki and a dozen other generals sympathetic to the Imperial Way clique on the inactive list and transferred many of the younger officers to unimportant posts.*

Martial law, invoked during the rebellion, continued month after month, with the press rigidly controlled and voices of dissent silenced. The mutineers were tried swiftly and in private. Thirteen officers and four civilians, including Ikki Kita, were sentenced to death. On July 12 they were bound to

* In an interview a few weeks before his death in 1966 General Araki said, "We [Imperial Way] were idealists, they [Control] were pragmatists. We thought force was necessary at times but it was more important to set the nation in a proper course according to Meiji's five principles. Therefore it was not right simply to crush China." He then added wryly, "But those who speak of ideals lose. The realists always get their own way in the end."

racks, blindfolded, and their foreheads marked with bull's-eyes. Lieutenant Takahashi, who had helped assassinate General Watanabe, sang a song before remarking, "Indeed, indeed, I hope the privileged classes will reflect upon their conduct and be more prudent." One embittered young officer cried out, "O, people of Japan, don't trust the Imperial Army!" Another shouted, "The people trust the Army! Don't let the Russians beat us!" Almost all gave three *banzai* for His Majesty just before the shots rang out.

Even with the purge of Imperial Way officers, there was a small but influential group in Tokyo dedicated to their main principle—the end of expansion. Their leader was the man who had engineered the seizure of Manchuria, Kanji Ishihara. Now on the General Staff, he had become appalled by the results of his own deed. He had dreamed of a democratic Manchuria comprised of five nationalities, all living in harmony as well as providing a bulwark against Russian aggression. But this idealistic goal had degenerated into a determination by the Army leadership to use Manchuria as a base for a takeover of North China.

Soon after the execution of the mutineers, Ishihara secretly met with eleven other key officers from the War Ministry and Army General Staff at the Takara-tei restaurant in Tokyo. These men shared his fear of expansion into China and had convened to discuss what should be done.

Ishihara opened with a question: Why risk war with China when the most dangerous enemy was their traditional foe, Russia? Two wars at once would be suicidal to a Japan weak in heavy industries, he continued. Instead the nation should concentrate all its energies on expanding its productive power until it could compete with that of the Soviet Union. To attain self-sufficiency in heavy industry, Japan would have to develop the resources of Manchuria in a series of five-year programs, avoiding all conflicts with Russia and China. When Japanese industry reached its peak in 1952, then an all-out war could be waged with Russia—and won. This alone could save Japan, not the expansion policy of the Control clique which called for a push into China and perhaps Southeast Asia that had to result in war with Britain and America. If this happened, the only one to profit would be the real enemy, Russia. Ishihara added that the greatest danger to the nation lay not in Tokyo, with the hierarchy comprised of men open to reason and persuasion, but in Manchuria.

In that country, influential radicals in the Kwantung Army were already organizing unauthorized forays into North China. Their leader was Major General Kenji Doihara, much like Ishihara with the same brilliance, flamboyance and talent for intrigue. He had already been nicknamed "The Lawrence of Manchuria" by Western newsmen. The previous year he had gone alone into North China inveigling the war lords and officials of the northernmost five provinces to break away from China and form an autonomous government under the wing of the Imperial Japanese Army. Once

Prime Minister Okada learned this, he had sent out word to check the impetuous Doihara. But he ignored Tokyo—as had Ishihara—and continued to plot so successfully that an autonomous government of sorts was set up. Opportunistic Japanese merchants flooded into North China under their slogan “Follow the Japanese Flag,” irritating Chinese merchants and stirring up anti-Japanese feeling all over China. Doihara claimed he had established the puppet regime merely as a buffer between Manchuria and China, but a few weeks later he brought in five thousand Japanese troops on the grounds that Japanese merchants needed protection from bandits.

Now Ishihara charged that this influx of troops was but the beginning of a mass raid into China and that Doihara’s buffer area was “a poisonous flower” which should be destroyed before it involved Japan in total war with Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek. Both the Russians and the Chinese Communists were plotting to this end so they could step in once both sides were exhausted and establish a Red China.

Ishihara concluded that the best way to curb Doihara was to get back to their offices and advise their chiefs to remove Japanese troops from trouble spots in North China. One such was the ancient Marco Polo Bridge fifteen miles southwest of Peking.

Japanese troops had been stationed in the Peking area ever since an international expeditionary force—including European, American and Japanese troops—suppressed the bloody, xenophobic Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The next year the chastened Chinese signed the so-called Boxer Protocol allowing certain foreign powers to occupy key points near Peking “for the maintenance of open communications between the capital and the sea.”

With the Boxers crushed, China became even more of a plundering ground for Western imperialism, but the continued depredation of her resources at last stirred her people to revolt. Long ago Napoleon had sounded the warning that China was but a sleeping giant: “Let him sleep! For when he wakes he will move the world.”

