

Letters

R&D and Technical Cooperation —an Efficient Balance

The article entitled "International Cooperation in High Technology" in the May/June 1983 issue was very stimulating and interesting reading.

Japan has been criticized in the past for relying too heavily on foreign technology for its economic expansion and development, but looking at the past, the U.S. itself in its early stages of development relied greatly on European technology until its technical expertise matched that of Europe. One must bear in mind that technology can only be transferred if the receiving country has one vital characteristic: an abundant, educated and disciplined labor force. If it does not, then we have the problem of enclave (or enclosed) technology, which really transfers very little expertise or know-how.

As Japan continued to develop, it required more advanced technology which was not available worldwide. Thus, it turned to its own R&D programs. It is hoped that R&D in Japan will not replace the acquisition of foreign technology and, at the same time, that foreign nations will take a hard look at the types of technology that already exist and are available before developing large and expensive R&D programs. Buying existing patented information can be much more efficient than starting from scratch. I often see this interaction of private research and cooperative efforts with our affiliates around the world, particularly with General Motors, as there has been a constant flow of technology back and forth between these two organizations for over a decade in areas such as computer software, production, diesel engine development, and design. There is nothing efficient in doing things twice.

The real key to economic development and a better standard of living lies in not only how much money is spent on R&D as related to GNP, but how fast and how widely that technology is used and disbursed through many industries and societies.

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Information on Text Conversion Needed

In the March/April 1982 issue, Hideo Miyashita discussed the coming Information Society and what changes it is likely to bring to Japan. Certainly the rapid advances in satellite and broadband communications, in word processing and on-demand printing, and in computer hardware give considerable weight to the contention that the information age is upon us.

A problem we haven't yet solved, however, is that of converting the enormous body of printed textual information to computer code. Years ago some experiments were run on using computers to store and retrieve information on certain laws. To put the data into the computer, it was necessary to key it character-by-character onto punch cards. Today we use minicomputers and microcomputers for data conversion, but it still requires human typists (keyboarders) to enter the data.

A number of firms in the U.S. have developed optical reading machines that will convert material typed in certain fonts to standard computer code. One company has produced a machine with an omnifont capability that will read typeset text. Many features of technical literature, e.g., embedded equations and graphics, still present problems, but progress has been made.

To my knowledge no one has developed a machine for scanning Japanese text. Considering the technological advances that have been made and are being made in Japan, it is important in the Information Society that the documentation of this work be accessible through computer data bases. Currently, this information is published in several thousand Japanese-language journals. For those journals that are typeset via electronic word processing equipment, it would be possible to use the printers' magnetic records to generate data bases, but the remainder will need to be converted from the printed copy.

A report on Japanese work on this problem of conversion of text and other data into digital magnetic formats would be welcome.

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Strengths and Weaknesses

The *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry* is proving to be of increasing interest and value in the study and understanding of the Japanese economy.

It is quite clear that there is a widespread appreciation of the strengths of the Japanese industrial system. Indeed, it can be argued that there is an excessively favorable view of the system, to Japan's disadvantage. It needs to be appreciated that Japan's economy has problems, and faces real and difficult issues. It would be helpful to have these problems and issues addressed as well.

An example of the problem of balance might be drawn from the interesting article in your May/June issue by Professor Koike, "Do robots make skills unnecessary?" While fully appreciating Prof. Koike's conclusions about the flexibility of the Japanese labor force, one needs also to note that Japan's very rapid moves to industrial and office automation pose problems regarding unemployment and Japan's employment system. Given Japan's pioneering role in the development of new approaches to manufacture, it would be of great value to industries everywhere to have review and analysis of the problems Japanese companies are encountering in moving to automation and the techniques being developed in Japan to deal with these problems.

Mr. Nakagawa's editorial note, with its emphasis on the stresses of the marketplace and on the limits to government wisdom and power, strikes me as an example of a balanced statement of strengths and weaknesses.

