

GOVERNING THE WORLD'S LARGEST CITY

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This paper briefly outlines Tokyo's development from a small feudal village into a self-governing metropolis and explores some of the current administrative problems resulting from overpopulation.

From Marsh to Metropolis

Tokyo was founded in 1457 by a feudal lord and poet named Ota. Tokyo (then called Edo) was selected as a castle site by Ota because of its location near the main land and water traffic routes. Today, the Imperial Palace stands where Ota built his castle and the Marunouchi business district covers what was then a large swamp area. Under Ota's progressive leadership, Edo became a thriving castle-town, but it gradually degenerated after his death in 1489.

It was not until after 1590, that Edo was rejuvenated and greatly expanded as the headquarters of Ieyasu Tokugawa, Japan's first Shogun (military ruler). Although the formal political capital and Imperial Court remained at Kyoto, Edo became the center of Japanese power and politics. In 1868, after the Tokugawa regime collapsed and the Emperor (Meiji) was restored to power, the national capital was moved to Edo and the area was renamed Tokyo (*East Capital*). Tokyo's population at this time was slightly over one million. A Prefecture of Tokyo was established to administer the area formerly controlled by Tokugawa magistrates and, in 1889, the City of Tokyo was created within the prefecture. The new city was given little power to govern itself and the functions of mayor were exercised by the provincial governor (an official appointed by the central government). Agitation by Tokyo citizens did result in the city getting its own mayor in 1898, but he was appointed by the city council and was given little authority to administer Tokyo's affairs.¹ This absence of local autonomy partially reflected the centralized political systems that Meiji Japan was developing in emulation of Prussia.

Further centralization of control was effected by the national government during World War II when the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was created to replace both the prefectural and city governments of Tokyo. The Metropolitan Government was placed under a governor appointed by and responsible to the central government. Most decisions on Tokyo's affairs thus continued to be made by national government officials until the introduction of local autonomy measures during the American Military Occupation (1945-51).

Local Autonomy After 1945

The legal position of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), like other local governmental units, was greatly strengthened by the postwar Constitution and the Local Autonomy Law (both of which came into force in 1947). Chapter VIII of the Constitution states: "Regulations concerning organization and operations of local public entities shall be fixed by law *in accordance with the principle of local autonomy.*" (underscoring added.) The Constitution requires popular election of assemblies, chief executives, and such other local officials as may be prescribed by law. Local governments are authorized to manage their own affairs, administration, and property and to enact their own regulations within the limits of higher laws. The Constitution also prohibits the national legislature (Diet) from passing special legislation applicable to only one locality unless a majority of the voters in [this locality give their consent to such laws.²

The Local Autonomy Law states that prefectural boundaries or names may be altered only by the Diet, but such changes can be effected for the subordinate units of a prefecture by the governor, if proposed by resolution of the prefectural assembly. Local legislative bodies are given increased powers to place them on a more equal footing with the local chief executive. The Autonomy Law also provides such instruments for popular control as the recall and initiative but these have seldom been used.

In spite of the increased authority given to local governments, they appear to have been reluctant to assume responsibility for functions previously managed by the central government. This reluctance was partially due to the lack of local funds, since the Local Autonomy Law did not make adequate provisions for financing the new functions which it authorized. In 1949, the Occupation officials brought a special commission (Shoup Commission) to Japan to study economic

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problems including the financing of local government. The Commission's recommendations resulted in additional taxing powers for local bodies and the establishment of "equalization grants" by the national government to aid some of the poorer localities. These changes, plus the general economic upswing that was stimulated during the Korean War have effected some improvement in local finances. Tokyo's own revenues have thus increased significantly in recent years since a relatively large number of economic enterprises are located in the capital city.

