

# Opening the Nation — Again

By Jun Eto

On March 26, the government's Ministerial Conference on Economic Measures met to put its stamp of approval on a comprehensive package of measures to improve standards and certification procedures for imports in another move to promote further market opening by dismantling a wide range of non-tariff barriers.

Specifically, (1) the Electrical Appliance and Material Control Law and 16 other laws are to be amended in order to ensure non-discrimination between Japanese and foreign manufacturers; (2) special efforts are to be made to simplify the automobile inspection and certification procedures, shortening the certification time from the present 7 months to 2.5 months; and (3) greater acceptance is to be accorded foreign clinical data in evaluating pharmaceuticals for the Japanese market. This is a wide-ranging program, and the government has announced its intention to implement such measures as soon as possible.

Thus the Japanese government, by dismantling non-tariff barriers, is moving, albeit belatedly, in an ambitious effort to respond to Western irritation and to alleviate trade friction. This is indeed a welcome development, and U.S. Special Trade Representative William Brock promptly issued a statement expressing his appreciation for the progress which has been made.

This problem of non-tariff barriers is one which has been discussed at great length for many years, but the broader question of whether to open Japan's doors widely or to allow only restricted access goes back to the early days of modern Japan. In the 1880s, there was great discussion in Japan about revision of the "unequal" treaties which Japan had signed with a number of other countries in the early days immediately before the Tokugawa shogunate's fall. Among the provisions in these treaties that were seen to be unequal were the provision for extraterritoriality and the provision that Japan would not have the right to impose tariffs on trade. Accordingly, the Meiji government sought to eliminate extraterritoriality, to gain tariff rights, and otherwise to get on an equal footing with the other countries of the world. Numerous

drafts were drawn up and countless negotiations held.

In 1889, then Foreign Minister Shigenobu Okuma proposed a plan for the treaties' revision which became a focal point in the domestic debate about what kind of terms to seek.

One of the main points that was especially divisive was the provision in the Okuma proposals that would allow foreigners to live anywhere in Japan. Until then, foreigners had been restricted to special enclaves, but Okuma's draft would have allowed them to live anywhere they liked and to mix with the general populace. This was one of the concessions that Okuma, and by implication, the government of Japan, was willing to offer to get the unequal treaties revised.

Okuma's draft quickly drew both great support and strong opposition. In a way, it was not unlike our current trade problems, and the people who supported Okuma's draft would no doubt support dismantling non-tariff barriers; while the people who favored keeping foreigners restricted to their enclaves would also likely oppose lifting non-tariff trade barriers.

## The Case for Abolishing Foreign Enclaves

One of the main supporters of the Okuma plan was the economist Ukichi Taguchi, who stated his position most eloquently at a debate held at the Ibumuraro tavern in Asakusa:

*Gentlemen, I would like to address my remarks today to any among you who may oppose the revision of the treaties, and I hope, if I am able, to convert such opponents to advocates of treaty revision.*

*Why do I not oppose the treaties' revision? As Marquis Okuma says, there is so very little to be lost by revising the treaties that it is hardly worth opposing their revision; yet there is so much to be lost by not revising them that their revision is imperative.*

*Let me explain my reasons by reference to the views of those who would oppose the treaties' revision. It seems that most of the people who oppose revision oppose it because (1) they oppose allowing for-*

*eigners to live anywhere in Japan and (2) because they fear that revision violates the Constitution.*

*Let us look first at the first reason, their opposition to allowing foreigners to reside anywhere in Japan. Basically, this boils down to a fear that if we allow foreigners free run of the country they will swoop down on us in great numbers and buy up all of our land, houses, railways, factories, and shops, reducing the Japanese people to little more than a nation of slaves. As other scholars and I have written repeatedly in Tokyo Keizai Zasshi, founded in 1879, such fears are groundless. However, the economic theory necessary to prove the folly of these fears is long and complex, and I do not have the time to go into details for you here.*

*However, even if we grant that there is some fear, which there is not, it is interesting to ask who exactly it is that harbors this fear. Are they Japanese or foreigners?*

Taguchi then goes on to trace the family trees of the revision's most vigorous opponents and to show that they are all descendants of people who immigrated to Japan from China or Korea. In effect, the people who opposed allowing foreigners free run of the country are the same people whose families had benefited from similar tolerance generations ago. At that time, over a thousand years ago, Japan had opened its doors to these immigrants from the Asian continent and had assimilated them in the emerging Japanese culture. It was these people's descendants who were now opposing opening Japan's doors to a new wave of foreign culture.