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CURRENT TOPICS

PM Nakasone Plays Active Role at Williamsburg Summit

Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone returned home after attending the seven-nation Williamsburg summit meeting May 28-30 in which he played an active role for the success of the meeting.

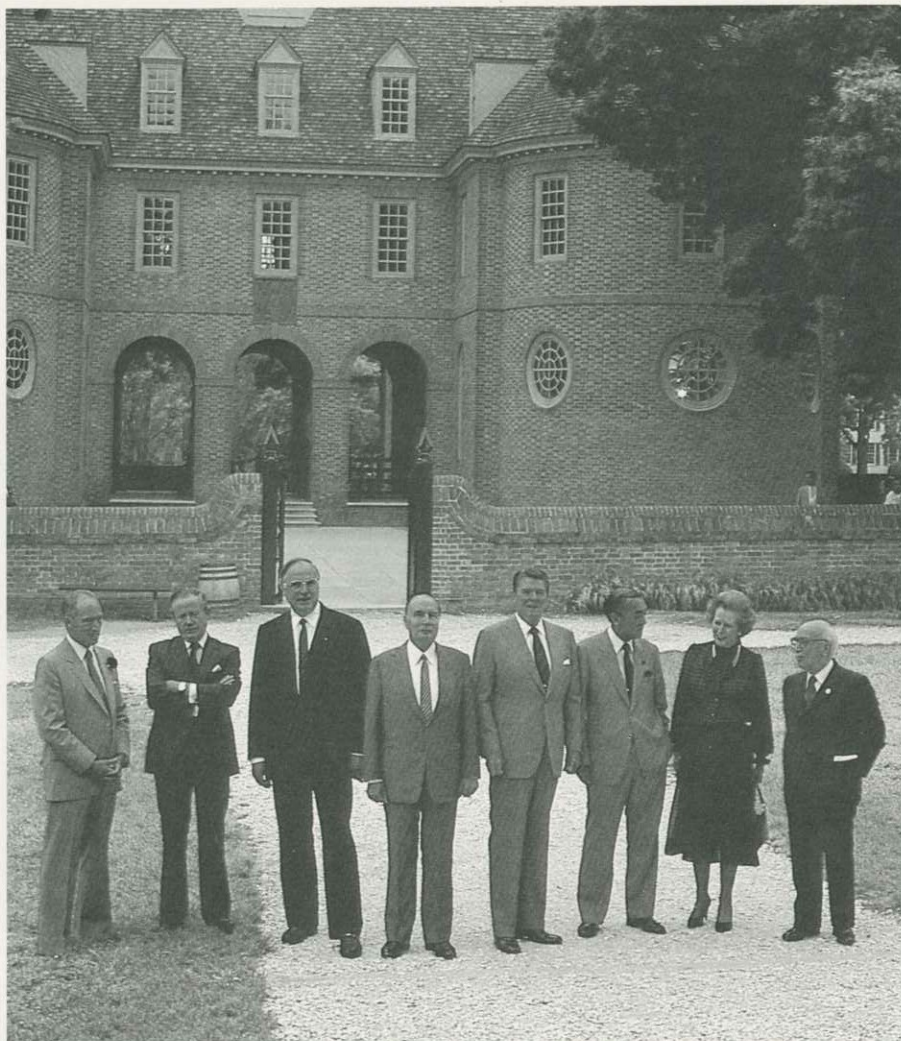
Nakasone was one of eight leaders of the United States, Britain, West Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Canada and the Commission of European Communities, who gathered in this old colonial capital to discuss economic and political issues.

Accompanying the prime minister were Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe, Finance Minister Noboru Takeshita and International Trade and Industry Minister Sadanori Yamanaka, who has since resigned.

