

1868 was a unique sort of mass movement peculiar to Japan. When the tenants have complaints and their demands are not heard by peaceful means such as petitions, they organize a forced appeal under mob rule. They hoist a rice straw mattress on bamboo sticks as a flag, and each carries a sickle in his belt and a bamboo spear on his shoulder. They go from village to village and recruit tenants, destroying the houses of the village mayors, who are hereditary officers, and were mostly rich landlords in feudal times. As the crowd proceeds they are fed by the villagers. When they reach the castle gate they are generally received by a representative of the lord who promises them remedies.

This form of appeal is used even to-day by discontented farmers and tenants against the government. And the old spirit is often displayed in labor strikes. The workers in Japan are not allowed to organize, so where the western workers pursue the method of first demanding an increase of wages, or shorter hours, etc., and strike only after they have failed previously to get a hearing or a satisfactory result, the Japanese workers strike first and negotiate afterwards. Thus a labor strike of this kind often can develop into a riot. Sabotage was used long before it was known under that name from the western world.

Among the city people, the custom of public demonstrations has developed remarkably. It was first started during the Russo-Japanese war when a lantern procession was gotten up to celebrate a victory over the Russian army. In the beginning it was encouraged by the government for the purpose of stirring up jingo spirit but the people discovered in these harmless processions a power that is greater than the power of the police. And this was shown on the 9th of September 1905, when mass demonstrations took place at the conclusion of the treaty of Portsmouth between Russia and Japan. It was interpreted by the foreign press and its agents in Japan as a popular outburst of dissatisfaction against the treaty, but the real truth is that it was a spontaneous popular outburst

against the oppressive war government of the late Prince Katsura. For a few days Tokio, a city of 2,000,000 population, was entirely in the hands of rioters and mobs. They first started to destroy police stations of which most were burnt down, and attacked policemen, so that there was no police in the city for some days. The government called out troops, but they were in sympathy with the crowd and would not shoot at them, so that the demonstration was highly successful.

This same spirit stirred the people of Tokio in 1906 when the Socialist party got up a monster demonstration against raising the carfare on the street cars. Street cars were burnt, car-sheds and company offices attacked. This brought results, for the government did not allow the company to raise the fares. Several socialist comrades who were leaders in the demonstration were caught, tried and imprisoned.

The next popular outbreak was in 1913, at the time of the reactionary ministry of Prince Katsura, who by the trickery of using the army minister as his puppet, forced the resignation of Marquis Saionji. This last Katsura ministry that then followed, was the most hated in the history of Japan. After only thirty days it crumbled under the pressure of popular opposition which developed into angry mobs in the city of Tokio. The crowd first gathered around the parliament building, and proceeded to attack many pro-government dailies and to destroy police stations, fighting the police forces in the streets of the city. The next ministry in 1914 under Count Yamamoto was also forced to resign by popular opposition.

We must not lose faith in the people of Japan, therefore, who after all are the real center of power, and who will yet strike at the right moment against reaction and oppression. Nor are there indications wanting that point to the overthrow of the bureaucracy. Corruption has developed to a sensational extent among those high in position, and unrest among the workers and the farmers is increasing. The imprisonment of a naval general for taking bribes a few years ago caused the