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Russia will fish out both the clam and the bird and get a fisherman's profit. Thus we should not begin a war in Korea now.

6. In regard to the Asian situation, Britain is especially powerful, watching with a tiger's eye. Our foreign loans depend on Britain. If there is trouble and we become poor, Britain will surely interfere in our internal affairs on that pretext. Look at India... observe carefully the process by which India became a colony. We must build our industry, our exports, etc. It is our most urgent business.

7. The Japanese treaties with Europe and America are not equal. This is harmful for our independence. Therefore we must do our best to revise them, or England and France will send armies on the pretext of an insecure internal situation... The first thing is to revise the treaties, the Korean business after that.

Conclusion. As I have said above we must not hurry to begin war. Of course, we cannot overlook the arrogant attitude of Korea, but we have no clear reason to attack Korea. Now it is argued, send the envoy and depending on his reception open fire or not. But we may be sure from experience that his reception will be cold, so this automatically means open fire. Thus we must decide about sending an envoy before we send the envoy. If there is war we must have more than 160,000 soldiers, laborers, ships, etc. It will cost many times 10,000 yen. Even though we are victorious, the expense will be far beyond the profit. Also after the victory there will be uprisings over there. Even though we get all kinds of goods in Korea, they will amount to less than the expense. Also it is said that neither China nor Russia will intervene, but there is no proof. It is said that we cannot endure Korean arrogance, but this is an insufficient reason and it would be very bad to open fire without thinking of our security and our people's welfare. Therefore I argue...

POLITICAL EQUALITY AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The search for political equality was conducted by former samurai of Tosa (Kochi) and Hizen (Saga), who unlike their counterparts in Saisuma and Choshu, were not first among equals in the Meiji oligarchy. They started the people's rights movement, which was supported by rich farmers and former samurai who sided with the Tokugawa bakufu. As a means of gaining power for themselves, and taking it away from their former colleagues in the Meiji oligarchy, the Tosa-Hizen group advocated some form of representative government. Bagaki Taisho (1837-1891) of Tosa was among the signers of a memorial (Document 14) urging the establishment of a representative assembly. His "progressive stance" was enunciated in January 1874, shortly after his resignation from the government. Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) of Hizen, who intermittently was a member of the oligarchy and a progressive when ejected from power, wrote a well-reasoned opinion on the necessity of establishing representative government (Document 15). The document included a provision seeking the establishment of a British-type party government. Its content was hidden from his colleagues for three months, and precipitated another infighting within the oligarchy. In the end Tō Hirobumi outmaneuvered Okuma, forcing the latter again to resign from his post. This incident, known as the crisis of 1881, had a serious repercussion on the making of the constitution. Those liberal thinkers, who were detected by Tō Hirobumi, are represented by Nakae Chūmō in Document 16. Nakae studied in France and was deeply influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau’s liberalism and Auguste Comte’s positivism. His translation of Rousseau’s Contrat Social was widely read, and profoundly influenced the leaders of the popular rights movement.

14 Memorial on the Establishment of a Representative Assembly, 1874

As your subjects humbly reflect upon the quarter in which the governing power lies, we discover that it does not lie with the Throne above, nor with the people below, but with the officials alone. This is not to suggest that the officials are disrespectful of the Throne, yet the Throne is gradually losing its prestige. Nor do we suggest that the officials fail to protect people, yet the manifold decrees of the government appear in the morning only to be changed in the evening. The administration is conducted in an arbitrary manner, rewards and punishments are meted out with partiality, the channel of communication is blocked, and people have no way of stating their grievances. How can the country be governed peacefully in this manner? Even an infant knows that it is impossible. We fear, if the evil practices are not altered, they may bring about the ruin of the nation. Unable to restrain the promptings of our patriotic feelings, we have sought a way to rescue our nation from this danger, and have found that it consists in the promotion of public discussion of issues in the empire. The only means of promoting public discussion is to establish a representative assembly elected by the people. In this way a limit will be placed on the power of the officials, and those who are above and below will obtain peace and happiness. We therefore beg your indulgence in allowing us to express our opinion on this matter.