Prior to the summit meeting, Nakasone conferred with U.S. President Ronald Reagan in Washington on May 27. During the two-hour meeting, which included a luncheon, the two leaders expressed their intention to cooperate closely to ensure the success of the summit meeting. The Washington meeting was also attended by top Cabinet members of the governments of the two countries, including U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige and U.S. Trade Representative William Brock. Shultz expressed appreciation of Japan's recent efforts in the trade and economic areas, adding that Nakasone had been responsible for the constructive ties currently existing between the U.S. and Japan. Both Baldrige and Brock praised highly Japan's recent enactment of a set of bills aimed at easing import standards and certification systems.

Nakasone made the opening remarks on the second day of the summit debate on economic issues.

The prime minister called on Western industrial countries to:



Participants in the ninth annual summit meeting of industrialized nations held in Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.

1) maintain cooperation and solidarity and demonstrate to the world their unity,
2) sustain non-inflationary economic growth through (a) implementation of a balanced economic policy at home and abroad, (b) promotion of broad structural adjustment, and (c) maintenance of free trade, abolition of protective measures and the strengthening of the GATT system, and

3) promote the North-South dialogue and step up support for the self-help efforts of developing countries based on the awareness that there can be no prosperity of the North without the prosperity of the South. (Referring to UNCTAD VI, Nakasone also said the industrial countries must make efforts to build a constructive relationship between the North and South.)

4) continue negotiations, based on the results of OECD and IEA meetings, aimed at achieving concerted action in dealing with East-West economic relations.

The summit ended with the adoption of a statement called the "Williamsburg Declaration on Economic Recovery" and a political statement on disarmament.

The declaration said that the industrial countries "now clearly see signs of recovery" in world economic activity. Based on this perception, it said, the summit leaders pledged efforts to reduce high interest rates and cut back on structural budget deficits through spending restraint in order to achieve non-inflationary and sustained economic growth. For this purpose, the declaration said, the summit



Photo: WWP

agreed on 10 policies, including pursuit of monetary and fiscal measures to ensure non-inflationary and sustained growth and to increase employment; coordinated intervention in exchange markets; halting protectionism and dismantling trade barriers; closer cooperation among countries and international institutions on the debt burdens of many developing nations; and consideration of the advisability of holding a high-level international monetary conference.

The summit also adopted an annex to the declaration covering ways to strengthen economic cooperation for growth and stability.

The next summit will be held in Britain next year.

Prime Minister Nakasone Tours ASEAN Countries

Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited the five member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines—and Brunei from April 30 to May 10.

Visiting Malaysia on the last leg of the 11-day trip, Nakasone made a wide-ranging speech in Kuala Lumpur, summing up the outcome of his talks with ASEAN leaders. In the speech, he outlined Japan's basic policies toward Southeast Asia in the coming years through the 21st century. He expressed the hope that relations between Japan and the ASEAN nations would grow to a "new dimension."

In particular, he called for the development of a more comprehensive relationship than that which has existed up to now, which has tended to be dominated by economic aspects. He singled out the following three points as new areas of closer cooperation: 1) the transfer of industrial technology, 2) cooperation in scientific technology, and 3) an expanded exchange of youth through a "friendship program" bridging the present and next centuries. He also pledged to give ASEAN top priority in providing economic assistance, which he said will be focused on the development of agriculture, energy, manpower and smaller businesses.

Nakasone first visited Indonesia, where President Suharto briefed him on the country's economic difficulties stemming from reduced crude oil prices and slumping exports of primary products. In reply to Suharto's request of a Japanese commitment to purchase crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) and supply 200,000 tons of rice in food aid, Nakasone pledged utmost efforts for stable crude imports. He also promised to extend ¥67.5 billion in yen credits for fiscal 1983—up 7% over the previous year—and supply 140,000 tons of rice on a deferred payment basis.

