

Socialistic Masses in Japan Are Fomenting War

Copyrighted, 1913, by Frank G. Carpenter, Washington, D. C.—The death of Prince Katsura has removed another of the elder statesmen who have so long formed the advisory of the emperor and have in fact controlled the policy of Japan. It is a question how long his majesty and the men who are left can hold the people in check. I have just received a confidential letter from an eminent authority in Tokio, describing the unrest among the Japanese masses. The enormous appropriations for the army and navy, as well as the extraordinary expenses of the government and the colonies, have brought in a reign of high prices which shows no sign of decrease. At the end of the Japanese war it was promised that expenditures would be reduced and the military establishment cut down. Nothing of the kind has been done.

On the contrary the cost of the government has increased, and during the coming year the expenses are to be something like \$5,000,000 yen. This is equal to more than \$5 sold for every man, woman and child in the country, or an average of \$25 per family. In many localities the farmers are working for 25 or 30 cents a day and there are women employed in the factories who do not get more than 15 or 20 cents for ten or twelve hours' work.

The Japanese army on a peace basis nominally amounts to 225,000 men or about twice as many as we have in the United States. It is really much larger, for every boy is now forced into the ranks and there are reserve forces like those of Germany. The islands are divided into military districts corresponding to the divisions of the army, and each division has recruits in its own district. Liability to service begins at the age of 17 and the actual service commences at 20. The total strength of the field forces just now amounts to about 699,000 men. This is fully one-tenth of the whole population, and at the same ratio we would have about 1,000,000 American troops. The army in equipping this enormous force, and the taking of several hundred thousand productive workers out of the ranks of industry, has a serious effect upon the productivity of the Japanese nation. The army last year cost \$1,000,000,000 yen. In addition to the cost of the army is that of the navy, which now ranks among the strongest of the world. The expenses for this are now about \$20,000,000,000 a year. The Japanese government has also large shipbuilding yards and armor factories. It is making its own guns and building and equipping its own men-of-war, and at the same time subsidizing merchant ships. Nearly every great Japanese steamer which goes to Europe, America, Australia and Bombay gets more or less money from the public treasury, and there are factories which are subsidized in one way or other.

At the same time the public debt steadily increases. It now amounts to \$1,200,000,000, or about \$125 per family. There is also a great deal of private indebtedness, and it is said that 85 per cent of the farmers are paying interest on mortgages.

The distress and pauperism which comes from the high cost of living and comparatively low wages are fomented and increased by the yellow journals. A large socialistic element has grown up, and it is from this that we hear the demands for war with China and with the United States. The socialistic party is rapidly increasing, and the indications are that the emperor and the elder statesmen cannot long hold the masses in check. When I was in Japan prior to the breaking out of the war between Japan and Russia, I was confidentially told that Japan would have to do something in order to take the attention of the people away from local troubles, and to keep them from demanding a greater share in the government. The same conditions prevail now, and they result in the nation being rushed into trouble with other countries. The Japanese-Russian war was largely undertaken by the Japanese to keep their own people in order.

Take the assassination of Mr. Abe, the high Japanese official who advocated moderation as to the troubles in California, and who wanted milder demands made upon China. This was brought about by the mob, and it may be that his death was decreed by some of the secret societies of the socialistic set. Mr. Abe was assassinated as he was about to go into his own house. Two men grabbed him and one held his arms while the other stabbed him in the stomach, and performed upon him what had been done to himself, might be called harakiri.

One of the assassins is said to have committed suicide, seating himself first on a map of Japan. At the same time he sent two yen, a sum equal to \$1, to the dead official's family, and left the following letter:

Some Japanese Patriotism.
"I stabbed Mr. Abe. Why did I commit the murder? He is responsible for the weakness of Japanese diplomacy. The act is the outcome of my sincere wishes for the welfare of the state. I stabbed him deep. He screamed and cried: 'Oh, hurt.' What an unmanly attitude. I understand Bushido, and therefore hate to commit suicide in the open air, like a vagrant. I have been seeking a place to die until now. Please forgive. I have killed him, but I entertained no grudge against him. When I remember his family, I cannot stop my tears. I deeply sympathize with the members of his family."