The people who have the duty to pay taxes to the government concurrently possess the rights to be informed of the affairs of the government and to approve or reject such governmental matters. This is the principle universally accepted in the world, which requires no further elaboration on our part. We therefore humbly request that the officials do not resist this great truth. Those who now oppose the establishment of a popularly-elected representative assembly assert: "Our
people lack knowledge and intelligence and have not yet reached the plateau of enlightenment. It is too early yet to have a popularly-elected representative assembly. If what they say is true, then the way to give our people knowledge and intelligence and to lead them expeditiously into the plateau of enlightenment is to establish a popularly-elected representative assembly. This is so because the way to give our people knowledge and intelligence and to lead them into the plateau of enlightenment, they must in the first place be made aware of the truths commonly accepted in the world and learn how to protect their rights. They must respect and value themselves, and be inspired by the spirit of sharing with the state in joys and tribulations. Such an end can only be accomplished by giving them a voice in the affairs of the state. The worst argument put forth by those who are opposed to the immediate establishment of a representative assembly is that such an assembly could be convened simply by gathering all the fools in the country. How arrogant is this argument! How contemptible are they toward the people? No doubt there are among officials men who surpass others in intelligence and skills, but how can they be certain if the society does not contain men who surpass them in learning and knowledge? Therefore, the people of our country cannot be treated with such contempt. If the officials continue to think that the people deserve such contempt, one must not forget that they themselves are part of the people. In such a case we must assume that the officials are equally lacking in learning and knowledge. Between the arbitrary decisions of a few officials and the opinion of the people arrived at through public discussion, where can one find wisdom or stupidity?

It is our understanding that under the pretense of being cautious, the present officials perpetuate the old evil customs and look upon those who advocate reforms as "rash progressives." They deny reforms with the two words "too early." We now wish to discuss this matter.

First of all, we do not comprehend the phrase "rash progressives." If by rash progression is meant initiation of measures carelessly, that fear can be alleviated by the careful deliberation of a popularly elected representative assembly. If by rash progression is meant the lack of harmony between different ministries, loss of perspectives with regard to priorities, and inability to coordinate works of different institutions, then again the establishment of a popularly-elected representative assembly will be desirable. This is so because the above-mentioned difficulties are caused by the want of a fixed law in this country, and by the capricious actions of the officials which can only be eliminated by a popularly-elected representative assembly. Progress is the most beautiful thing in the world, and everything must move forward. Therefore the officials cannot consider the word "progress" a "rash," but the word "rash" has no place in our concept of a popularly-elected representative assembly.

Another argument advanced by the officials is that the parliaments now existing in Europe and America were not formed in a day, but were brought to their present status by gradual progress. Therefore they cannot be transplanted to Japan overnight. However, gradual progress has not been the case with parliaments only. All branches of knowledge, technology and machinery are subject to the same gradual development. It took the foreigners to bring them to the present status after several hundred years, because no examples existed previously and those had to be discovered through experience or through invention. If we can select examples from these foreign inventions, we can be assured of our success. Must we delay the use of steam engines until we have discovered the principles of steam ourselves, or must we wait to construct our telegraph lines until we have discovered the principles of electricity ourselves? If we work on that assumption, our government will be able to do nothing at all.

We have presented our case for the immediate establishment of a popularly-elected representative assembly, and argued also that the degree of progress among the people of our country is sufficient for the establishment of such an assembly. We have done so, not to prevent the officials from speaking against its establishment. We are, however, actuated by the desire that through the establishment of such an assembly, public discussion in our country may be developed, the truths commonly accepted in the world and the rights of the people may be respected, and imperial de-corps prevailing in our country may be enhanced. In this way, the high and the low shall come closer to one another; the sovereign and his people shall learn to love one another; our imperial country shall be sustained and further developed; and happiness and peace shall be assured to all. We again seek your adoption of our recommendations.

15 Okuma Shigenobu’s Memorial on a National Deliberative Assembly, 1875* As your subject humbly reflects on the question of government, he discovers that when the root is secure the branches and leaves prosper and when a general outline is established detailed plans follow. In today’s politics, there must be a root and a general outline. In the council deliberations we agreed on the establishment of a national deliberative assembly, which was confirmed in the act of 1875. Therefore your subject wishes to follow through [his general policy outline] by submitting his opinion. There is no greater joy than in having them receive Your Majesty’s consideration and acceptance.

Your subject, Shigenobu, with trepidation submits the following recommendations:

I. That the date of the opening of a national deliberative assembly be publicly announced.

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