While the degree of initiative taken by the Japanese to handle their own affairs has been less than hoped for by many observers, the local autonomy situation is much better than it was before 1945. In the words of one Tokyo official, "Local administration in post-war days.....has been considerably decentralized and the form of supervision by the Central Government has changed from administrative control to non-authoritative guidance, assistance, and advice. This means that the autonomy of local public bodies is more highly respected and the status of local government administration has been raised."³

Organization of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG)

Subordinate Units of the TMG

Japan is divided into 42 regular prefectures (*ken*), two urban prefectures (*fu*: Osaka and Kyoto), one metropolis (*to*: Tokyo), and one special district (*do*: Hokkaido). The Metropolis of Tokyo includes 23 special wards (*ku*), three counties (*gun*), 10 cities (*shi*), 22 towns (*machi*), and 10 villages (*mura* or *son*).⁴

The special wards are peculiar to Tokyo and have existed with varying degrees of local autonomy since 1878 (before the City of Tokyo itself was created). The 1947 Autonomy Law gave the wards essentially the same powers as cities and when the TMG issued bylaws restricting some of this authority, a battle ensued between the wards and the Metropolitan Government. The TMG won its case and the Autonomy Law was amended to indicate that the wards were subordinate to the Metropolitan Government and subject to its bylaws. The wards also lost their elected chief who was henceforth to be appointed by the ward council with the consent of the Metropolitan Governor. Thus, generally speaking, the TMG now exercises municipal powers over the special wards and prefectural powers over its cities, towns, and villages.⁵

The Metropolitan Assembly

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government consists of the Assembly, the Governor and several quasi-independent commissions. The Assembly constitutes the legislative branch and consists of 120 members elected for four-year terms from 36 Tokyo constituencies (23 urban and 13 rural). From one to eight Assemblymen are elected from each constituency according to the size of its population. Of the 118 members elected in 1959, 71 belonged to the Liberal Democratic Party (conservative), 31 to the Socialist Party, 11 to the Democratic Socialist Party, two to the Communist Party, and three were independents.⁶

The Assembly elects a President and Vice President from its membership to represent and manage it. Reporting to the President is an Assembly Secretariat with about 100 employees. The Assembly is normally convened by the Governor for four regular sessions each year. Except for the one-month budget session, these last about seven days. The Governor is also required to call an extra-ordinary meeting when more than 30 Assemblymen propose it. The Assembly carries out most of its work through eight standing committees whose activities generally correspond to those of the Governor's administrative bureaus: (1) General Affairs, Public Relations, and External Affairs, (2) Finance and Taxation, (3) Welfare and Education, (4) Housing and Labor, (5) Health, Economy, and Public Cleaning, (6) Construction, Port, and Harbour, (7) Transportation and Waterworks, and (8) Police and Fire.⁷

The Assembly is responsible for such functions as: (1) enacting, repealing, and amending ordinances, (2) approving the annual budget and financial report, (3) approving the flotation of bonds (within limits prescribed by the national government), (4) approving the Governor's appointment of three Vice Governors, Chief Accountant, and members of certain semi-independent commissions, and (5) inspecting or investigating the performance of administrative personnel in the TMG or the local government units. (The Assembly can summon officials, including the Governor, to answer questions on matters under discussion in the Assembly or its committees.)⁸

The Governor

Like the Assemblymen, the Governor is elected for four years by Metropolitan voters. The present governor, Dr. Ryutaro Azuma, was elected as a

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*360 Yen equal US\$1.00. page 15

Liberal Democrat.

The Governor is the chief executive of the TMG and is thus responsible for all administrative operations. The Governor also acts as official representative of the Metropolis. He is assisted by three appointed Vice Governors, a Chief Accounting Officer, and 21 department heads. In 1961, the TMG had approximately 162,000 employees, (including teachers) and its budgets totaled 343 billion Yen.*⁹

Both the Governor and Assemblymen can introduce legislative proposals into the Assembly, but only the Governor can initiate budget bills. The Governor may veto decisions of the Assembly, but if the latter again passes the measure (and the conflict cannot be resolved through further negotiation), the Governor must implement the measure, resign, or dissolve the Assembly.

The Governor is also responsible for certain functions assigned to the TMG by the National Government, particularly in the area of public works. In addition, there are several quasi-administrative commissions which are under the nominal control of the Governor. These semi-independent bodies are appointed by the Assembly or by the Governor with the Assembly's approval. There are currently commissions for: Electoral Management, Inspection and Audit, Education, Public Safety, Civil Service, and Local Labor Affairs.