Nakasone told the Indonesian leader Japan regards ASEAN as the most important area for economic cooperation. Outlining Japan's aid policies, he told Suharto Japan will:

- raise by 50% in value the import quotas for products from developing countries to which preferential tariffs are applied, effective fiscal 1984;

- promote a "plant renovation pro-

gram" to modernize obsolete industrial plants built under Japanese assistance in the past;

- expand the exchange of personnel, mainly the younger generation, inviting 750 youths to visit Japan; and

- hold an annual conference of Japanese and ASEAN ministers concerned with scientific technology to step up cooperation in the field.

Nakasone then traveled to Thailand and offered Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonde ¥67.4 billion in still uncommitted official credits for fiscal 1982, including some for an agricultural center in northeastern Thailand. Nakasone promised to continue to suspend economic assistance to Vietnam until Vietnamese troops withdraw from Kampuchea. But he refrained from making a firm commitment to a strong Thai request for Japanese cooperation in a project to develop LNG in the Gulf of Siam for supply to Japan, saying Tokyo would like to discuss it as a matter for 1990 onwards, since it has been assured of enough LNG supplies to meet demand until then.

In Singapore, Nakasone conferred with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Lee told Nakasone Japan, the United States and West Germany should take a leadership role in revitalizing the world economy to raise hopes for an early recovery. Lee also said continued trade friction between Japan and the United States is not desirable for the world economy as a whole, calling for greater Japanese efforts to eliminate such friction. Nakasone told Lee Japan will speak for the South at the Williamsburg summit of seven industrial powers, adding it expects to try to stabilize foreign exchange rates.

In the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos expressed the hope that Japan will play a greater role in ensuring the stability and prosperity of Southeast Asia. Nakasone pledged yen credits for fiscal 1982 totaling ¥65.05 billion, including ¥9.6 billion in special credits. He also offered expansion of cultural grant aid and promotion of bilateral technological cooperation. Nakasone proposed a "friendship program for the 21st century," under which young Filipinos will be invited to Japan together with youths from the other ASEAN nations.

Nakasone concluded his ASEAN trip with a visit to Malaysia. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told him Malaysia wants Japanese investments to help carry out its policy of transferring state-controlled industry to private ownership. Mahathir also asked for correction of the bilateral trade imbalance. Nakasone sought the Malaysian leader's understanding by explaining about Japanese efforts to increase imports from developing countries, including a plan to boost ceilings on imports subject to preferential duties.



Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone confers with Thai students during his ASEAN tour.

Photo: Asahi Shimbun



Photo: WWP

Then MITI Minister Sadanori Yamanaka (center) took part in the first session of the International Energy Agency meeting in Paris.

Yamanaka Visits Europe And Middle East

Sadanori Yamanaka, the then Minister of International Trade and Industry, visited Western Europe and the Middle East for nearly three weeks between late April and mid-May to attend a series of international conferences and meet top government officials. In Europe, Yamanaka discussed swollen foreign debts of developing countries, trade protectionism, foreign exchange rates, and other issues with trade and energy ministers who attended the meetings. During his visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait, Yamanaka had extensive talks with those countries' leaders on the world oil situation.

Yamanaka first visited Belgium to attend an informal meeting of trade ministers in Brussels April 28-29, along with U.S. Trade Representative William Brock, Canadian Trade Minister Gerald Regan and European Community (EC) Commission Vice President Wilhelm Haferkamp. The gathering was preparing for a meeting of trade and finance ministers held in Paris May 10-11. The trade ministers discussed Third World foreign debts, exchange rates and other problems.

At their Paris meeting, trade and finance ministers from Britain, Canada, West Germany, Italy, Japan, Switzerland and the United States discussed the debt and foreign exchange issues, interest rates and other problems, from both trade and financial aspects, on the basis of the Brussels debate. Also represented at the Paris session were the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It was the first time that trade and finance ministers sat at

the same table and it was agreed to hold a similar meeting in or after September.

