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Population: 10.6 Million (or so)

# Tokyo—An Ugly City But So Vital

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(Third of Six Parts)

Tokyo today is the largest, ugliest, dirtiest and most vital city in the world.

Last July its population was 10,400,000. By now it is more than 10,600,000. By the time you finish reading this story, several hundred new citizens will have arrived. Every square kilometer in Tokyo contains an average of 15,361 persons compared with 9,355 persons per square kilometer in New York.

Where they all live is one of the great mysteries of the Orient. There are no towering apartment blocks in Tokyo because the threat of earthquakes, until recently, limited building heights. Most Tokyo residents live in small rooms in small houses bordering narrow lanes in the shadow of modern office blocks and huge Western-style hotels.

Competition for living space has driven rents and land prices to astronomic levels. A dilapidated pre-war, semi-Western house in the suburbs, 45 minutes by taxi from the centre of the city, will sell with land for about \$90,000. The owner of a similar house in Montreal would be lucky to get \$15,000. An American Chamber of Commerce survey in Tokyo revealed that a small American family living in a two-bedroom, Western-style apartment will spend about \$1,000 a month for rent, heat, light, water and food.

Several months ago, two Canadian beatniks, bearded male and pony-tailed female, showed Tokyo one method of solving the housing crisis. They pitched a pup tent in the downtown park adjacent to the Imperial Palace. The Japanese, not as yet a nation of family campers, were fascinated. Hundreds visited the park to see the primitive Canadians in the flesh. Worried Japanese police telephoned officials at the Canadian Embassy to see if they couldn't do something. When the embassy declined to interfere, a policeman was stationed in the park at night to make certain that no one bothered the visitors. Eventually the beatniks struck their tent and moved off in search of new Bohemias.

Pup tents may reappear in the parks this fall when Tokyo plays host to the first Olympic Games ever held in Asia. A recent survey showed that the city contains 13,200 beds in Western-style hotels and 3,500 beds in superior Japanese inns but only 10,757 beds were classified as suitable for foreigners. During the games in October the city will contain, on an average day, about 30,000 visitors. People who failed to make hotel reservations more than a year ago will be housed in youth hostels, remodelled inns, private homes and aboard ships anchored in the ports of Tokyo and Yokohama. In an attempt to control the number of visitors, Olympic officials have announced that they will sell tickets to the games only to those foreigners who can prove that they have reserved accommodations.

Downtown Tokyo is one big traffic jam. There are 860,000 registered motor vehicles in Tokyo now and the number is increasing at the rate of 10,000 every month. Japanese officials have tried every conceivable method of traffic control but admit that "the results cannot readily be seen because the exploding population wipes out most of the progress achieved."

Congestion is so bad that vehicles in Tokyo move at an average speed of 16 miles an hour. In 1960 municipal authorities, with one eye on the Olympics, launched a five-year \$555,000,000 crash program of road construction. The city is building more than 40 miles of "Olympic highways" while a toll-charging expressway corporation is constructing more than 50 miles of superhighway, mainly ele-



Work progresses on Tokyo's tent-shaped National Gymnasium as Japan prepares for October Olympics.

SKETCHES BY McNALLY

vated. A new expressway from downtown Tokyo to Haneda Airport reduces travelling time for the distance from more than one hour to 14 minutes. A monorail system, using sleek German-designed cars that straddle concrete rails, runs beside the airport expressway—or will, if it is finished as scheduled before the Olympics open.

Even when the new Olympic routes are finished, only 11 per cent of the land in Tokyo will be occupied by roads compared with 25 per cent in Paris and 35 per cent in New York.

When Ed McNally and I were there, a 17-year-old Tokyo student tried to commit suicide by swallowing sleeping pills. Beside his bed police found a note. It said: "I have lost my fight against smoke and noise."

