

Labor Conditions in Japan

By Sen Katayama

SINCE the recent rice riots the workers of Japan have been steadily asserting their power. In spite of rigid police rule and the use of troops in strikes, mass demonstrations are occurring more and more frequently. Demands for higher wages are being made not through the agency of labor organizations but by direct action in the form of mass strikes and labor riots which have proved very effective in the majority of cases.

Owing to the fact that the Japanese workers are forbidden to organize in labor unions they are forced to resort to strikes, sabotage and rioting to improve conditions, and in these struggles they are learning over night what their Western comrades have learned only through many decades of agitation. Since the outbreak of the Russian Revolution the spirit of revolt against the oppressive government in general and the greedy exploiters of labor in particular has been gathering strength until it burst forth in the recent rice riots and the continuous strikes and labor riots. There are still nearly six thousand workers in prison throughout the country who were arrested in the rice riots. Many have been tried and condemned to long periods of imprisonment and many are still in prison awaiting trial.

All over the country the bureaucratic regime and its supporters are crying loudly for the punishment of the rioters to the very limit of the law. By this means the bourgeoisie hopes to intimidate the workers from striking and rioting, but the effect is only to increase the spirit of revolt among the people's masses. The workers of Japan have already glimpsed the power of mass action in the rice riots and the recent strikes, and the struggle will continue. The readjustment of Japanese industry from a war to a peace basis will cause greater suffering and unemployment than was the case during the readjustment periods following the wars of 1895 and 1905, for Japan's present industrial conditions are more advanced, more centralized and have many more people dependent upon their continued operation. It is estimated that over a quarter of a million will be thrown out of work in Tokio, Osaka and a few other large cities during the present crisis. Already there are many unemployed in the in-

dustrial centers of the country and as the workers are unorganized the employers will cut down wages and dismiss the workers at their will. But this will itself bring further resistance from the workers and will develop the necessity of mass action in a wider sense than it has already been applied in the demand for higher wages. Thus the whole situation is helping the workers to awaken to the real situation—and they are awakening.

The bureaucrats, terror-stricken at the recent rice riots, while advocating the severest punishment for the ring-leaders of the riots have been attempting to organize labor unions dominated by the employers. These paternal labor unions are mostly taken up by retired army and naval officers as a lucrative means of livelihood. Among these so-called labor organizations the most widely known, and to a certain extent well established, is the "Friendly Society of Labor"—Yū-Ai-Kai which is supported by the bourgeoisie. The president of the Friendly Society of Labor is Mr. Bunji Suzuki, a graduate of the Tokio Imperial University, who has been twice present at annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor as the honorable fraternal delegate of Japanese labor.

He crossed the Pacific in a first class cabin, travelled in a Pullman and stayed at first class hotels in America. He was enabled to do this because he came to America in reality as the private secretary of Baron Shibusawa whose patronage of the Friendly Society of Labor has been the chief reason for its peaceful existence under the Imperialist-capitalist governments of Okuma and Terauchi and the present plutocratic government of Hara. He has been truly styled the "Gompers of Japan." The only difference between the two is that Suzuki's Friendly Society is not by any stretch of the imagination an organization of labor. Its so-called members consist of subscribers to a monthly magazine largely edited and contributed to by bourgeois writers who invariably and pedantically preach that out-worn theory—"the identical interest of capital and labor."

It is reported in the Japanese press that Bunji Suzuki is again coming to America on his way to Paris

to attend the international Labor Peace Conference. He will not attend the International Labor and Socialist Conference for he is the deadly enemy of Socialism. He has publicly declared that he will stake his life to crush Socialism in Japan. His real attitude to the labor question, which is borne out by his actual work in Japan, is to compromise between capital and labor. He opposes strikes and never was either a strike leader or adviser. When a strike does occur he attempts to step in and bring about a compromise, a compromise which is invariably in favor of Capitalism.

We, the Socialists, of Japan, are opposed to the methods and tactics of the Friendly Society of Labor. It is directly detrimental to the cause of labor, it poisons and kills the manly spirit of the real labor movement in Japan particularly among the young workers who read its paper. Just now the Japanese *intelligentsia* are attempting to interpret the labor and social phenomena of Japan and pacify the awakening workers by government permitted labor movements that will abandon the strike and the economic boycott and become the obedient servant of the employers.

But the great mass of the Japanese workers are rapidly awakening to a realization of their power and are making themselves felt in strikes and riots. The present economic situation of the workers is making them far wiser and more powerful than the pedantic Japanese *intelligentsia*. Japan is fast approaching a stage where the workers will assert their rights to the control of their own affairs. A close contact with the Russian Bolshevik revolution is being evidenced everywhere and though the government is trying to shut out the ideas of Bolshevism the workers are practising the tactics that enabled the Russian workers to conquer power. Socially Japan is a steam boiler without a safety valve, sooner or later an explosion will occur. The government is shutting every mouth of freedom, freedom of the press and assemblage is denied to the workers and Socialists. The best indication of the coming social revolution in Japan is the rapid building of bastilles and the increasing jailing of the workers and poorest peasants. As sure as day succeeds night these bastilles must fall before the mighty wave of Bolshevism that is sweeping on to Japan.