Prior to the Paris meeting, an OECD ministerial session was held in the French capital May 9-10, with Japan represented by Yamanaka and Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe. Their counterparts from the United States, Britain, France, West Germany and Canada also took part. Among main topics were macroeconomics, trade, Third World debts, energy, and North-South problems as well as unemployment and budget deficits in industrialized countries. It was agreed that the OECD's 24 member countries should try to reverse the trend toward trade protectionism, lay down procedures for a follow-up to the relaxation and elimination of protectionist measures, and to prevent reduction in fiscal deficits from hindering economic recovery.

Yamanaka also attended a ministerial meeting of the International Energy Agency (IEA) held in Paris May 8. Pointing out that crude oil price cuts are desir-

able, delegates to the IEA session agreed to continue development of alternative energy sources. On the question of ensuring natural gas supplies that had divided the United States and Europe, they confirmed the principle of not depending too much on a single supply source.

Addressing the IEA meeting, Yamanaka called for the promotion of a dialogue between oil producing and consuming countries. He said the drop in crude oil prices is favorable for the world economy, adding it should be utilized to help revitalize world economic activity. He also insisted on preventing erratic oil price fluctuations. Emphasizing that the time is ripe now for a dialogue between producer and consumer nations, he proposed the IEA's 21 member nations maintain and expand contact with the producers on a bilateral basis. Such ideas were incorporated into a communique issued at the end of the meeting.

In between these activities, Yamanaka visited the UAE and Kuwait. The trip was based on his belief, as he stated at the IEA session, that a dialogue with oil producers is necessary at a time when the supply-demand situation has eased. In the UAE, he conferred with President Zayed bin Sultan, Tahnoun bin Mohamed, Chairman of the state-run Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., and Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Mana Said al-Otaiba. In Kuwait, Yamanaka met with Amir Jaber al-Ahmad, Crown Prince and Prime Minister Saad al-Abdullah, and Oil Minister Ali al-Khalifa. The oil price cut, easy supply-demand relationship, other recent developments on the international oil front and future prospects were discussed. Agreement was reached on the need for a sustained dialogue between oil producing and consuming nations aimed at mutual understanding.

Yamanaka held separate talks with officials from various countries during the series of meetings in Paris, including with



Newly appointed MITI Minister Sosuke Uno

On June 10, Prime Minister Nakasone appointed Sosuke Uno to the portfolio of Minister of International Trade and Industry following Sadanori Yamanaka's resignation from the post for reasons of health.

Prior to this appointment, Uno held such Cabinet posts as director-general of the Defense Agency, the Science and Technology Agency and the Administrative Management Agency while serving in various capacities within the Liberal Democratic Party including a term as deputy secretary-general.

Newly appointed Minister Uno began his political career in the Shiga Prefectural Assembly and then entered the national political scene in 1960.

EC Commission Vice President Etienne Davignon, West German Economics Minister Otto Lambsdorf, British Trade Minister Peter Rees, U.S. Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige, and U.S. Treasury Secretary Donald Regan. Yamanaka also conferred with Brock in Brussels in late April. At the meeting with the U.S. trade representative, it was confirmed that Japan and the United States will cope with pressures for trade protectionism by deepening mutual understanding through the exchange of information on policies and measures related to industry and their effects on trade. It was agreed to hold a joint committee meeting every other month to discuss industry-related measures and their impact on trade.

Japan-France Symposium on Science & Technology

The second Japan-France symposium on science and technology was held at the French Ministry of Industry and Research in Paris April 27-28. Thirty-six panelists conducted intensive discussions on three themes—solar energy, robotics and new materials—and the debate was more concrete and sophisticated than at the first symposium held in Tokyo in April 1982.

Japan's pre-eminence in robotics, especially, was highlighted at the Paris meeting. Japan produces 30,000 industrial robots a year, accounting for nearly two-thirds of world output.

In the case of futuristic robots, however, France is also placing emphasis on such research and development. This year, Japan started as a government-financed project the development of robots that can be used under harsh conditions. The symposium revealed that France is also trying to develop a new generation of so-called "intelligent" robots. French panelists said the country's robotics R&D cover not only robots that can see, hear or walk on their own but also a "robot language." France has embarked on the development of robotics language, reasoning that as a computer has its own language, robots also need a concise "language" to learn an operation and do a given job efficiently. The day may come when a Japanese-made robot works under a French-language program.

