

CHAPTER XXV

NEWS-AGENCIES

The largest newsagencies now existing are the Dempo Tsushinsha and the Teikoku Tsushinsha. Their head offices are in Tokyo and they have many branches in various districts in Japan. Provincial papers, as well as papers in Tokyo, are, without exception, subscribers to either or both of these news services. The Dempo Tsushinsha is greater than the other and is well managed by President Mitsunaga and Director Uyeda. It has much of the colour of the Seiyukai. The Teikoku Tsushinsha is a concern owned by Mr. Tanomogi, a leader of the Kenseikai Party.

These news services are to be compared to Reuters in the United Kingdom and the Associated Press in the United States, so far as its position in the domestic press is concerned, although they cannot vie with the English or the American service in their scope.

The Dempo Tsushinsha was inaugurated in 1901 and after an amalgamation with the Nihon Kokoku Kaisha or Japan Advertising Agency achieved a greater expansion. It made strides in its development at the time of the Paris Peace Conference, to which a special correspondent was despatched, thus entering the stage of international news services. The next epoch of development came with the Washington Conference which was covered by Director Uyeda who was specially sent by the service.

However, the Dempo Tsushinsha and the Teikoku Tsushinsha are in no sense international news agencies, their object still being the supply of inland news to their subscribers. The creation of an international news service comparable to any large system in America, England or France, is

the desire generally entertained by all leading journalists. Japan now lacks means to report correctly and accurately the things happening here and is at the mercy of foreign correspondents in Tokyo. The most notable case which made public men in this country feel strongly the absence of such a powerful international service, was what was called the Imperial Hotel incident which occurred in June this year in connection with the anti-Japanese legislation in the United States. The event was nothing but a small affair that a reactionary league named the Taikoshu designed to warn certain sections of the people, who are in luxurious habits and blindly Americanized, thus helping the excess of imports in luxurious articles, in a way rather shocking to the ladies present but not so brutal as reported to America by foreign correspondents. The fact was that certain members of the league invited a sword dancer to dance in the dancing hall in the presence of Japanese and foreigners at table. Their object was to appeal to the Japanese and to impress upon them that the time was very grave and all the nation must be more serious than to spend time in dancing fox trots or jazz. However, the incident was terribly exaggerated by a certain Associated Press correspondent in Tokyo.

Such similar cases are now causing leading journalists to entertain the idea to form an international news service. A plan proposed is to organize a powerful service based on the same system as the Associated Press in the United States by the Press Association in the United Kingdom. The plan is easy to be realized if leading papers pay

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much more attention to the improvement of the press on co-operative lines. At present certain big papers waste much money in ruinous competition and if they saved money in that direction they could organize a powerful concern without difficulty. The excessively competitive spirit of Japanese journalism now sometimes causes special correspondents staying in New York or London to cable even a speech of Secretary Hughes or Premier MacDonald or a certain bill in Congress or Parliament bearing upon the interest of Japan, without comments or interpretation but in toto, for fear that other correspondents than a press association, may flash it to Tokyo or Osaka. All special correspondents in New York or London do the same thing, just wasting money from the sense of silly competition.

I know how the Associated Press came to be organized and its cause was the ridiculous competition among papers. G. Binney Dibblee says in his work, *The Newspaper*, "It was the excessively daring and competitive spirit of American journalism, which in the early forties brought about the first attempt at co-operation. At that time, years before an Atlantic cable was laid, competition for European news was limited to sending out fast sailing vessels to most incoming ships to take the latest news from them. Newspapers yied with one another as to who should sail out the farthest and catch the news soonest, until at last it came to sending fast vessels all the way over to Europe to get the news at its source. Such competition had a sufficiently ridiculous aspect to bring about its own collapse and somewhere about 1850 the New York papers organized a joint service, which, while primarily covering European news

grew slowly to cover general news and practically all but the internal news of each city, as subject for competition among newspapers. This was the germ of the Associated Press, which numbers about 700 papers as subscribers and regular members and is certainly the largest news gathering concern in the world."

The necessity of the organization of such a news agency as the Associated Press was emphasized in a speech by Mr. Motosada Zumoto, editor and proprietor of the *Herald of Asia* and the founder of the present *Japan Times*, at a dinner given by the *Kokusai Tsushinsha* early in 1924. The dinner was attended by the representatives of all Tokyo papers.

