

Oriental coming- of-age

Japan's universities
are suffering from
growing pains

by Stuart Griffin
(Science News correspondent in Japan)



Students in a January demonstration at Tokyo University's Yasuda Hall.

There will be no freshman class at Tokyo University next year; the university, for the first time in its 90-year history and in the wake of the riots that tore Japanese universities apart this winter, has suspended its spring entrance examinations.

This may be the most dramatic immediate consequence of the revolution sweeping Japanese higher education; it is by no means the most significant.

Japanese education has reached a coming-of-age point, brought on by the continued vigor and growth of the country's economy that has put university within the reach of many more young Japanese than can be handled on present campuses.

The higher education system was designed to be a bulwark for oligarchy in Japan; its problem is that the design has not changed with the times.

A university degree, says a study by the Education Problems Committee of the Keizai Doyukai, the Organization for the Economic Development of Japan, is regarded as nothing more than a necessary stepping-stone to a good position in industry. With facilities limited, only an elite fraction can enter the promised land, gain degrees and join the oligarchy. In a country where the economy is booming but overall annual per capita income is still low (in 1967 it was \$916) such a bottleneck, and such a pattern for higher education, is becoming intolerable.

Aggravating the situation is the lack of university facilities available to the student once he has been accepted. Japan ranks among the foremost na-

tions in per-student expenditures in primary and middle school, but lags far behind at the university level. And colleges all too often tend to duplicate much of what students had already learned at middle school levels.

Another problem is the relation between research and education. Japan's system of higher education, which was thoroughly overhauled in the years following World War II, is still geared to the research-center concept, and is ill-equipped to handle mass-education requirements. New universities and colleges, many of them private, though they are developing to meet the demand, continue to hew to the same line. With enrollments doubling and tripling, organizations that were never designed to give large numbers of students meaningful education are deteriorating under the load.

Out of these conditions, as much as from the tensions of international politics and the question of Japan's role in the Cold War, came the disastrous disorders of the past year.

During 1968, 117 campuses were disrupted, half a dozen university presidents were forced to resign, and 6,600 students were arrested, more than 4,000 of them in Tokyo.

In Japan, as elsewhere, student violence is made up of two parts radical politics and one part dissatisfaction with local education. Radical students in Japan look on disorders brewing all over the country now as well as those that racked the campuses last year as a warm-up for 1970, when the U.S.-Japan security treaty is up for review.

But local issues have brought widespread support to the revolt from students who were not overly involved in the political question.

Hardest hit was famed Tokyo University, where the first incidents began.

A strike by medical students, over new regulations restricting their rights to practice as interns, led to punishments that turned out the rest of the student body. The conflict led to the resignation of university President Kazuo Okochi, the seven-month occupation of campus facilities by student rebels, and finally in early 1969 an agonizing invasion by police that ousted striking students from 24 buildings including the campus's neogothic Yasuda Tower.

The campus was a shambles; the suspension of entrance examinations followed. Other campus upsets had other causes. Students at Nihon University in Tokyo complained that lack of dorm space on campus compelled them to seek costly lodgings off-campus, that dining-room seats were often not available, that toilet, bathing, even drinking-water facilities, were overcrowded, that they could never meet with professors, that student employment offices offered few jobs, and those only in the low-paying brackets.

Then the Tokyo Tax Bureau found, and announced, that the university had handed out a total of 180 million yen (\$500,000) in tax-free, off-the-books salaries to a handful of already highly paid administrators, professors and officials, and that another 200 million yen (\$555,555) was unaccounted for in the university's account books.



Prof. Iwao Moriyama argues for move to Science City.



Tokyo University medic Dr. Masahiro Io makes a point.

At Nara Prefectural Medical University, students protested the illegal admission of students rich enough to bribe their way into classrooms without taking entrance examinations.

The Tokyo University of Education student body demonstrated against the transfer of the campus from downtown Tokyo to the distant Science City (SN: 3/16/68, p. 259), which is slowly evolving three hours from Tokyo near Mt. Tsukuba. They feared job opportunities for earning their way would not be sufficient. Komazawa University of Science students struck because 11 students were expelled for over-zealous demands for better school housing.

Out of the demonstrations, strikes and boycotts came a number of short-term gains. Students gained greater participation in university administration, more say about picking teachers and curriculum, promises of better housing and laboratory facilities and a voice not only in school regulations but on finances as well.

But the violence has had its casualties. Some 17,500 seniors will be unable to graduate this spring; most students face months of additional schooling to compensate for the hours of classroom absence, time lost during and because of the disorders, and a harshly negative public and parliamentary reaction to the disorders may well cut back on the money needed to make corrections.

The unpopularity of the university disturbances showed up in a Mainichi newspaper poll, in which 90 percent of those interviewed opposed student vio-

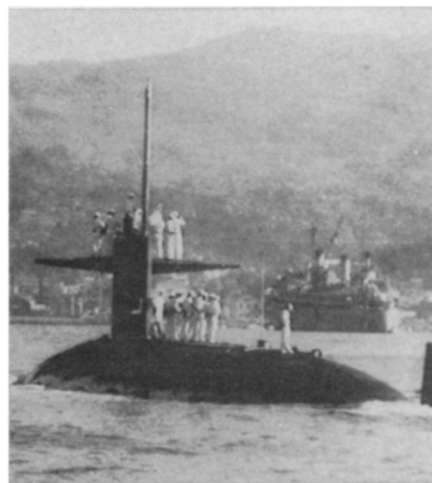
lence, with only 5 percent saying they could "understand the students' thoughts and deeds."

The Government party, under right-wing Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, is now moving to overhaul the state-run universities and to encourage similar action in private schools, which today account for 73 percent of all Japanese colleges and universities.

But the action is moving in typically roundabout fashion. Japanese have a historic fondness for forming committees of investigation, often of a quasi-governmental nature, after events have taken place; in the wake of the 1968 turmoil many have been named. Most significant is probably the Campus Issue Advisory Organ, comprising eight private intellectuals who are concerned with Tokyo University and its problems alone. The committee, chaired by Dr. Kyubei Mishimatsu, former Government minister of state, will report to Prime Minister Sato, himself a graduate of the university. It is still too early to guess what conclusions the committee will reach.

Meanwhile, the disputes simmer. Conflicts still exist over 20 different issues on more than 60 campuses, 36 of them national, 22 private, and two municipal.

Beyond that lies the explosive issue of U.S. bases that is due to come up in 1970. By that time, says Prime Minister Sato, the local irritations may have become big enough to cause real trouble on a nationwide scale, given the underlying issues and the rallying point of the Mutual Security Treaty.



U.S. sub in Sasebo: Crisis next year.



Left vs. Far Left: Interstudent furor.