

Interview with Tom Murphy

The Revolution Japanese Style

by Brian Steeves

Tom Murphy is President of the Canadian Student Christian Movement. In his official capacity he spent two months in Japan during the past summer. His original intention was to visit and study in Communist China but he was barred entry by that nation.

He elected to stay in Japan and while there, he became deeply involved with the student activist movements. He participated in and spoke at a number of student demonstrations, visited student occupied universities, attended underground student meetings and talked with a number of officials high in the Japanese government. His insights into the Japanese student issues and their methods of action are revealing, informed and at times a little shocking.

Tom is no stranger to student activism and the reprimands of the law. While enrolled at UNB last year, he wrote a column entitled Spades Down, for the Brunswickan. One of his articles criticized the New Brunswick courts and their treatment of Norman Strax. For this article, John Oliver, the Editor of the Brunswickan and Tom Murphy were forced to appear before the supreme court. Both were fined but Tom was given an extra sentence of a week in jail. This jail sentence was one reason for his acceptance by the Japanese radicals.

The Toronto Star ran an article last summer stating that 450,000 poorly armed but dedicated students faced 90,000 well armed police. The situation, according to Murphy, still exists in Japan and the student police battles of the past will be mere in intensity compared to 1970.

Prime Minister Sato, the arch enemy of the radicals was re-elected on December 27, with a resounding majority. The students managed to overthrow the government in 1960 but this time Sato got a large mandate. The leading plank in his campaign platform was a promise to crack down hard on student disorders. In a country where brutal clashes between authority and students are common, the future of the Japanese students is bleak.

Murphy sees the radicals problems on two levels, those directly related to university and social problems of the country. There are one thousand universities in Japan, a country of one hundred million people. Overcrowded conditions there make our problems of overcrowding small in comparison. "Four Japanese students share a room the size of a single room in

Harrison House. They study, eat, and supposedly relax in these rooms, and to sleep they lie on straw pallets six feet long and two feet wide." The cost of university is so prohibitive and salaries of professors so low, that they both must "moonlight" to make ends meet. Often the professors don't make it to lectures.

The entrance examinations are extremely competitive and among the most difficult in the world.

Murphy says one of the main complaints of the students is the tremendous American presence in Japan. The Americans officially occupied Japan until 1953. In 1960 the Japanese signed the American Security Treaty. The Japanese didn't have and still don't have an army. The Americans convinced the Japanese that a defense against North Korea and particularly China was necessary. As a result there are three hundred American military bases in Japan today. The treaty also gave the US an amazing power, first priority on all Japanese facilities.

The largest American base is on the island of Okinawa. Japanese citizens need passports to visit the Island, which is virtually part of Japan. Pressure from all factions, have forced the Japanese government to ask for the Island back. The US has agreed to withdraw and leave it for the Japanese by 1972, but it is doubtful that this is fast enough to placate the radicals. This and other bases are home for the US nuclear submarines, and the whole of Japan virtually bristles with nuclear armaments. Quote Murphy, "The students see this as making Japan a base for American military enterprises in the east, and in the process making Japan a top priority target."

Pollution in Japan is unbelievable. Crowded housing condition (six to a room) and completely inadequate sewage facilities (20% of residences in Japan have indoor plumbing) create "a sickening morass out of the rivers and canals." Murphy commented that he crossed a canal in Tokyo and became nauseous before he started. "Air" pollution is a major problem. "The skies over Toronto are crystal clear in comparison with Tokyo."

The student when he graduates gets little reward for his efforts. The average graduate gets the equivalent of \$120 Canadian dollars of buying power monthly. Living costs are high and the average man spends at least one-half his monthly salary on rent.

Five major families have a stranglehold on the economy and all the money stays with

them. The "corporate elite" is small and well entrenched.

The students do have a cause for upset. Murphy stated that the radicals have a fantastic dedication to their cause, it is summed up in one sentence, "what do we have to lose, only our lives."

The radicals play for keeps and most of the students are behind them. One hundred and forty of Japans universities have been on strike from six months to two years. "When they go on strike they stay on strike until their demands are met." That can mean forever and the students will stick it out until they are crushed. Kyoto University with a student population of 100,000 has been on strike for two years.