The debate on new materials spotlighted the potential for cooperation between Japan and France, in the area of carbon fibers. A very strong carbon fiber has been developed in Japan. But it has found only limited use in golf clubs and fishing rods. In France, high hopes are being pinned on carbon fiber, which is used for the body of the Airbus A310, as an aircraft material. Demand for carbon

fiber is thus expected to swell in the future. The French side asked Japan for a stronger carbon fiber with the aim of using it in French aircraft.

The French side was also interested in the application of titanium alloy technology, discussed by Japanese panelists, to aircraft manufacture.

In the field of solar energy, electric power generation using sunlight was among the topics. France is seeking to develop a crystalline type of solar battery, which will be highly efficient, though costly. Japan, on the other hand, is developing an amorphous silicon type—somewhat less efficient but far less expensive. The difference stems from the fact that France aims to use solar cells in the area of space and aircraft development while Japan gives preference to private-sector use. In Japan, amorphous solar cells are already in use for some products such as pocket calculators and watches.

Summing up the spirit of the symposium, one French panelist said:

"Paintings of French impressionists were once affected by Japanese 'ukiyo-e' prints. The flower of high technology that has bloomed in the Orient will have a fresh impact on French science."

The next symposium is to be held in Tokyo next spring.

Japan Seeking U.S. Talks on Motorcycle Tariffs

The Japanese government has protested U.S. President Ronald Reagan's decision in April to raise tariffs on large motorcycles—of 700cc or more—by a maximum 45% in the next five years.

President Reagan acted under Section 201 of the 1974 Trade Act, calling for emergency import curbs on the grounds that increasing motorcycle imports—in effect from Japan—are hurting the sole American manufacturer, Harley-Davidson Motor Co.

Behind the U.S. decision was a complaint filed with the U.S. International

Trade Commission (ITC) last fall by Harley-Davidson that rapid Japanese penetration of the U.S. motorcycle market is injuring the company. Harley-Davidson sought federal government relief on the basis of the law.

The ITC ruled late in January that imports are injuring the domestic motorcycle industry, and recommended sharp tariff hikes. Reagan's decision was in line with the recommendations except for one modification, which added tariff quotas. On top of an existing 4.4% import duty, foreign motorcycles are now subject to an additional duty of 45% in the first year, 35% in the second, 20% in the third, 15% in the fourth and 10% in the fifth.

Japan takes the position that the extra duties are de facto import surcharges running counter to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and that it is very regrettable for the U.S. President to have made a unilateral decision without prior notification when both sides were discussing ways of bailing out Harley-Davidson in the wake of the ITC ruling.

Furthermore, it was found that the allocation of the tariff quota was totally disproportionate in view of the trade records in recent years, and that such a tariff quota system had the discriminatory effect of limiting imports from only Japan, thereby constituting a violation of the relevant provisions of GATT.

There was heated debate at a GATT ministerial meeting last November over whether to accept European-sought selective safeguards against given countries, which Japan and the United States opposed. Accepting U.S. measures on large motorcycles could be taken as Japan's acceptance of selective safeguards. The Japanese government thus intends to press for a reversal of the U.S. decision through bilateral consultations under Article 19 of GATT.

Meanwhile, the Japanese motorcycle industry is seriously concerned that the U.S. move will reduce exports and fuel a decline in the already low rate of capital equipment utilization. Japanese motorcycle manufacturers are exploring every possibility to cope with the plight, with Honda

Japan strongly opposes the U.S. decision to raise tariffs on large motorcycles.



Motor Co. and Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd. considering increasing output at their U.S. plants, and Yamaha Motor Co. and Suzuki Motor Co. discussing the feasibility of setting up factories there.