In 1911 the collapse of the decadent Manchu Empire under the attacks of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, China’s first genuine nationalist, finally wakened the sleeping giant. At once the fledgling republic was besieged on all sides by local war lords hungry for spoils, and although Dr. Sun’s Kuomintang (National People’s Party) continued to gain support throughout the country, China was torn to pieces. Finally, after a dozen frustrating years of bloody conflict, Dr. Sun called for help from a country which was glad to oblige—the Soviet Union. Soon Canton was swarming with Communists offering advice on everything from mass propaganda to military tactics. The moving spirit behind the Kuomintang armies called himself Galen but was in truth a Soviet general named Bluecher; and the chief political adviser was a colorful man who had taught in a Chicago business college and was one of the Kremlin’s top political agitators, Michael Borodin. With their help the

republic grew in power, and its armies, under an able young general, Chiang Kai-shek, crushed its war-lord foes and pushed north, capturing Shanghai and Nanking. But success brought a much greater problem, the rising power of Communism within the ranks of the Kuomintang itself. In 1927 Chiang, now Sun's successor, concluded that continued help from Russia would lead to a Red China; he outlawed the Communists.* From that day until the 2/26 Incident a triple war raged through China. On Monday, Kuomintang troops fought war lords; on Tuesday, the two would unite to fight one of the growing Red armies; and on Wednesday, war lords and Communists would jointly fall upon Chiang Kai-shek.

This constant turmoil, along with the relentless surge of international Communism, alarmed Japanese military leaders. They were threatened from the north by Stalin's bombers in Vladivostok, less than seven hundred miles from Tokyo, and from the west by the burgeoning legions of the Chinese Communists under a determined peasant named Mao Tse-tung.**

To the militarists, there was no choice but to consolidate Manchuria, which lay between the two threats, as a breakwater against Communism. Those in the Control clique further argued that Manchuria was not enough and North China should also be seized. A state of anarchy existed throughout that area, and the considerable Japanese interests there needed protection. The claim of anarchy was somewhat justified. According to the *Survey by the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, banditry was rampant but Communism itself had become "an organized and effective political power exercising exclusive administrative authority over large stretches of territory." There were also indications that the Chinese Communists were in league with the Soviets. "The possibility that Chinese and Russian Communism might join hands was thus to be reckoned with if Chinese Communism were Communism in the Russian sense."

* After he had been forced to leave China, Borodin reportedly said, "When the next Chinese general comes to Moscow and shouts, 'Hail to the world revolution!,' better send at once for the OGPU. All that any of them want is rifles."

** On their part, the Soviets accused America and Britain of plotting against them in Asia. *A Short History of the U.S.S.R.*, Part II, put out by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. Institute of History, states: "In April 1927, political circles in Britain and the U.S.A. tried to provoke a military conflict between the Soviet Union and China. Police and troops broke into the Soviet Embassy in Peking, arrested members of the staff and searched and ransacked the premises. This provocation was instigated by representatives of the Western powers, a fact which was confirmed by the Chinese chargé d'affaires in the U.S.S.R. in his reply to the Soviet protest note. He stated quite clearly that the action of the Chinese military authorities and police had been prearranged with Western diplomats." This same work further declares: "In the summer of 1929 . . . ruling circles in the U.S.A., Japan, Britain and France made another attempt to provoke a Sino-Soviet clash and involve the U.S.S.R. in war in the Far East. On May 27, 1929, bandits attacked the Soviet consulate in Harbin, and on July 10, Chinese militarists tried to seize the Chinese Eastern Railway, which was administered jointly by the U.S.S.R. and China . . . In September and October 1929, detachments of Chinese militarists and Russian whiteguards invaded Soviet territory." No corroborating evidence could be found to these accusations.

Most of the world lived in terror of Communism, and it was not remarkable that the Control clique regarded its spread in China as Japan's principal danger. For the Chinese Communists, unlike those in America and Europe, were not merely members of a party but actual rivals of the national government, with their own laws and sphere of action. Already large sections of China had been Sovietized, and Shanghai itself was a fount of Communist propaganda.

At this time Mao was declaring that his Red troops alone were fighting the Japanese, while Chiang was simply waging a "war of extermination" against Communism. "I solemnly declare here, in the name of the Chinese Soviet government," he told Western newsmen, "that if Chiang Kai-shek's army or any other army ceases hostilities against the Red Army, then the Chinese Soviet government will immediately order the Red Army to stop military action against them. . . . If Chiang Kai-shek really means to take up the struggle against Japan, then obviously the Chinese Soviet government will extend to him the hand of friendship on the field of battle against Japan."

This call for a united front, which had originated in Moscow, failed to move Chiang, but one of his most important field commanders, Chang Hsueh-liang, was not so adamant and Mao decided to work through him. Chang was known as "the Young Marshal," since his father was Old Marshal Chang Tso-lin, whose assassination had led to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. Though the Young Marshal commanded the Northeastern Army, which had been ordered by the Kuomintang to wipe out all Red forces in North China, he had serious reservations about Chiang's course; he had come to believe that those he was fighting were also patriots and perhaps both sides should unite against the Japanese.

