

Building for the Future

By Naohiro Amaya

When World War II finally came to an end, the conquered Axis powers and the victorious-yet-war-ravaged Allies had one overriding priority—restoring their battered economies and ensuring their people's survival.

The war's end also spelled an end to Japanese, American and European colonialism as countries gained their independence and made a fresh start in the world. These countries too found that their overriding priority was economic development to ensure their economic independence. In fact, economic development became the Holy Grail of almost every country in the world, America being the exception, after the war.

Forty-four years have now passed since the war's end, and it is clear that there are stark differences in how well the various countries and regions have done with regard to economic development since then. There has been an especially large gap between expectations and results in the communist bloc countries and in the West Pacific countries. The communist countries have failed miserably to meet their lofty expectations, while the West Pacific countries' performances have far surpassed even their wildest dreams.

The reasons for communism's failure are fairly clear, but it is not so easy to explain the West Pacific countries' remarkable achievement. Over the last 200 years, it has been the West that has led world economic development. Since World War II, however, the non-Western countries of the Asia-Pacific have been outperforming the West economically. This development is very difficult to explain within the Western logical tradition.

Faced with this difficulty, some Western observers have argued that Japanese values, rules and systems differ so dramatically and so inscrutably from those in the West, that the West is unable to compete with Japan no matter how level the playing field is made. But this argument for "containing" Japan could easily turn into an argument for "containing" the newly industrializing economies of Asia

and eventually escalate into a confrontation between occidental and oriental cultures. It is imperative that both sides give the most serious thought to how we are to avoid this disaster.

Isolationism, protectionism and exclusionism are rooted, more than anything else, in a loss of confidence. Given this, it follows that America, Europe and Asia must all become stronger if we are to prevent a dangerous slide into protectionism. Only when all the players are confident of their own competitive abilities can they pursue their shared goals in a rational manner.

Europe is making a major effort for unification to create a stronger Europe. I hope it succeeds. Likewise, the United States is working to become competitive once more. Again, I wish it well. And finally, the Asia-Pacific countries must strengthen the cooperative relationships within the region if they are to sustain their heady pace of development.

Given the vast geographical, historical and cultural differences among the countries in the region, it will be much more difficult to achieve economic unification in the Asia-Pacific region than in Europe.

Thus it follows that Asia-Pacific economic unification will require more effort, more perseverance, more tolerance and more time than European market unification will. But we must overcome those difficulties and build a stronger and more prosperous Asia. Only when these foundations are strong can we hope to achieve the ultimate goal of global prosperity.

COMING UP

The January/February issue of the *Journal* will feature a special report on the Japanese economy in 1990.

Dr. Kenji Mizutani, managing director and chief economist at Tokai Bank, will give his outlook for the coming year, while experts at the Industrial Bank of Japan will provide forecasts of the business performance of 23 key industries.

Realms of Discourse

I read with interest Mr. Kusayanagi's column in the September/October issue of the *Journal* entitled "Who's More International," as I do all commentaries on the issue of "internationalization." The writer mentions that there remains no clear definition of what constitutes an "international person," though English-language skills and an "international mindset" are often cited as main elements.

I certainly cannot end all discussion on the subject, but I would like to express my views as to what it means to be an international person.

Foreign language skills assuredly are valuable and are a practical necessity in an international environment, but putting the emphasis on foreign tongues per se misses the point. The truly important skill is the ability to move across what we might call different realms of discourse, which may or may not be expressed in distinct natural languages.

The population of speakers of any given language (including Japanese) encompasses numerous realms of discourse, and unless people find ways to express the ideas and experiences in one realm within the framework of another, real understanding cannot take place even when both realms use the same natural language.

Thus, the mechanical or pedantic ability to reproduce phrases in another language is not enough by itself. A parallel skill is the ability to move fluidly and comfortably into other culture zones. Again, any nation or population of speakers of a given language encompasses numerous such culture zones.

This is true even for Japan, though many attempt to deny it is the case. Both of these skills imply not only cognitive familiarity with the contours of another discourse realm or culture zone but also a sense of relative ease in making the transition and sojourning in other zones.

Yet another characteristic of an international mindset is the capacity both cognitively and viscerally to view culture and behavior as Artifice rather than Reality.

It is the preconscious as well as the conscious recognition that everything about our personal selves, everything we

value and judge to be important, could be profoundly different had one been born or raised in a different context.

This recognition can be profoundly unsettling, and for this reason many people tend to try and avoid it. Such an awareness, if it were more widely present, might not eliminate present conflicts between Japan and the United States, but it might muffle some of the moralistic overtones present in the current debate.