Japan's Market Not Closed to Foreign Goods

—Fair Trade Commission's First Report Published—

Amid growing American and European criticism of Japan's industrial policy and its allegedly closed market for imports, the Fair Trade Commission (FTC) has come up with a report showing there is no evidence Japan's distribution system is closed to foreign products.

Published April 19, the report was the first of its kind to be prepared by the government watchdog of trade practices. The report, entitled "How the FTC is handling the question of trade friction," focused on four aspects, including the distribution of imported goods, activities of sole import agents, and activities of general trade houses (sogo shosha) and import-related trade organizations.

As a whole, the report denied U.S. and European Community (EC) allegations that the Japanese market is closed. It concluded that:

—there is no proof to support the claim that the Japanese distribution system is closed to foreign products;

—transactions within the same group of companies are not so widespread as to restrict imports;

—there is no proven instance in which import-related trade organizations discriminate against foreign firms.

The EC has decided to refer the question of limited foreign access to the Japanese market to multilateral negotiations under Paragraph II, Article 23 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Criticism is also growing in the U.S. Congress and some government quarters that Japan is targeting certain industries for aided growth. But the Japanese rebuttal of these charges so far has been made in language too abstract to be persuasive.

The FTC report was based on a study prompted by the government's recommendations—made as part of a second package of market-opening measures announced May 28, 1982—that the FTC keep close watch on the distribution of imported goods and apply the Antimonopoly Law to cases of trade practices restricting competition. The report refuted the foreign criticisms by citing specific cases.

For instance, the FTC investigated the distribution of three import items—cars,

medical equipment and sporting goods. The report revealed imports of cars and medical equipment have recently declined but that imports of some products competitive in price and service are growing steadily, adding this shows the Japanese market is not closed.

The FTC also probed into the system of general import agents for nine products, including motorcycles and watches. It said imports of these products generally have been on the decline since 1980, and pointed out that agent commissions are too high in some cases. Stressing there was no example of unjustified discrimination against imports or barriers to their entry, the FTC said it found no problem in connection with the Antimonopoly Law.

Investigations were also conducted into the handling by the six largest trading firms of eight products, including computers and pulp. The report denied imports are restricted by Japan's unique system of distributing goods through companies of the same business group led by these trading giants. But it noted it is necessary to offer Japan's trading partners information on the operations of trading conglomerates to prevent overseas misunderstanding.

The report represented the first attempt by the FTC to tackle trade friction. American and European countries have shown keen interest in the outcome of the study, with their diplomatic representatives in Japan seeking detailed explanations of the FTC study.

International Symposium On Productivity

An international productivity symposium was held in Tokyo May 10-12, marking the first step in a worldwide campaign for higher productivity.

The symposium, the first of its kind in the world, was sponsored by the Japan Productivity Center, with the support of the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and various other institutions.

Under the theme "Revitalizing the World Economy Through Improved Productivity," the session drew 1,000 participants—550 Japanese and 450 from overseas—a greater number than was expected.

Among the participants were Konosuke Matsushita, adviser to Matsushita Electric Industrial Co.; Assar Lindbeck, professor of Stockholm University and chairman of

the Committee for the Nobel Prize in Economic Science; Thornton F. Bradshaw, chairman of RCA Corporation; Robert E. Kirby, chairman of Westinghouse Electric Corp.; Wayne Glenn, vice president of AFL-CIO; and Naohiro Amaya, adviser to MITI.

The large attendance reflected growing interest throughout the world in higher productivity as a means to break the current recession in the world economy, and in Japan's business management techniques.

Discussions at the three-day symposium concentrated on how to realize higher productivity in business management.

Participants said the symposium was meaningful because they found they had a common understanding of the importance of market functions, the necessity of valuing the human element in business management, and on the economic rationality of Japanese-style business management.

The participants agreed to hold a similar symposium again with the date and place to be decided later.



The world's first International Productivity Symposium held in Tokyo