Recent Population Growth

Largely as a result of American air-raids, Tokyo's population dropped from 7.4 million in 1942 to 3.1 million in 1945. As had been the case in the 1923 earthquake, marked development of suburban districts around Tokyo took place as people moved to escape the center of destruction¹⁰. When the war ended, Tokyo's population figures again shot upward as former residents returned and as many expatriates from former overseas colonies settled in the capital city. After 1950, Tokyo's relative prosperity began to attract an increasing number of immigrants from the less fortunate prefectures. At present, about 70% of the annual population increase of 300,000 persons results from such migration. That Tokyo residents are comparatively prosperous is supported by the fact that the average per capita income for Tokyo is 152,628 Yen while the national average is only 83,873 Yen. ¹¹ In early 1962, Tokyo's population passed the ten million mark, clearly confirming it as the world's most populated city. While Tokyo

officials are proud of this distinction, they also readily admit that most of their administrative headaches stem from overpopulation. The Tokyo Metropolitan region covers 2,023 square kilometers of which only 50% is classified as "urban" area. Another 35% is regarded as "rural" while the remaining 15% consists primarily of islands located to the south of Tokyo Bay. About 90% of the total population is crowded into the 10 cities and 23 special wards which compose the urban area. Thus, there are over nine million people living on slightly more than 1,000 square kilometers of land. Population pressure is greatest in the special wards, where there is an average of 14,000 persons per square kilometer. Density drops to about 1,800 persons per square kilometer in the 10 cities and averages out to 4,700 for the total Metropolitan Government area.¹²

In addition to being the political center of Japan, Tokyo is also a major financial and education center. The Tokyo Metropolitan Area has 155 colleges or junior colleges, 1,540 primary or high schools, 52,000 manufacturing plants, and 145,000 retail shops. The concentration of so many activities and people upon such a limited land area has created a host of administrative problems for Metropolitan officials.

Selected Metropolitan Problems

The rapidly increasing population in Tokyo has produced or aggravated such problems as: (1) uncontrolled land use and development, (2) shortage of housing, parks and open spaces, (3) air and water pollution, and (4) insufficient public roads and transportation. Each of these illustrative problems and current programs for their solution or mitigation will be briefly outlined below.

Uncontrolled Land Use and Development:

Many of Tokyo's present problems could have been obviated by the development of an orderly plan for reconstruction of the city at the end of World War II. Unfortunately, responsible American and Japanese officials were too preoccupied with national political and economic problems to devote much time to city planning and reconstruction in Tokyo. The redevelopment of the city has thus been rather haphazard with an unhealthy mixture of industrial, commercial, and residential construction in many areas. There has also been such a demand for building sites that land prices in Tokyo have reportedly increased 1,000 times since prewar days!¹³ Prices have been particularly high in the central

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part of Tokyo, so that many residences and business firms have been built in the fringe areas, sometimes along any small road that existed. This has often meant that areas have been built up faster than adequate public utilities and services could be provided.

To cope with this and related problems of metropolitan growth, the National Diet passed the National Capital Region Development Law in 1956. This permitted the establishment of a comprehensive ten-year regional development plan for the area contained within a radius of 100 kilometers from Tokyo station. This area includes the Metropolis of Tokyo and seven neighboring prefectures (or segments thereof). The *core* (or "built-up" area) of the planning region includes the land within a radius of 15 kilometers of the Tokyo Railroad Station. A 10-kilometer-wide ring encircling the core is designed as the *green belt*. The area outside the green belt up to the limits of the regional boundaries is designated as the *peripheral* area. Objectives of the plan include the restricting of construction of large factories or schools within the core and green belt areas and the preservation or expansion of parks and scenic spots wherever possible. Designated satellite towns in the peripheral area are also being redeveloped to absorb some of the population and industry which would otherwise flow into the center of Tokyo. Cities or towns which already had their own development plans were required to integrate these with the overall regional plan.

A 5-member National Capital Region Development Commission was established as an organ of the Prime Minister's Office to develop the plan. To assist the Commission, an advisory council was set up with 42 members chosen from the Diet, the government ministries, prefectural governors, prefectural assemblies, and from men of "learning and experience." The TMG also has a staff of about 100 employees to aid the Commission. The national government also provides subsidies and technical assistance to facilitate implementation of the plan.¹⁴

Shortage of Housing, Parks, and Open Spaces:

Since World War II, approximately one million houses have been constructed, but three-fourths of these were to replace houses destroyed during the war. Due to the high land prices, few persons can afford to purchase land and build their own homes. They thus try to buy or rent housing built by public agencies since this is reasonably priced, but there is much competition for space

that becomes available. For each of the 7,000 to 10,000 houses and apartments now being built by the Tokyo Metropolitan Housing Bureau, there are 20-40 qualified applicants. (To apply one must be in the salary range prescribed for the particular type of unit and have lived in Tokyo for more than three years.) The final selection is usually by lottery. Other housing is being constructed by the Metropolitan Housing Corporation, the Japan Housing Corporation, the larger railroad companies, and other private firms or individuals. However, at the present rate of construction, it will take many years for the housing supply to catch up with the current estimated need of 360,000 units.