This man was probably one of the Sohei of Japan. The Sohei became prominent just after the war with China, and in a short time spread throughout the empire. They probably still exist under a different name. I have never seen them described in letters of travel. They are a kind of cross between an anarchist and a political striker, and I am told that every political meeting is filled with them. They have committed many assassinations, and for a time those allied to one politician fought with those of the same kind allied to other politicians.

While I was last in Japan a band of ten Sohei assaulted a member of Parliament while he was on the way to the House of Parliament, and one of them threw a bottle of sulphuric acid at him, but failed to strike him. A few days later a band of twenty Sohei attacked the office of one of the newspapers and stoned the editor, and other outrages occurred.

I am told that many of these Sohei came from the old Samurai or retainer class of the Daimios, the nobles of the country who ruled Japan under the shogun before the new government came in. Each Daimio then had a number of these fighting men about him, but when the emperor came out of his seclusion and took hold of the government the fighting men were out of a job. Some of them got places in the new administration, some



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went into private life and took up industries of one kind or other, and not a few sat and sulked. It is the descendants of these men who are fomenting much of the trouble today. I was told that some of them had attached themselves to politicians and that a few of the Sohei had organized into bands where they worked together for their own mutual benefit. I was told that they are not fond of foreigners and that they were the basis of the anti-foreign element of the country. Not a few came from the overeducated of the young Japan. Thousands of young Japanese have prepared themselves to enter the professions. The country is honeycombed with schools and universities and many of the graduates of the colleges have hoped to either get places under the government or be lawyers, doctors, engineers and whatnot. The supply for such professions has been greater than the demand and a large part of the surplus has devoted itself to political agitation and socialistic fomentation. The Japanese are naturally high-spirited and excitable, and between this element and the sensational newspaper the anti-government and war following has been growing by leaps and bounds.

How People Are Handled.

Indeed, the great wonder is that the emperor and the elder statesmen have been able to handle the Japanese people as they have. It is only the reverence for the emperor which has been built up through generations which has enabled them to do so. This reverence still exists, but it is a question as to whether it is not on the wane. It was owing to the veneration for the mikado that the really great men who have acted as his advisers for the last generation have been able to introduce the modern civilization. It was they who laid out the plans for the great country of today and carried them out to a successful conclusion.

Among the more famous of the men were such as Prince Ito, Inouye, Count Okuma and others. Prince Katsura, who died a month or so ago, was of the same class, and so was Prince Yamagata, who was at the head of the army when I was last in Japan. I have met all of these men from time to time during my travels through the Japanese empire, and have had heart-to-heart talks with many of them. They were all of extraordinary ability, and men who would have made their mark in any nation or in any government.

It was in 1909 that I had a long interview with Prince Katsura, who was then the premier of the Japanese empire. He was also secretary of the treasury, and was doing all that he could to bring Japan out of its financial troubles. Prince Katsura had command of a division in the Chinese-Japanese war, and he was war minister during the troubles with Russia. He told me that he did not like to be considered a military hero. Said he: "I am for peace, peace, always peace. It is wrong to look upon the Japanese as consumed with a lust for conquest. We are a peaceful nation, and when we fought with Russia it was only because we could not honorably retire to do so." Prince Katsura denied that there was any ill-feeling in Japan toward the United States. He said that Japan looked upon America as its great and good friend, and that it was the hope of the government that the relations of the two countries would always be friendly. He said that any war between Japan and the United States would involve the whole world, and what the world needed was peace rather than war.

At that time Prince Katsura wrote me out a message for the United States, and I printed a facsimile of it in one of my letters. I have the original before me. It consists of some Japanese characters beautifully written in the hand of his excellency on a wide strip of white silk. It is signed with the seal of the marquis. Translated it is: "For Japan and the United States mutual friendship and mutual harmony."

It was sentiments like that that caused Katsura to lose his job. The mob went against him, and they terrorized the emperor to such an extent that he asked Katsura to resign. Katsura did so and tried to organize a new party, a party of peace rather than war. He found, however, that this war spirit and this socialistic element were stronger than he and it was for this reason that he withdrew from public life. He remained in seclusion until his death a few weeks ago.

