

CHAPTER XXI

THE EARTHQUAKE AND THE PRESS

The reconstruction of Tokyo after the earthquake on September 1 1923, which wrought the severest havoc that had ever been done, was so quickly effected that the people coming up to the city at the end of that month were extremely amazed at the animation shown in the streets full of houses temporarily built. The herald of the reconstruction movement was the restarting of the newspapers of the metropolis. This was quite unexpected because it was apprehended immediately after the disaster that only a few papers would revive from the ruins. The fact was that all the newspapers were re-issued in the course of September and helped to impress the public that everything had returned to the normal condition.

Never has the importance of conducting a newspaper business on the basis of the chain system or co-operative plan been realized so much as at that time. The papers which had their head offices in Osaka, such as the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi and the Asahi, and the Jiji which had the Osaka Jiji were quicker than other papers in restarting. The Osaka offices spared no effort to help their Tokyo papers. As a consequence of the moratorium declared by the Government after the disaster, the people suffered greatly, although they knew that the measure was needed. The papers which had their sister papers in Osaka were financed by the latter. Cash was brought from Osaka from time to time until the moratorium was removed. Not only in financial assistance, but also in printing equipment and even in man power, the Tokyo papers depended upon their Osaka sisters a great deal.

During the month of September, advertisements were limited to announcements of the re-opening of business, removal of offices, the arrival of imported articles which were required for the reconstruction, such as motor vehicles, bicycles, timber or other building materials and so forth, or to want-ads or personal. Among the ads relating to personal matters were many pathetic ones and their few lines of ads were enough to move all readers. There were many lost children at the time of the disaster and they were sought by their parents through the medium of the papers. Actually a considerable number of boys and girls returned to their fathers and mothers through the kindness of the press.

According to the returns of various newspapers, the income from advertisements showed no such decrease as was imagined at first and the report of business made to shareholders at the end of 1923 was optimistic.

The effect of the disaster upon the Tokyo papers, however, was great. Some papers changed proprietors, while other papers reorganized their staffs. The Kokumin had a sweeping change under Mr. Bubi Ishikawa, who became vice-President of the paper. Mr. Ishikawa is a successful journalist, and the editor and proprietor of the "Shufu no Tomo", a ladies' magazine named Companion to Housewives. He sympathized a great deal with Mr. I-ichiro Tokutomi, editor and proprietor of the Kokumin, and promised to help him. However, he left the paper in May 1924, issuing a statement that he left because he had finished the reconstruction of Tokutomi's paper. His in-

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terference with the Kokumin was disliked by certain sections of the press and the latter interpreted his leaving the paper as being from other motives.

The Yomiuri was sold to Mr. Matsutaro Shoriki, former detective chief of the Metropolitan Police, at the end of February 1924. This was also an effect of the earthquake disaster and it is worthy of note that it came rather late. The paper was an astoundingly democratic and even radical paper inclined to the Left. But it was transferred to the hands of a former detective chief who had strongly been opposed to any radical movement. The Yomiuri was a literary paper and held a unique position among papers on that account. It was bought by Mr. Chujiro Matsuyama, former editor-in-chief of the Tokyo Asahi, a few years ago, when he left that paper. It has since become a paper with liberal tendencies.

The Yamato had a change about the same time, inviting Mr. Asakichi Tanaka, former assistant political editor of the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi, as vice-President of the paper. Mr. Tanaka represented a certain interest in coming to join it.

The activity of the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi and the Hochi which were safe in the disaster was redoubled when they were reajusted to the new situation.

The Nichi-Nichi started to issue its evening paper on September 18. The Asahi, the Jiji, the Hochi, the Yamato, the Kokumin and the Yorozu had already their evening papers, but the Nichi-Nichi long remained as a morning paper only. The great event gave a fillip to the paper and caused it to issue its evening edition.

The circulation of the Nichi-Nichi on January 1 1924 was 709,000, surpassing all other papers in Tokyo.

The following table shows the development of the paper for the last twelve years.

The circulation on Jan. 1.	
1912	97,000
1913	116,000
1914	148,000
1915	235,000
1916	276,000
1917	313,000
1918	360,000
1919	355,000
1920	368,000
1921	376,000
1922	348,000
1923	373,000
1924	709,000

Despite such an amazing increase in circulation, the Nichi-Nichi, compared with the same period of the preceding year, incurred a considerable loss in 1923 as the natural result of the quake disaster in Tokyo. This was felt by the Osaka Mainichi Company, under whose control the paper is. The company declared a dividend of 13 per cent for the term ending December 1923 against 80 per cent for the corresponding term of the previous year.

The general condition after the earthquake was not favourable for English language papers in Tokyo to restart quickly. Even the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi English edition with such big backing as the Nichi-Nichi management felt some difficulty in restarting. The Japan Times and the Japan Advertiser keenly felt the effect of the disaster. The latter paper, entirely owned by American interests, had its building burned down in the quake-fire and was not able to restart until linotype machines arrived from America and the office building was rebuilt in January 1924. The Japan Gazette of Yokohama ceased to exist, as well as the Herald of Asia, of Mr. Motosada Zumoto,

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and the Far East, of Mr. Penlington. September 6..... 4

The greatest difficulties imaginable were experienced by every paper in gathering news or transmitting it to its sister papers. What papers suffered from most was the destruction of all telephone and telegraphic systems. So, certain papers, such as the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi and the Asahi, had to relay the telephone-news at Takasaki in sending it to their Osaka papers, as there was communication between Osaka and Takasaki and the Tokyo office could connect with its Takasaki branches somehow or other. The telephone connections between Tokyo and Osaka were restored on September 6 though still imperfect. The following statistics are available of the number of direct telephone communications between the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi and the Osaka Mainichi after they were restored.

7.....	19
8.....	18
9.....	14
10.....	10
11.....	15
12.....	35
13.....	25
14.....	26
15.....	40
16.....	53

In order to increase the communication facilities, the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi, as well as the Asahi, maintained the service of the Tokyo-Takasaki-Osaka plan and opened an aeroplane route and used railway trains to the utmost. Aeroplanes were first used in Japan as news carriers and the Nichi-Nichi afterwards established an aeroplane department. The earthquake gave a stimulus to the press in every respect and papers have since been earnest advocates for radio to be permitted by the Government to be installed in their news offices.