

Tough Words for American Industry

By Hajime Karatsu
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As the author notes in his preface, this book is a collection of essays written for Japanese audiences. The fact that the essays were not written specifically for an American audience is both the book's strength and its weakness.

It is a strength because Karatsu is one of the most respected business commentators in Japan, and Americans need this opportunity to hear his "tough words." He unhesitatingly faults American corporate leaders for investing in offshore production while neglecting the domestic labor force and for then demanding that Japanese companies produce in the United States until the U.S. now has imported "American" cars competing with American-made "Japanese" cars.

He also comes down hard on American business' propensity to slight quality, noting that "acceptable quality level" has changed from "the worst something can be" to "the best it has to be" in American minds. There is, after all, a limit to how low things can be priced or how much the American government can bully other

countries into purchasing. And he lays the blame for this inferior quality clearly at management's feet.

Yet this is also the book's weakness. Because it was written for a Japanese audience, it includes sentences such as "This is the path that Japan must take to continue to survive." Of course, the alert reader can draw the same conclusions about America, but Karatsu's argument is geared to Japan. He is pointing out all the things America is doing wrong and urging Japan not repeat the mistakes, but it is too easy for the American reader to discount what he says. It is a little like a smoker's eavesdropping on an address by the surgeon general to the Lung Association.

Yet he is worth listening in on, because his creed of better productivity and greater quality is also the path that American industry must take to survive. America must, he says, get back to the basics—and he defines the basics as manufacturing. The basics are not financial razzle-dazzle in search of paper profits. Nor are the basics even design and marketing. As he states several times, manufacturing is basic to any economy, and money not backed by manufacturing activity is no better than wastepaper. America needs to regain its industrial competitiveness in manufacturing, and this means emphasizing quality and productivity.

Japan's Economic Challenge

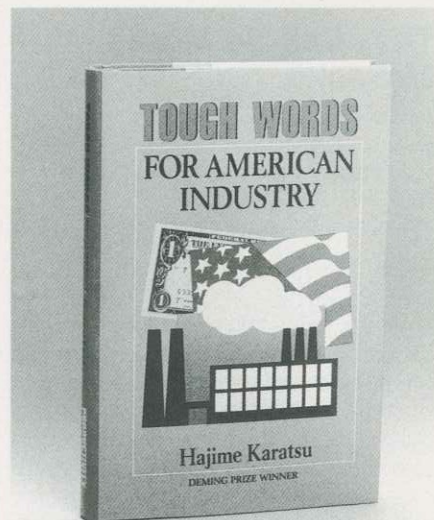
This is not a book about Japan's economic challenge. Rather, it is a bibliographic source book compiled by Michael Keresztesi and Gary Cocozzoli of the vast literature in English through mid-1987. As such, it is useful.

The book is organized by topics. In addition to the usual table of contents, it also has a 58-page listing of topical locators ranging from administrative reform through Zen. In effect, this is very much like the index one would find at the back of a typical book. The main difference is that it refers the reader not to page numbers but to let-

tered entries (e.g., DB-43, GC-52 and HA-22). Then in the back is a list of authors again referring to specific entries, so items can be looked up either by subject or by author.

Although there are a few surprising omissions (such as *Japan Echo* as a source of articles on Japanese society or Taguchi as an author on quality engineering), the range of sources covered is fairly comprehensive. Almost everything that was looked up as a check was found—including a couple of somewhat obscure items.

Available from Garland Publishing Inc. in New York, this would be a worthwhile \$57.00 purchase for any library interested in Japan.



The emphasis on quality has already become a buzzword as Karatsu and the other Japanese quality missionaries have seen their gospel accepted. Yes, it really is cheaper to make it right the first time. Yet the productivity side of this coin has been caught in the crossfire between managers seeking to pare payrolls and unions seeking to protect members' jobs.

Here Karatsu offers a persuasive argument that productivity does not have to lead to unemployment. "In point of fact, nations with low productivity in the manufacturing industries have high unemployment rates." Productivity is efficiency. It is competitiveness. And as a result, it is the key to maintaining employment. "By raising productivity, we get more economic space to play with; we can then use this new space to start up something that we have never been able to do before." In short, productivity is the key to better quality of life for all—labor, management and the general public.