Recent relaxation of the restrictions placed on building heights as a result of the 1923 earthquake will permit the construction of larger housing units. If adequate controls are not imposed, this may only alleviate one problem (housing) and aggravate others by increasing the population density.

As stated above, open areas for parks, gardens, etc. are provided for in the regional development plan, but the purchase and conversion of other types of property for these is extremely expensive. One approach being employed under the 1961 Law of Urban Renewal for Extension of Public Facilities, is to purchase right-of-ways for roads and open spaces and for new building sites. Taller multiple-dwelling units are then constructed in order to relocate some of the businesses or residences that were removed. The TMG's selling point is that the citizens will gain by being able to remain in the same area but with more attractive surroundings.¹⁵

Air and Water Pollution:

Another problem confronting Tokyo is pollution of the air and water. These two health problems are sometimes closely related since the 3.2 million tons of industrial and domestic wastes dumped in Tokyo's Sumida River each day generate poisonous and/or malodorous gases which contaminate the air. More effective control of industrial wastes has been delayed because new standards have still not been completely worked out to implement the revised pollution laws passed in late 1958. Part of the air pollution is attributed to automobile exhaust fumes and smoke from industrial plants. While air contamination has not reached the danger point for human health, it has killed off plant life in some areas. To clean out the Sumida River, the TMG periodically creates artificial floods which flush the wastes out into Tokyo Bay. Additional sewerage

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systems are being constructed to reduce the amount of waste which goes into the river, but it will take considerable time before these can be completed.

Insufficient Public Roads and Transportation:

Any visitor to Tokyo who has tried to ride a train or taxi during rush hour is usually amazed at the literal mass of commuters which seems to occupy every available inch of space. It is estimated, for example, that every morning between 7 and 9 a.m., over 4,000,000 people are trying to catch a train somewhere in Tokyo. The six comparatively efficient railway companies serving Tokyo have been unable to cope with the increasing number of commuters, in spite of increasing the number of cars per train (to six) and the number of trains per hour (to 25) during the rush hour. Trains are loaded from 200 to 300% of normal capacity during peak hours. Additional tracks are being built to approximately double the present capacity, but these will require 5 or 6 years to complete. By that time, Tokyo's population may have increased by another 1.5 million. To achieve better coordination of the existing facilities, the Metropolitan Transportation Research Society recommended in 1958 that all railways be brought under one authority. No action has yet been reported on the Society's suggestion.

Tokyo also has some of the world's worst automobile traffic jams. Tokyo has approximately 730,000 automobiles running on road space amounting to only 10% of the city area. (The percentage is about 35 for New York and 23 for London.) In addition, there are approximately 1.5 million motorbikes and 10,000 trucks and buses. In spite of the fact that traffic usually moves slowly (particularly during rushhours), Tokyo had the world's highest number of traffic deaths in 1961 (1,179 persons). There were also 68,392 persons injured in the 150,000 traffic accidents reported to the Metropolitan Police.¹⁶

To provide more road space, the Metropolitan Government is building eight new four-lane highways linking central Tokyo with the suburban areas, plus one loop road. Two roads are about half finished, but progress is slowing down due to the problems involved in purchasing right-of-ways. Officials told the writer (in late 1960) that they hoped to have most of the new 71-kilometer express system completed for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, but this now appears improbable. The TMG is trying to build roads over canals and river beds wherever possible since the cost is about one-sixth of that for construction over normal

land sites.

