

# TOKYO LETTER

## TOKYO—An Inside View

Anyone, anywhere, can take a look at the latest crime statistics and deduce that, figure-wise at least, Tokyo must be a pretty safe place to live...and they'd be quite right. No matter how many suspicious myths and woolly legends surround this mammoth city, here is one that just cannot be refuted. Of course, that's not to say there isn't any crime at all; it stands to reason there must be. But after more than four years in Tokyo, I have come into contact with relatively little.

Obviously, if Tokyo is "safe", one of the main reasons for this must be the police force and the general organization of the metropolis. (And I'm not discussing traffic!) I was very surprised when I discovered that whenever a person moves house, they must inform their local ward office of their change of address, and then register in their new area. And every once in a while, the local policemen from the *koban* (police-box; there sometimes seems to be one around almost every corner) visit all the people in the vicinity. Each household, Japanese and non-Japanese alike, is given a green card, which they can fill out if they choose to. All details concerning the family are entered—names, ages, sex and occupation—and this information is then filed away in the nearest *koban*. The *koban* system is an excellent PR tool. The filed information is invaluable in cases of emergency; in locating people who reside in the area should the need arise.

In Britain, the local "bobby" on his "beat" (foot patrol) was a common sight until a few years ago. The sight





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of a "bobby" or two strolling around one's area was comforting; reassuring. It was decided that the beat system was out-dated, and in the course of modernization, the bobby on his beat was replaced by a policeman in his "panda" car. It didn't take too long before the realization struck home—the beat system has some definite advantages, particularly in residential areas, and it was re-introduced in some places, no doubt accompanied by great sighs of relief from the public. In principle, the *koban* system is not dissimilar to that of the beat. Through it, the police as a whole are kept in touch with the public—and a well-informed and trusted police force is an advantage in any country or state.

Another important "safety" factor in Tokyo is basic honesty. The Japanese people live up to their reputation, which is well-earned. Leaving one's purse or wallet in a taxi cab or department store is a sure-fire way to ruin an otherwise enjoyable stay in any city. But in Tokyo, there's a good chance your property will be returned to you, or taken to a lost-and-found

office or *koban*. Needless to say, fate shouldn't be tempted too far. No self-respecting thief is going to resist the offer of a purse sitting on the top of a shopping basket, or a wallet enticingly peeping out of a hip pocket!

In comparison to large U.S. and European cities, there are few burglaries in Tokyo. In fact, many Japanese houses rival the local banks when it comes to security! Most modern houses, and certainly all new apartment blocks are constructed in a completely different way to the traditional wooden houses one imagines as being "typically" Japanese. Today's buildings are often built using ferro-concrete and steel girders, and come equipped with bars on all small windows, and steel shutters on the rest—which are closed at dusk. It's stating the obvious to mention the fact that shutters keep out the cruder elements, but how about those bars? It would seem that these dwellings, intentionally or otherwise, are constructed to thwart even the most single-minded burglar. Few would-be thieves would get very far without a high quality hacksaw...and as the

buildings are so close together, one wonders if it is worth trying!

In any large city, personal safety is of paramount importance. The blood runs cold to hear of any unprovoked attack, whether it takes place in New York, London, Paris or Tokyo. One or two more extreme and bizarre occurrences have hit the headlines in Tokyo recently, but they are definite exceptions. The only consistent worry I ever have here (and not being a parent automatically relieves me of a few) has nothing at all to do with dangers lurking in dank, dark alleys or meeting unruly gangs of thugs in the streets. It is merely a matter of whether the more obnoxious drunks I meet (an inevitable fact of nightlife here) can run faster than I can! I haven't been caught—yet—and I can honestly say I feel as safe in Tokyo as I did in my small home-town in Britain. And when one considers the awesome fact that the stable population of Tokyo is approximately 11,993,000 *more* than that of my home town...there's food for thought. (Susan Scurlock)

## BOOK REVIEW

### **THEORY Z: How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge**

by William Ouchi

In this book, the author analyzes the Japanese style of management and contends that American business will be able to cope with the challenge of Japanese business by adopting the good points of



Japanese management. Within a few weeks of its publication, the book became a best-seller. The initial printing reportedly totaled 70,000 copies, an unprecedentedly large figure for a book on management. It is now available in paperback and its Japanese translation has been published. Total circulation is believed to be immense.

A major reason for this popularity is the book's title. It goes without saying that *Theory Z* is a sequel to D. MacGregor's *Theory X* and *Theory Y*. Without doubt many readers must have received from Z, the last letter in the alphabet, the impression that the book