Cottin's Defence — "Why I Tried to Kill Clemenceau"

I WANTED to kill the man instigating a new war. I am an anarchist, a friend of the people, Germans not excluded, a friend of mankind and brotherhood. These words deeply penetrate into the heart of every man. Clemenceau is a tyrant, and a tyrant of the highest degree. Clemenceau is making the fighters for the popular cause rot in the free prisons of France. Clemenceau is the greatest enemy of the great free-thinking people. No wonder he is called "Tiger." But he is not a tiger—he is a man. Prior to the March revolution in Russia there were sent to the French front many Russian soldiers—the figure varying between 100,000 and 300,000 men. Reliable information it is impossible to obtain. They replaced English and French troops in the most dangerous sections of the battle line; well supplied with arms and provisions they took the place of a large number of the Allied troops, which were sent to police different sections of France.

Unexpectedly the revolution in Russia broke out. Russian soldiers immediately began to be insistent in their demands, and created a Soviet of the soldiers' deputies, which was arrested in its entire personnel. Nobody knows of its fate up to the present. This did not stop the Russian soldiers; they protested as a single man, and refused to advance. Their superiors were infuriated and began to threaten, but nothing could shake the Russians. At the council of the generals and colonels of the old regime, the tyrant-rulers, it was decided to take the Russians off the firing line and intern them behind the bars of the camp for the interned. They were recognized as enemies. But that was not the end of the sufferings of the Russians. Terrible conditions, executions of the leaders, arrests of the conscientious soldiers—nothing could shake the firm attitude of the Russian soldiers, who had scented the fire of the revolutionary flame in their native land. They categorically refused to obey. Detachment after detachment was sent to the rear guard camps, where they awaited their fate.

When the Kerensky government had fallen, the sympathy of the Russian soldiers was on the side of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies. But in spite of that some of the detachments of the Russian army still fought on the front lines. Russia signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and those troops that were under the influence of the revolutionary patriotism under-

We publish below a statement by Emile Cottin after his arrest following his attempt upon the life of the French Premier.

stood and decided to leave the struggle. The last detachments refused to go into action, basing their claim on the fact that they were neutral citizens; they understood the reality of the war. Their main demand was to return to their native land. This request—and then demand—the French premier, Clemenceau, ordered suppressed. The order of the French government was obeyed immediately, and many Russians, true sons of the cold valleys of Russia, fell before the bullets of the treacherous weapons of those cunning politicians. Many were wounded. Clemenceau's order "not to spare bullets" was executed according to all the rules of military tactics. With waving flags the battalions of the free republic returned from the places of their crime accompanied by the sounds of the "Marseillaise." A few days afterward a colonel was sent to the camp where the irreconcilable Russians were kept, who delivered a fiery speech. He spoke of revolution, of everything, and finished by an appeal to enlist into the army to fight against the Bolsheviks. Twenty thousand men believed these fables telling them that Russia was in danger and decided to save Russia. They were formed into detachments and were sent to the nearest military camp in order to be attached to the Czecho-Slovak army. The rest, tens of thousands of men, as one man, decidedly and deferentially answered: "The Russian people have concluded peace; they might have made a mistake, as you said; yet you treated us cruelly even after the downfall of the Czar's regime, and therefore we demand to be sent to our native land; there on the spot we will deliberate as to what must be suppressed for the Russian people."

The French authorities became enraged, and having caught the leaders of the military Soviets sent them without trial to hard labor, to an island prison, located not far from Bordeaux. The rest were exiled to places where no crow flies. After that a dishonest reaction was instituted: the Russian soldiers were tormented to the extreme. Then, having tormented them sufficiently, and enjoyed it enough, the Premier ordered irreconcilable Russians to be sent to Africa. Forty thousand men were sent there. While they were being sent into slavery there came unexpectedly a Russian

colonel, decorated from head to foot with the Czar's medals, and facing the rows of soldiers responded to the order of Clemenceau with the following words:

"My boys, it would truly be a great mistake if we consented to go to war against our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and the whole Russian people. First of all what we need to do is to return to Russia, and there we shall see what government we Russians shall defend."

"You are sending my boys to slavery under the hot ray of the African sun. Send me also with them, for I believe exactly the way they do."

Clemenceau's order was obeyed, and forty thousand Russians for their fidelity to the popular cause were sent to slavery in the African plantations of the French.

Last November, after the armistice with Germany, tens of thousands of war prisoners were liberated, among them many Russians. As a stream this human wave rushed in the direction of the Allied lines en masse, passing the outposts and blockhouses. The Russians were in a terrible condition, beaten, wounded, and bare-footed. They did not resemble men at all, but rather apparitions. Having reached the American lines they were stopped, given American uniforms but were forbidden to proceed further. Where are they, what is the matter with them? There is no information. Where they are—martyrs—remains a secret. Their number reaches between 10,000 and 15,000 men.

Many refugees passing the battle line found themselves in cities where they were caught and told: "You have no right to live in this country. You must return to Russia, and enlist in the Czecho-Slovak army. You must fight against the Soviets."

"We cannot do it," replied the Russian prisoners of war. "We must be sent to Russia and see the people at work. There on the spot shall we see whom we must defend."

I am an anarchist, a friend of the people, not excluding Germans, a friend of mankind, of the brotherhood of man.

That is where the heart of man lies. That is where lie the spirit of protest and revenge. I lifted my hand; the protest of the shot resounded, and the "Tiger" was wounded.