Tokyo has been flattened three times in its 350-year history, by an earthquake in 1923, by American bombers in 1944-45 and by the Olympics in 1964. Someone said that there were more than 1,000 construction projects under way in the city and it was easy to believe. Not far from the Imperial Palace, workmen were topping off the largest hotel in the Orient, 1,700 rooms. New expressways were opening up so rapidly that even taxi drivers had trouble locating them. I was driving one day through the narrow, tangled streets of a Tokyo suburb with an Australian who had lived there for 18 years when we suddenly found ourselves on a brand-new four-lane throughway.

"It's great," he enthused, "but I could swear there wasn't a sign of it last week."

During the day, many of Tokyo's main thoroughfares are surfaced with Canadian timber. At night, the logs disappear and thousands of workers move underground to work on subway extensions. The present 40-mile system will be increased by 10 per cent to help transport Olympic crowds.

Japan's first attempt to stage the Olympic Games was interrupted by Pearl Harbor. Influenced by European example, the Japanese decided that armed conquest was the only sport that commanded international respect. Since 1945 they have been anxious

to erase this image. No other nation today is more desperately peace-loving and the Olympics is regarded as a prime time to promote the new Japan throughout the world.

Among the Japanese, as among Canadians faced with a World's Fair in 1967, there has been some criticism and concern about the Olympics. The Games will cost Japan an estimated trillion yen, a lot of cash even when translated at a rate of 330-odd yen to the Canadian dollar. Expensive athletic facilities are being built at a time when Tokyo desperately needs new housing, sewage systems, garbage incinerators and other services taken for granted in North American cities. Projects are being pushed ahead so rapidly that 63 workers died and 1,900 were seriously injured on Olympic-related construction in 1962 and 1963. There have been 25 deaths so far this year.

Women's associations are

the same the world over. In Japan, the ladies have been trying to Victorianize certain hallowed institutions in an effort to protect delicate Western consciences during the Olympics. The latest target is Turkish baths.

Flying squads of Japanese matrons have raided a number of baths. Their horrified reports indicated that cleanliness in the Orient is not always next to godliness. Reluctantly the Tokyo Turkish Bath Owners Association have promised to clean up for the games.

Tokyo architecture is a shambles of conflicting styles—Western Commercial, Oriental Domestic and International Slum. The city has only one redeeming feature—the parkland surrounding the Imperial Palace. Elsewhere there are few parks and open squares. Narrow, pot-holed streets are cluttered with signs and filled with dust or mud, particularly in outlying suburbs.

North Americans who like clean antiseptic prairie cities will hate Tokyo. But for the real connoisseur of cities who revels in noise, confusion and vitality, Tokyo is a wonderland. It has some of the largest department stores in the world, with ferris wheels on the roofs for children. Around the corner from the department store will be a mile-long covered arcade where a man can open an appliance store by collecting half-a-dozen television sets and a few transistor radios in a stall barely larger than a few telephone booths. You can buy anything in the arcades—barbecued take-home chicken, raw fish, kimonos, jazz records, ivory chopsticks and tickets to non-stop strip shows.

Narrower streets jammed with coffee houses and bars lead away from the arcades. In one 40-yard street I counted no less than 35 bars. Pachinko parlors containing hundreds of the Oriental-style pinball machines are open at all hours of the day and night. On the first floor of a Tokyo parlor I lost 100 yen—about 30 cents—playing for 15 minutes on machine number 558. Seated next to me, a young Japanese mother played with intense concentration while her baby snoozed on her back among the folds of her kimono.

To open a restaurant in Tokyo, all you need is a handcart, an awning, chairs and a few square feet of sidewalk. In the next block there will be a three-storey night club featuring Chinese food, German and Japanese hostesses, Australian strippers and bills that rarely amount to less than \$100.

At night the slums and ramshackle buildings disappear and the city blazes with neon. It never sleeps. As thousands of bar hostesses show their last customers into taxis, the fish markets open and crowded commuter trains bring millions of workers into the city's heart.

Tokyo is the only modern city where Hogarth would have felt at home.



Flower arranging is a serious study in Japan.