In the fall of 1936 Mao sent his most able negotiator, Chou En-lai, to work out a truce with the Young Marshal. Chou was mild-mannered, soft-spoken, almost effeminate-looking, but it was he who had directed the gory massacres of anti-Communists in Shanghai in 1927. Like all good diplomats, he was blessed with endless patience. "No matter how angry I get," said an old school friend named Han, "he always smiles and goes back over the same ground covered in our argument, only in a different way—different enough to make you feel as though he were presenting a new point."

He met with Chang in a Catholic mission in Sian, a remote city in North China, and after admitting that Chiang Kai-shek was the logical leader against the Japanese, promised that the Red generals would serve under him. In return Chang would have to assure him that the Red troops get equal treatment with the Nationalists. In addition, Communists held in Nationalist prisons would be released, and the Communist party allowed to operate legally once Japan was defeated.

They signed a document listing these conditions and shook hands to

seal the bargain. "Young Marshal, now that it is all settled," said Chou, "I am ready to take orders from you this very moment."

Chang replied coldly that they would both have to wait and take orders from Chiang Kai-shek.

"If you still have any doubt about the determination of my party to join in a united front against Japan," said Chou, "I will gladly stay here in Sian with you as a hostage."

Chang said this wouldn't be necessary and that he was as determined as anyone to fight the Japanese—after all, he had a personal account to settle with them. Nevertheless, he was a soldier and must first attempt to persuade his superior, the Generalissimo, to accept the terms of the truce just signed.

But before such a meeting could take place, another of Chiang's field commanders, General Yang Hu-cheng, an ex-bandit chief, convinced the Young Marshal that the Generalissimo could only be made to co-operate with the Reds if he were kidnapped. Chiang was already on his way to Sian to confront Chang with evidence that the Young Marshal was being influenced by leftists and to warn him that "unless timely measures were taken, the situation could lead to rebellion."

Although he had agreed to the kidnapping, the presence of Chiang Kai-shek in Sian weakened Chang's resolve; he continued to vacillate until General Yang took matters in his own hands on the morning of December 12. He seized the Generalissimo and all troops in the area loyal to him. Chiang had been badly injured in a fall while trying to escape, but he was more composed than the Young Marshal when they came face to face. "Both for your own sake and for the sake of the nation, the only thing for you to do is to repent at once and send me back to Nanking," he said. "You must not fall into the trap set by the Communists. Repent before it is too late."

It took the sheepish Chang two days to get up his nerve to show his superior a proposed eight-point agreement similar to the one made with Chou. Once it was signed, Chang promised, the Generalissimo would be escorted back to the Nationalist capital.

"So long as I am a captive, there can be no discussion," said Chiang. He dared the other to shoot him and went back to the Bible.

The distressed Chang turned to the Reds for help. When Chou arrived he praised Chang for his courage, scolded him for bungling the kidnapping and went in to see the prisoner. They knew each other well. Chou had once served under the Generalissimo at the Whampoa Military Academy, China's West Point; here, with Chiang's approval, he had set up a political-commissar system. What Chiang didn't realize until too late was that most of the commissars selected were Communists.

Chiang had since offered \$80,000 for Chou's head and was understanda-

bly pale and apprehensive. But Chou was all affability. He swore that the Communists would not exploit the situation if Chiang joined them. All they wanted was an end to civil war, and a joint effort against the Japanese.

Hostile at first, Chiang listened with growing interest but still refused to commit himself. Within a week, however—according to the Communist version—Chou persuaded him to lead the fight against the Japanese on his own terms. In any case, he was flown back to Nanking on Christmas Day. Surprisingly, the Young Marshal went along with him and once there the two went through a typically Oriental face-saving game. It was like a stylized duel in Chinese opera. First Chang abased himself, confessing that he was “surly and unpolished” and had acted impudently and illegally: “Blushing with shame, I have followed you to the capital in order to receive from you appropriate punishment. Whatever is best for the state I will not evade, if I have to die ten thousand deaths.” Then it was Chiang’s turn: “Due to my lack of virtue and defects in my training of subordinates, an unprecedented revolt broke out.” Chang was tried, sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment, and pardoned within twenty-four hours.

At the same time Chiang was publicly proclaiming that despite stories from Sian, he had been freed “without having to accept any conditions.” It was undoubtedly a version contrived to appease those in Nanking much more violently opposed to any dealing with the Reds than he, because within weeks he was dickering with Mao. The negotiations went so well that early in 1937 the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee wired the Kuomintang that they would abandon their policy of armed uprising against the Nationalist government and place the Red Army under Chiang’s full control. The terms were informally accepted and once more, as in the honeymoon days of Borodin, the Kuomintang and Communists were united.

This brought China her first semblance of tranquillity in more than ten years. “Peace is achieved,” declared Chou En-lai in an interview. “There is now no fighting between us. We have the opportunity to participate in the actual preparations for the defensive war against Japan. As to the problem of achieving democracy, this aim has only begun to be realized. . . . One must consider the anti-Japanese war preparations and democracy like the two wheels of a rickshaw, for example. That is to say, the preparation for the anti-Japanese war comes first, and following it, the movement for democracy—which can push the former forward.”

A few months later, on July 5, 1937, a formal Kuomintang-Communist agreement was signed and both sides made preparations to drive the Japanese out of Peking and the rest of North China.