The Radical groups are classed in two major sections: the communist party supporters and the anti-communist supporters. Ten smaller factions comprise the former and thirty the latter. The communist supporters are actually the more conservative of the two. The most highly militant and popular group are the anti-communists. This group is non-sectarian and anarchistic in nature. Murphy sees this factionalism as the greatest problem for the student movement. They fight violently with each other and no all encompassing coalition exists on a national scale.

However each faction is tightly organized in a structure similar to the Black Panthers. Each has a leader, and ministries, ranging from information to education and finance.

The occupied universities average about one demonstration per week. From ten to twelve thousand people turn out for these demonstrations.

Demonstrations on a larger scale are held in public parks or important city streets.

Murphy described a typical rally, at which he spoke, in Tokyo. "Roughly 150,000 students turned out to demonstrate. Each faction wore labelled hard hats and carried large sticks. The leaders in turn rose to speak as the crowd assembled and each one shouted slogans and chants with the crowd joining in. As each speaker became hoarse he was replaced by another until the crowd had been worked to a frenzy. The underground committees which organized the demonstration then led the students into the streets. They linked arms six abreast and started to snake dance into the street entrance. The police by now had lined both sides of the street and blocked one end with about thirty armoured trucks. The police wore riot

helmets and masks, had pistols, tear gas, long billy clubs and heavy textile uniforms.

The snake dance proceeded in its undulating fashion up the street. "Suddenly twenty of the police trucks roared down the street one after the other." This broke up the snake line but as the trucks reached the end of the street and prepared to turn about, the students quickly filled the street to capacity. At this point, the police waded into them with their clubs and tear gas. Eventually the demonstration was broken up. Casualties? Several hundred injuries and two students dead. It was a common occurrence."

Tom foresees the police using machine guns on these demonstrations as was the case in Mexico last year.

The occupation of a university is different. The students make underground preparations for months in advance. They stockpile food and crude weapons in anticipation of the strike. Finally a huge rally is scheduled whereupon most of the student population turns out. The rally lasts from early in the morning until late in the evening with the usual slogans and chants. At the close of the rally they seal off the university.

Most of the Japanese universities are built in the shape of a quadruple. Thusly, by barricading the entrances they can effectually seal off the campus.

Having decided to strike, the students have little more than one-half an hour to put up their barricades before the police arrive. The barricades are formed from desks and chairs ripped from the floors of the buildings. They are usually fifty feet high and one hundred feet deep, with a maze like route through them for entry and exist.

The students then set up a shift pattern of two to three hundred occupying the university and once a week they open the barricades for supplies but quickly close them again to keep out police.

During the strike period, free schools are set up and the libraries and labs are packed all year long. There are no degrees but the students continue to learn just the same. As with

Kyoto university, they usually stay on strike until their demands are met. In one striking university which Murphy visited, 135,000 out of 140,000 students voted to strike. Virtually the whole student body vote for them.

This is the do or die year for the radical students. Osaka, on June fifteenth will be the scene of a huge demonstration. This will commemorate the death of the first student radical killed by the police in 1960.

Tom spoke of one group he met who had been manufacturing bombs for six months; the intention to blow up Osaka Seventy. The students see Osaka Seventy as a facade the government is using to cover unrest in the country. They are intent on destroying the facade. Whether they succeed or not is another matter.

The government plans to increase the number of riot police by 25,000 to a total of 110,000. The self defence force will be increased by 7,000 to 50,000. These two will be grouped with the traffic force, bringing the total to 220,000 police for the quelling of riots. The American army hasn't been used yet but it may if conditions become desperate enough.

The Japanese government is not willing to accept any of the student demands. All government efforts are geared to repressing the students. Murphy related two incidents which exemplify this attitude.

One of the huge subway stations in Tokyo used to be the weekly rallying place of over 15,000 students chanting and singing. The Japanese legislature declared it a road and on this pretext started to clear out the students. The scuffle was bloody but the students eventually left.

The supreme court made a ruling which allowed them to commandeer all "struggle" films. The students and TV networks protested to no avail. The government doesn't want news of the conflicts to seep out. Tom had to smuggle out of the country, one film he made of a police-student conflict.

It is estimated that the students have a 1% chance of succeeding this year. Most are prepared to die in the attempt.

