

# SO IMPORTANT

IT SHOULD BE WRITTEN

WHERE EVERY MOTORIST

WILL SEE IT EVERY DAY . . .



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## Japan Once Wanted Democracy

(Written for "The Listener" by GORDON INGHAM)

RECENTLY a noted New Zealander, James Bertram, returning to this country after several years in China and Japan, stated that the Chinese could "operate a democracy," but that the Japanese could not. Taken as a bare statement without any conditioning factors in time and training, it holds out no hope of Japan ever coming as an equal into the comity of nations. But is it a fair statement to make about a people who have only been in contact with the democratic peoples for a few years? It took us many generations to achieve a "democracy that works"; the Japanese are late starting but, given a lead and guidance, without relaxing vigilance meanwhile—who knows? Anyhow, they were willing to try once—33 years ago—when on February 10, 1913, a popular uprising against the dictatorial Katsura Ministry began in Tokyo, and later extended to Osaka, and other cities and towns. The demand was for party government. Prince Katsura led a minority group in the Diet but there were no party groupings. Even so, 246 members of the Diet introduced a resolution calling for the impeachment of Katsura,

who mustered only 94 supporters. Katsura met this by ordering the suspension of the Diet before the vote could be taken, and by calling out several thousand police to break up the demonstrations. In the following days, 80 police stations were destroyed by the enraged crusaders for a democratic Japan, who suffered many casualties in the clashes. The offices of newspapers which supported the Katsura Government were attacked and in one the editor opened fire on the critics of his paper!

Actually the demonstrators secured a victory by forcing Katsura to resign the Ministry; but, as in other countries which have had to fight for their democratic institutions, the victory was not taken far enough at that stage. But no nation is born to democracy. It is attained only through struggle with innumerable setbacks. Thirty-three years ago—just a generation as we reckon time—the Japanese made an attempt to gain control of their country. The willingness to fight for it was there; it cannot be wholly dead to-day.\*

\* Since our contributor wrote, cable messages from Tokyo have described mass meetings of Japanese Communists, Socialists and Koreans, demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, Baron Shidehara, and his Cabinet.



THESE PHOTOGRAPHS, reproduced from a 33-year-old copy of "The International Socialist Review," show incidents during the 1913 political crisis in Japan. The upper picture shows a crowd demonstrating outside the Diet building in Tokio, the lower shows demonstrators crowding into a protest meeting