To facilitate the flow of traffic, restrictions have been placed on the size of vehicles permitted in the down-town area (enforcement of this is being stiffly resisted by trucking and tourist-bus firms) and on overnight parking in the streets (many Tokyoites have purchased-cars without having space or garages in which to park them). Solution of these and other traffic problems will require closer cooperation between the Ministry of Transportation and the Metropolitan Government than has existed in the past. The Ministry actually has jurisdiction over all traffic media (private and public) not operated by the TMG itself. A joint central traffic agency has been proposed for better coordination of traffic administration but no action has been taken to date.¹⁷

Closing Remarks

This cursory review of Tokyo's historical development and current metropolitan problems has attempted to illustrate one city's response to urban growth. Tokyo's administrative problems are not unique, although she is experiencing them on a grander scale than most of the world's cities. Her experiences should be particularly studied by other Asian countries who are facing the same types of problems as increased industrialization brings more people from rural areas into the urban centers. While the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has made progress in coping with the problems of overpopulation, the battle is a continuing one and may require more drastic approaches than have been employed thus far. For example, the supply of land and water is now estimated to be adequate for only eight million people, so that sub-standard housing and other facilities will continue to be the norm for several years. To really attack the problem of excessive population concentration in Tokyo, more attention should perhaps be paid to the suggestions for decentralizing some of the national government and higher education functions from Tokyo to other areas. These are the two activities that could probably be shifted with the least harmful effects. While Japan does not have the available space for a new national capital (like Brasila), she does have well-developed transportation and communications systems that would permit a decentralized national administration. Perhaps when the results of the first National Capital Region Development Plan are evaluated in 1966, the necessity for more extreme measures may be considered.

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1. Tokyo Metropolitan Government, *Highlights of Tokyo Government*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 1960), pp. 2-3
2. An English version of the 1947 Constitution appears as an appendix in Linebarger, Paul M., *et al*, *Far Eastern Governments and Politics*, 2nd Edition, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956)
3. Haraguchi, Ichiji. *Outline of the Metropolis of Tokyo*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 1960), pp. 29-30.
4. Quigley, H. S. and Turner, J. E., *The New Japan: Government and Politics*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 377-378.
5. Tokyo Metropolitan Government. *An Administrative Perspective of Tokyo*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 1959) p. 7.
6. *Ibid.* p. 13.
7. Brady, J. R., *Selected Aspects of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government* (A special report prepared for the Public Administration Division, International Cooperation Administration, May 1961), pp. 10-11
8. *Ibid.*
9. Tokyo Metropolitan Government, *Metropolitan Administration in Tokyo* (A special report prepared for the 1961 Seminar of the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration), pp. 10-11. This report is published in the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*. Vol, 11, No. 4, July 1962, p. 8.
10. The 1923 earthquake and accompanying conflagration destroyed over half of the city and claimed about 1,500,000 victims. Fifty-seven square miles of the city were destroyed in World War II. According to a 1947 report of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, 14,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Tokyo during 1944-45, killing about 93,000 persons, wounding 73,000 others, and destroying 728,000 buildings. (See *Far Eastern Governments and Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 403.) Tokyo officials now estimate that losses were greater than those reported by the U. S. survey. (See *Metropolitan Administration in Tokyo*, *op. cit.*, p.1.)
11. Hani, Gyo and Osaki, Naotada. "The City in Crisis" (a series of special articles), *The Japan Times*, March 1962. These excellent articles provided much of the statistical data used in this paper to describe current metropolitan problems in Tokyo.
12. *Tokyo Municipal News*, Vol. 11, No. 4, July 1961, p. 8. These density calculations are based on early 1961 population figures, so the density rate is even greater at the present time.
13. "City in Crisis" *op. cit.*
14. The 1956 Planning law actually replaced the Capital City Construction Law enacted in 1950. Under the latter legislation, an emergency five-year plan was passed in 1952 for reconstruction of the special ward area of Tokyo. Little progress was made due to a lack of funds. (See *City Planning in Tokyo*, Tokyo City Planning Council, July 1961.) The stress on redevelopment of satellite towns just outside the "green belt" areas was reinforced by the passage in 1953 of the Law of Redevelopment of Urbanized Areas in the National Capital Region. The limitation of construction of large factories and schools in central Tokyo is covered by the 1959 Law Restricting Industrial and Educational Establishments in the Built-Up Area Within the National

Capital Region. (*An Administrative Perspective of Tokyo, op. cit.*) pp. 14-15.

15. *Tokyo Municipal News, op. cit.*, p. 1.

16. "City in Crisis" *op. cit.*

17. *Ibid.*