And in raising productivity, Karatsu returns to another basic tenet of the Japanese industrial faith: that it is the person who is actually doing the job who understands it best. The workers have to have the information and authority they need to do the job right. Like so much of the Japanese productivity brief, this is not uniquely Japanese. Yet the Japanese have been its fiercest and most consistent adherents.

The Japanese have seen what had to be done and done it.

Now it is America that is in trouble and that needs to regain competitiveness. Other nations can help with technology, capital, market-opening and more, but there is a limit to how much impact such outside help can have. The stimulation of Japanese domestic demand will not in itself result in a new influx of American products into the Japanese market.

As Karatsu argues, the root of the problem is that America no longer cares about manufacturing. It is time to start caring again, and Karatsu's blunt talk—refreshingly free of the cant and circumlocution that characterizes so many official pronouncements—may well be the kick in the pants some people need.

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is picturesque indeed. Around this charming park are located many of the historical sites of Nara.

The Nara period was probably one of the most international eras in Japanese history. Buddhism, having become the state religion some time previously, flourished during this period, as did sericulture, weaving, metal-casting, brewing, and writing and literature—all of which had been brought over from the Asian mainland or Korea and Japanized in earlier times.

Present-day Nara City and Nara Prefecture are treasure houses of the art work of this period. The Shosoin is a repository for more than 9,000 articles, many of which were used by Emperor Shomu, who reigned from 724 to 749. These treasures include many items from Greece, the Byzantine Empire, Persia, India, Tang China and Korea, silent witnesses to the international flavor of ancient Nara.

Pagoda's reflection

There could be no better place to see first than Kofukuji Temple. At the height of its prosperity it had more than 175 buildings. Unfortunately few of these remain today. The five-story pagoda, actually reconstructed in 1426, is the second-highest in the country and a famous national treasure.

There are two ways to view this pagoda, either by looking at it directly, or by viewing its reflection in Sarusawa pond, a short walk to the south of the pagoda. The pond contains hundreds of turtles released there by devout Buddhists. Also in the precincts of the temple is the Treasure House which has on display the majority of the Buddhist images in the possession of the temple and masterpieces from other periods of Japanese history as well.

Todaiji is actually a whole complex of buildings within the extensive grounds of the Todaiji Temple, but it is known primarily for its main hall, which houses a statue of Buddha. The hall, the largest wooden building in the world, was built by the order of Emperor Shomu and completed in 752. According to records kept by the temple, 50,000 carpenters, 370,000 metal workers and 2,180,000 laborers worked on its construction and furnishing.

An undertaking which, not surprisingly, brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy.

The original wooden structure has burned down and been rebuilt a number of times, and the current building (about 280 years old but reroofed only a few years ago) is only two-thirds the size of the original. Some people say that is why the Nara Daibutsu (Great Buddha of Nara), one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world, looks a little cramped inside its present home. Cramped or not, however, the 16.2 meter high figure is large enough to hold 17 men in the palm of its hand.

Nara is a treasure-trove for the history lover. The Shosoin is a repository which holds items such as jewels, musical instruments, writing materials and clothing which date back over a thousand years. Many of these objects belonged to Emperor Shomu and were donated to Todaiji by his consort on his death. These objects are usually on view when they are aired in October or November. Nara National Museum is noted for its collection of Buddhist art objects, primarily images and altar articles. The main building dates from the Meiji era (1868–1912) and

Outside Tokyo

Nara: Historic Treasure House

A 35-minute ride on the modern Kintetsu Railway will take you from the hustle and bustle of Osaka back in time over a thousand years to the relative quiet of Nara, Japan's capital from 710 to 784. Like Kyoto, it was not bombed during the war and manages to preserve much of the charm of prewar Japan—narrow winding streets, low wooden houses—with a generally slower pace than either Kyoto or Osaka.

When you emerge from Kintetsu Nara Station you will find yourself at the side of a wide street which will take you to nearby Nara deer park. The park is actually a large wooded area in the center of the city where the deer are allowed to roam freely. The sight of these deer standing about in twos and threes under ancient pine trees