*Even more to be feared than having a lot of foreigners loose in Japan is the maintenance of foreign enclaves. These enclaves are, as it were, foreign nations in Japan. In effect, the enclaves grant foreigners autonomous zones of their own within the Japanese land. Nothing is more to be feared.*

Taguchi referred to the enclaves as a cancer upon the nation's security. According to him, there was nothing to fear from foreigners spread throughout the country, even if there be a hundred thousand of them. Thus, he argued, inland residence should be allowed even from the standpoint of national security.

## Not Sufficiently Socially Evolved

In sharp contrast to Taguchi's support, treaty revision also had its detractors. One of the most eloquent was Tetsujiro Inoue, who wrote a passionate argument against free residence from Germany, where he was studying at the University of Berlin.

In his epistle sent to Japan and pub-



lished as a pamphlet by Tetsugaku Shoin, Inoue based his opposition on Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism. According to Inoue, the Japanese people were not yet sufficiently socially evolved.

*The Japanese people, young and old, rich and poor, of noble or common birth, are generally unable to compete against Western peoples. To expand upon my argument, the Japanese people are physically, intellectually, financially, and in every other way inferior to Western peoples, and it is impossible to expect any outcome but humiliating defeat should the Japanese engage in competition against the peoples of the West. Westerners are generally far more competitive than Japanese, and are far better able to endure physical hardship. According to statistical tables compiled by Dr. Erwin Baelz, the Japanese reach maturity earlier than do Western peoples but are unable to compete with Westerners in their prime.*

Substantiating this, Inoue made a comparison of average physiques of Japanese and Westerners at ages 14-15 and 24-25 and then concluded that the Japanese were inferior.

*Not only that, but in physical height too, Western peoples are generally taller than Japanese, and the English and German people are especially outstanding in this regard. According to "Japan nach Reisen und Studien," Japanese are shorter than not only Western peoples but also Chinese and Koreans.*

What would Inoue think if he saw today's lanky youngsters?

*Phrenologically as well, Japanese are inferior to Western peoples. Western heads are long from front to back, while Japanese heads are higher than they are wide. Likewise, the Japanese head is large in proportion to the overall body weight,*

*a feature characteristic of primitive species.*

Inoue's argument is that the Japanese are intellectually, physically, and genetically inferior to Western peoples, and that subjection would be the inevitable result if Japan willy-nilly allowed foreigners free run of the country. After expressing these fears, however, Inoue went on:

*Nonetheless, there are some superbly outstanding Japanese and these superior Japanese should be encouraged in limited contacts with Westerners and the concept of allowing free residence rights postponed while we wait for the cultural level of the average Japanese to evolve sufficiently.*

## A Resolution to a Century-Old Debate

Because Inoue was writing from Berlin, it is clear that he was not a narrow isolationist who rejected all contacts with the West. He was, instead, a member of the Japanese elite and someone personally familiar with international conditions—presumably one of the superbly outstanding Japanese capable of meeting foreigners on their own terms. All he was saying is that Japan should be wary in its contacts with the West until there were more people like himself.

A student of Chinese philosophy, professor at Tokyo Imperial University, and an experienced international traveler, Inoue advocated restraint in allowing foreigners to live outside of their enclaves. On the other side of the debate, the private-sector economist Taguchi based his support for Okuma's plan on his high regard for Japanese adaptability. This is a very interesting contrast. Taguchi was saying that the Japanese are adaptable people, that there is nothing to fear from

foreigners in the neighborhood, and that the restrictions on where foreigners can live should be abolished. By extension, Taguchi was saying that allowing foreign capital and products to come into Japan would stimulate the healthy development of Japanese commerce and industry. Yet Inoue was wary. He did not come right out and say that it should not be done, but he urged all deliberate delay. He wanted to proceed slowly and take the time needed to prepare domestic institutions.

In asking which of these two views has prevailed in Japanese economic policy to date, I myself suspect it has been Inoue's. Although actions have not always had the rationally elucidated justification that Inoue gave them, traditional Japanese feelings of inferiority to the West have undeniably found reflection in government policy.

That is why I feel the measures announced by the Ministerial Conference on Economic Measures to dismantle non-tariff barriers and to ensure non-discriminatory treatment have been a major step in Taguchi's direction. Marking as they do a coming of age and restoration of confidence in the Japanese economy, they are a welcome resolution to this century-old debate. ●

*Jun Eto is a leading literary critic and professor of literature at the Tokyo Institute of Technology.*

*Graduate of Keio University, Eto, now 50, has authored many prize-winning books and won various literary awards including the prestigious Japan Academy of Arts award in 1975.*

*He served as a guest lecturer at Princeton University 1963-65.*