Deprecates Military Spirit.

It was at the same time that I met Prince Yamagata, the great general and statesman. He was to Japan what Grant was to the United States. He was the organizer of the Japanese army, and it was his military ability that did much to make it one of the greatest fighting machines of modern times. Yamagata deprecated the military spirit which was growing in Japan. Said he:

"We do not want to be considered a



PRINCE ITO



PRINCE KATSURA

warlike nation and we hope to continue our national life along the lines of peace, not war. Our military establishment has been created for defense, and not for conquest and we hope that the time will eventually come when we can dispense with it. As for us we do not want war with any nation and most certainly not with our old friend, the United States."

Prince Yamagata objected, as many of the Japanese do, to being put in a special class on account of his yellow skin. I had asked him as to the yellow peril, and whether China and Japan were not combining to conquer the world. He replied that there was "no such thing as the yellow peril and there was no radical difference in the minds of the east and the west. 'We have the same ambitions as to the betterment of mankind and of the world, and there is no reason why you should get us off by ourselves.'"

One of the greatest losses that Japan has ever sustained in its great men was the assassination of Prince Ito in Man-

churia by a fanatic Korean about a year after I had had this talk with Yamagata. It was the Li Hung Chang of Japan. He stood to the old mikado as Prince Otto von Bismarck did to old Kaiser Wilhelm, and he was one of the great organizers and constructing statesmen of the empire. He was a boy at the time that Japan was opened to foreigners, and he told me how he and Count Inouye ran away to England to study the secret of foreign military and naval supremacy. He said that they were made to work their way as common sailors, and told me how when they landed in London and were wandering about the streets hungry and not knowing where to go his boy friend Inouye laid down a silver dollar on the counter of a bakery and picked up a loaf of bread, expecting to get some change back. The baker, who saw they were foreigners, put the dollar into his till and motioned them to go on. It was the last dollar they had and they walked about for some time before they

found the English business house to which money had been forwarded for them. At that place they had a credit of \$5,000, and this enabled them to spend the year or more in England, after which they went back to Japan and told the great men with whom they were connected that there was no use in the nation trying to fight the British. This was not welcome news and some of the high-bred Japanese Sohei of that day tried to assassinate them as they left the council to go home. The effect of their news confirmed the opinion of the princes that they must have modern civilization in Japan, and that was a part of the beginning of the Japan of today.

Ito Enters the Cabinet.

It was a little later that the emperor was transformed from a puppet into a live acting monarch, and then Ito became a leading figure. He was soon made a member of the cabinet of the mikado and became one of his chief advisers. He continued so throughout his life, and had a great deal to do with making Japan what it is now.

With other things, Ito introduced our banking system into Japan. He came to the United States and studied modern finance here in the Treasury department at Washington. He told me he was very grateful to our government for the facilities it gave him. He said this was when General Grant was president and George A. Bristow secretary of the treasury. In that talk Prince Ito said:

"I shall always be a friend to the United States, and I believe that the best element of our people have the greatest friendship for your nation." I have had altogether three long interviews with Prince Ito. The first occurred twenty years ago at the house of the prince in Tokio. He was then the Japanese premier and acted as such during the war with China, which occurred shortly after my talk. My second interview with him was in 1908, just before the war with Russia. He gave me to understand that the relations of the two people were strained, but said that the governments were friendly. Nevertheless within six months after that war was declared and some of the greatest battles of all time were fought. In that interview Ito talked of the Philippines islands, which had just come into our hands. He said that he was glad that the Americans had taken possession of them, and that he thought it was our duty to develop them and their people.