It is now believed that this plan will materialize some day when the co-operative spirit grows stronger among papers. Recently tendencies indicate that newspapers are drifting towards co-operation among themselves. Eight papers in Tokyo have come to discontinue the issue of evening editions on Sundays as in New York. They are the *Tokyo Asahi*, the *Tokyo Nichi-Nichi*, the *Hochi*, the *Chuwo*, the *Yamato*, the *Yorozu*, the *Jiji* and the *Kokumin*. This will save much expense and will save it for better salaries for employees. Such a thing would not have been done before.

Another co-operative sign is that Mr. Hikoichi Motoyama, President of the *Osaka Mainichi* and the *Tokyo Nichi-Nichi*, is approaching Mr. Ryuhei Murayama, President of the *Asahi*, for more co-operative relations between the two papers. If they avoid all ruinous competition, their profit will amount to a huge sum, and it can be devoted to the betterment of their own papers and to charity or cultural works, such as the *Osaka Mainichi* prize in the

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Imperial Academy. This sort of 'naval holiday' between the two greatest papers in Japan, if effected satisfactorily, will lead to a more concrete plan for the formation of an international news service, as these papers expend much money in foreign news gathering.

The Kokusai News Agency was organized in February 1914 with the support of Viscount Yeiichi Shibusawa and other prominent businessmen. It has a contract with Reuter's Telegraph Company as to the news supply and through this organ Reuter's telegrams and the Associated Press news are disseminated among newspapers in this country. However, this organ receives news from abroad only and does not send out any news from Japan. This is a useful concern, but its mission is one sided. The exchange of news helps an international understanding. Peoples' views on a certain international issue must be cabled and exchanged in that way from day to day, from minute to minute; then a clash by means of arms will wisely be avoided.

Mr. Yukichi Iwanaga, new head of the Kokusai News Agency, is ambitious to expand the concern and make it a perfectly independent national agency. Availing itself of the expiration of the contract with the Reuter's Telegraph Company, on January 31 this year, the Kokusai proposed certain modifications in the contract and is now running its business on a revised contract which is beneficial to its expansion in the future. The Kokusai gathers foreign information on its own responsibility through every channel possible and is distributing it as Kokusai telegrams. Even Reuter's despatches are put to the choice and study by the Kokusai staff and are sent to papers assuming the name of the Kokusai,

not Reuter's as before. The hope of Mr. Iwanaga that the Kokusai will have its own special correspondents at every important point in the world will eventually be realized.

The Toho Tsushin or Toho Service telegrams from China or Russia are printed in newspapers every day. This, with the Kokusai despatches distributed by the Kokusai News Agency and the United Press service contracted by the Dempo Tsushin, makes a feature in the press. The Toho Tsushin was organized during the war with Government backing and has since been the supplier of Japanese news to Chinese papers and of Chinese or Russian news to papers in Japan. The service especially excels in Russian news with an able correspondent in Moscow where he is accorded every facility by the Russian authorities. Mr. Gen-ichiro Date and Mr. Samata Fuwa are at the helm of the organization. The service holds a relationship with China in the news supply similar to that of the United Press of the United States with South American countries.

In Tokyo, the Associated Press, the United Press, the Chicago Tribune syndicate, the International Service and Reuters are represented by their special correspondents. Nobody can tell how far Japan is misinterpreted naturally by correspondents who usually stay here a few years and lack the knowledge of the language of the country where they are stationed for such an important mission of peace. This can be compared to the Japanese staff correspondents being sent abroad who never fail to possess a considerable amount of the knowledge of the language and constitution of a country where they will stay as such.

Besides the Dempo Tsushinsha and the Teikoku Tsushinsha, there are various special services, for

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instance for news of the Imperial Court, theatrical news, police news, music, literature, religion, etc. The Chiyoda Tsushin is special in the Imperial Court news.

The question remaining is how certain leading papers could not trust the Kokusai Tsushinsha in foreign intelligence. The Kokusai, then headed by J. R. Kennedy, killed its own news that the committee of the League of Nations adopted the

Japanese amendment to the race equality bill three hours after it was printed by almost all evening papers subscribing to the service in May 1919. Secretary Hughes' Naval plan announced at the opening of the Washington Conference, which was called a bombshell, was first reported by correspondents of the Osaka Mainichi and the Nichi-Nichi, while the Kokusai utterly failed in the matter.