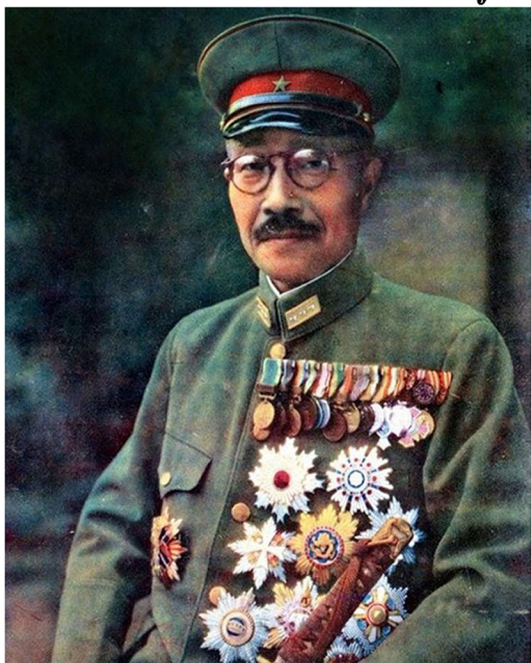


# Newsweek

OCTOBER 27, 1941

## Man With Spurs

Japan's Future Put in Hands of Hard-Boiled General Tojo



*Eiki Tojo, Japan's new Premier*

A fog crept up from Tokyo Bay and the Sumida River and swirled through the streets of Tokyo on Oct. 18. It was the day set for Japanese to pay homage to the deified spirits of 15,013 war dead, killed in China and buried in the Yasukuni shrine near Tokyo. The damp mist even hung over the wooden crosspieces on the ceremonial gateway to the shrine as Emperor Hirohito visited it.

That fog seemed almost to symbolize Japan's position in the world—a nation facing a future clouded by doubts and uncertainties. For Oct. 18 marked a day of crisis in the history of Japan. The Cabinet of the ailing, lackadaisical Premier Fumimaro Konoye, had resigned, split wide open by internal disagreements. Konoye had been succeeded by Lt. Gen. Eiki Tojo.

During the afternoon, as the fog turned into a drizzle, Tojo formed a new Cabinet and took the members to Kyujo, the moated imperial palace, to be sworn in before the emperor. Until this ceremony had been completed, the line-up was kept a secret. Then it was released, providing an anxious public with its best clues as to the policy of the new government.

About short and stocky Tojo, with his bullet-shaped head and incisive voice, the facts were clear. His wife said that he spent his spare time reading biographies of great men, was "gentle to the weak," and "never scolded any of the servants." But in public life he had made his reputation as the chief of staff of the crack Kwantung Army, by a bitter quarrel with

big business dating back to 1938, by outbursts against the United States and Britain, and by a statement made on Nov. 28, 1938, that "Japan must be able to fight China and Russia at the same time." A magazine writer quoted him as saying: "The whole nation should move as one cannon ball of fiery resolution." In the Kwantung Army his nickname was Kamisori (razor blade).

Tojo's career followed a consistent pattern. Descendant of an old samurai family and son of Lt. Gen. Eikyo Tojo, a famous strategist during the Russo-Japanese War, young Tojo was graduated from the military staff school in 1915 and four years later went to Germany as assistant military attaché. Returning to Japan, he served as an instructor in various army positions and in 1934 became head of the powerful and dreaded military gendarmerie, the Japanese equivalent of the German Gestapo. His reputation for toughness grew during his next two jobs: chief of staff of the Kwantung Army (1937) and Minister of War in the second Konoye Cabinet (1940).

The new Premier kept the War and Home Ministries in his own hands. In awarding the other posts, he passed over the Liberals and Independents represented in Konoye's last Cabinet and picked men of strong nationalist leanings. The Foreign Ministry went to 59-year-old Shigenori Togo, a career diplomat since 1912. Having represented his country in China, Switzerland, and the United States, Togo in 1937 was named ambassador to Germany, where he was able to display his German wife to the best advantage. A year later he was switched to Moscow, again as ambassador, but was replaced in September 1940 because of a private feud with the then Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka.

To the public, Tojo made a one-minute radio talk after the investiture. He also gave out a statement to the press. If words could be trusted, his program was scarcely more extreme than Konoye's had been. Japan's policy, he said, remained unchanged. But "The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" would be pushed and ties with the Axis strengthened. Then he accepted promotion to the rank of full general and went, according to custom, to the shrine of Ise, nestled among the pine-clad slopes near Kyoto, to inform the Sun Goddess that he had taken over the government of Japan in a troubled hour.

### *Significance* ~~~

The Japanese themselves admitted that Konoye's Cabinet fell because it was split on matters of foreign policy. The division was reflected in the two courses which Konoye attempted to pursue simultaneously. One was that of completing "The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

Under this slogan, Indo-China was occupied. The other aimed at arriving at some sort of agreement with the United States and Britain. Under this, the talks with Washington were initiated.

But the Konoye Cabinet did not succeed in developing either policy with any success. Moreover, the German attack on Russia constituted a complicating factor that tended to hold the Japanese back until the trend of events became clear. The question last week was whether the new Tojo Cabinet represented another face-saving compromise or whether it really heralded a period of decisive action.

The character of both Tojo and his colleagues appeared to favor a policy of action. Perhaps the most significant indication was Tojo's Kwantung Army background with its implications of hostility to Russia. At the same time, however, there were restraining factors in the situation. One was the circumstance that Tojo was chosen by a group of six former Premiers. This seemed almost to revive the tradition of the genro, by which cautious elder statesmen had the decisive voice in Japanese policy. Then there was the emphasis given to the ceremonies connected with Tojo's taking office—something that may have been due to the Emperor himself. And Hirohito is known as being in favor of moderation. Finally, Konoye remained in the background as a sort of adviser.

In the last analysis, however, the forces that govern Japan's policy depend on the realities of power politics. In that connection, the Japanese had to consider five vital factors:

**1**—Relations with the United States now depend not so much on what Japan desires as on what Washington is willing to grant (see page 11). The worst stumbling block is China, since Tokyo is committed as an act of fundamental policy to finish off "the China incident," while the United States cannot afford as a matter of principle to "sell out" the Chinese.

**2**—The China war has reached the point where further Japanese advances will almost certainly cost more than they are worth. Furthermore, Chungking is growing constantly stronger as a result of aid given by the United States, Britain, and Russia. In addition, the military and administrative burdens in China are a constant drain on the strength of Japan.

**3**—Relations with Britain and the Netherlands Indies have grown much worse in the past few months. The military situation in the South Seas has also definitely deteriorated for Japan. The strengthening of the Singapore area and of the defenses of the Netherlands Indies plus the close relations established between the British and the Dutch on the one hand and the United States on the other have made

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it likely that Japan would now meet united opposition in a push to the south. The furor created by the recent Manila conferences involving British, Dutch, and United States staff officers indicated how greatly Tokyo fears this cooperation among its enemies.

4—The commercial embargo applied by the democracies is now having an increasing effect on the economic life of Japan. This acts both as a deterrent to action and as a spur. If the Japanese wait as much as one year, the strain on their economy might prove so decisive as to forbid any aggressive action.

5—The time factor is also all important in regard to the Russian war. In case of a Soviet collapse, the Japanese would have to move swiftly to beat the Germans into Vladivostok. Winter, moreover, is an unfavorable season in which to stage a campaign in Siberia.

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