My last interview with Marquis Ito was only a few months before his death. I was about leaving Japan for Korea to write a series of letters about that country. Ito had been governor general of Korea, and he had the welfare of the Koreans greatly at heart. He asked me to come out to his country villa near Tokio and spend the day with him. I did so, and we had a long conversation about himself and his country, and also about Korea and other matters relating to the far east. Here he reiterated his former sentiments relating to the United States. President Roosevelt was then in the White House, and he expressed the greatest admiration and regard for him. Mr. Roosevelt had sent him a photograph and the prince had had this enlarged to portrait size and framed. He had one of his servants bring him the framed picture into the room, and place it on a chair before us so that we had Theodore Roosevelt looking at us, a silent participant in our talk. I venture that this is the only time that Mr. Roosevelt has kept silent in any tripartite conversation.

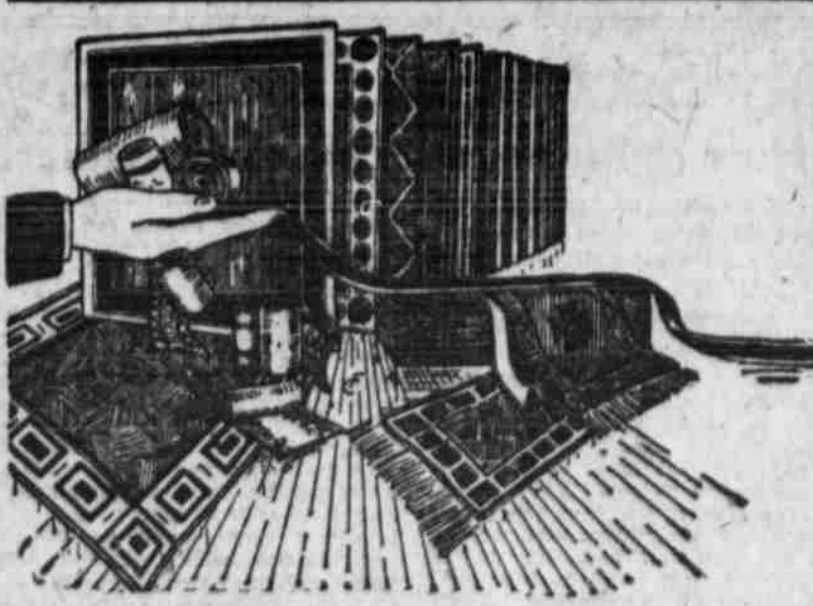
In talking of the future of Japan Prince Ito emphatically said that the mission of his nation was peace rather than war. He hoped that Japan would engage in trading and manufacturing and evidently thought that it had a situation in the far east compared to that which England has in Europe, one that fits it to be a great commercial and industrial nation.

He said that he thought the friendly relations of Japan and the United States would continue, but intimated that he did not like our treatment of Japanese immigrants and that the Japanese children of California ought not to be discriminated against in the schools.

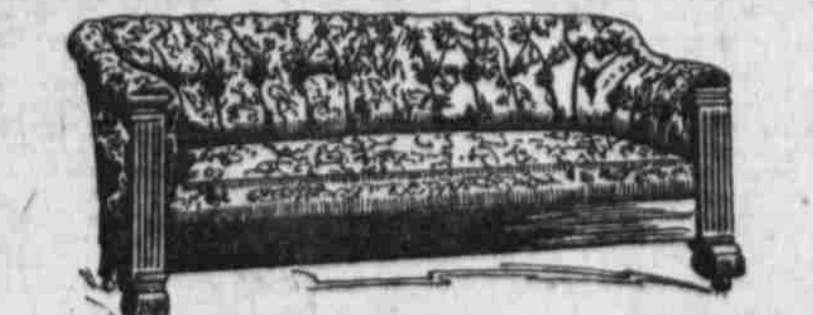
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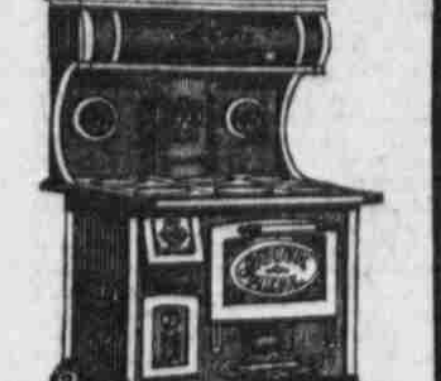
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