

[Japan Society-New York: Documents Project. 1890-1930, Foreign Relations)]

Document 40: “Great disturbances in Tokyo.” Illustrator’s view of Tokyo riots after the Russo-Japanese War, Sept. 6, 1905.

[Run the attached illustration of the Hibiya riots here. It is taken from the MIT Visualizing Cultures website; url:

http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/social_protest_japan/trg_gallery.html. The site lists it as being from the personal collection of the author, Andrew Gordon. We likely could secure permission from him to use it (I would be happy to ask if you need me to); alternatively, I could probably secure a copy from the Meiji Shimbun Zasshi Bunko at the University of Tokyo when I next go to Tokyo—though that would take longer. I’ve attached to the e-mail here a copy of the illustration I’d use; the url shows all of the pages of that special edition of *The Japanese Graphic*.]

Source: *Tokyo Sōjō Gahō* (Tokyo Riot Pictorial), special September 18, 1905 issue of *The Japanese Graphic*, p. 15.

Context.

Public demonstrations followed the Russo-Japanese War in early September 1905, just as they had the Sino-Japanese War a decade earlier (Document 39). This time they were in opposition to what citizens regarded as insufficient gains at the Portsmouth Conference that ended the war, and this time they turned violent. The war with Russia had dwarfed that with China, and while Japan won, the victory was less decisive—a fact that most citizens did not fully grasp because of the nationalistic tone of the press’s coverage during the war. Japan won a great deal at the negotiating table, including the Russian holdings in the Liaodong Peninsula of Manchuria that had been so controversial in the earlier war. But when Japan did not receive an indemnity, tens of thousands demonstrated for three days, burning scores of police stations and street cars, destroying pro-government newspaper offices, and causing 17 deaths. In the aftermath of the war, Japan moved aggressively onto the Asian continent, annexing Korea five years later and expanding its commercial and military activities in Manchuria.

Questions.

1. Describe what you see in this *Tokyo Riot Pictorial’s* depiction of the popular uproar. What kinds of citizens appear to be taking part? What are the signals that Japan has become a “modern” country?
2. Explain why people who have just won a war against a European power might be angry enough to take to the streets so violently.



Terms.

Portsmouth. The talks to end the Russo-Japanese War were held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the summer of 1905 because U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt agreed to host them and serve as chief negotiator.

Liaodong Peninsula. Manchuria was the name given to China's northeast region, and Manchuria's southern peninsula is called Liaodong. It was that peninsula that Japan was pressured by Russian to give back to China after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)—and that peninsula that Russia itself took over through coercive diplomatic means in the late 1890s.

Indemnity. Indemnities were the sums that losing nations typically were required to pay to the winners after 19th and early 20th century wars. They often financed the victor's war costs.