The final component I would cite as an ingredient of an international mindset is an intuitive belief in the basic congruence of human experience.

Denying the existence of such basic congruence, as all too many *Nihonjin-ron* tend to do, ultimately denies the possibility of meaningful understanding and communication outside a particular context and symbolically reduces "outsiders" vis-à-vis one's own context to the status of nonentities.

It is unrealistic to suppose that a majority, or even a sizable minority, of any country will ever display all of the traits I mention above. People who do display many of these traits may not always be welcomed or esteemed by others. However, with any good fortune, their numbers will continue to grow.

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Acid Rain Starts Falling in Japan

Acid rain is beginning to fall in Japan and the government is moving to deal with the situation. According to a survey by the Environment Agency, acid rain, already widespread in Europe and North America, is now falling throughout Japan.

Damage to forests and farm products is not yet so severe as in West Germany, where 70% of the famed Black Forest has reportedly been impoverished. Scientists fear, however, that acid rain damage could eventually take its toll in Japan too, as the country has abundant rainfall.

The Environment Agency has established 23 stations for monitoring the fallout of pollutants since 1987. The Forestry Agency has decided to start acid rain monitoring at 1,200 forests throughout the country starting next fiscal year. The National Institute for Environmental Studies will also establish a research center for the global environment to step up studies on the effect of acid rain on the environment.

The Environment Agency survey, conducted over a five-year period starting in fiscal 1984, was the first such survey in Ja-

pan. It consisted of the analysis of rainwater collected at 29 points across the country, water from 133 lakes, and soil at 12 other points.

The survey brought to light the fact that the annual amount of substances such as sulfuric acid ion contained in rainwater at several points on the Japan Sea coast and in urban districts was larger than that in America and Europe.

The average pH (potential of hydrogen) reading of the rain checked in the survey was 4.8 each year and almost on the same level as in North America and Europe, but the pH reading was below the acid rain safety standard of 5.6 points at all places where samples were collected, underlining the fact that acid rain is now falling throughout Japan. The results also showed that more than 10% of the lakes surveyed were being oxidized.

The survey indicated that sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and other substances causing air pollution in Japan were not only domestically produced but were also blown into the skies over Japan from China and other areas of the Asian continent.

Scientists say that despite the high amount of acid substances contained in the rain, damage was limited as compared with North America and Europe



Acid rain has begun damaging Japanese forests.

Photo: Asahi Shimbun

The *Journal* welcomes letters of opinion or comment from its readers. Letters, including the writer's name and address, should be sent to: the Editor, Japan Economic Foundation, 11th Floor, Fukoku Seimei Bldg., 2-2 Uchisaiwai-cho 2-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100 Japan. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

because Japanese soils contain higher amounts of calcium and kalium and thus are more resistant to acid rain. They warned, however, that in time acid rain will begin to affect Japan's soil and plants.

Boat People Bring Immigration Headache

The term boat people is normally taken to mean Vietnamese political refugees escaping persecution in their homeland. But the boat people arriving in Japan in recent months also include Chinese leaving their country for economic reasons.

The Japanese immigration authorities have found that there are a large number of Chinese among the boat people who have arrived in Japan since May. The Chinese, most of them from Fujian Province, boarded Vietnamese boats when they called at southern Chinese ports on their way to Japan, and landed in Japan pretending to be Vietnamese political refugees, to whom Japan has been extending legal protection for humanitarian reasons.

Japan has automatically accepted Vietnamese boat people regarded as political refugees since 1978, gradually expanding the official limit of refugees granted permanent residence from 500 at the beginning to 10,000 in 1985.

It was only at the end of August that Japanese immigration officials, tipped off by a Chinese student in Japan, learned that the would-be boat people included many Chinese. The Chinese woman student informed the officials that her husband had sneaked into Japan disguising himself as a Vietnamese refugee.

The Justice Ministry's immigration office in Fukuoka has found that as of mid-September as many as 657 Chinese were among the 2,950 boat people who had arrived in Kyushu and Okinawa aboard 33 boats since late May.

The Japanese government has decided to deport all Chinese illegal entrants and to tighten the screening of Vietnamese refugees. Under the measure, Vietnamese refugees whose motives are economic will be urged to return home.

Official investigations have brought to



Boat people arriving in Japan

light the fact that the Chinese boat people had paid as much as 4,000 yuan (approximately \$1,100) equivalent to 30 months pay for an average worker, to brokers who arranged their illegal voyage to Japan.

What prompted such a large number of Chinese to illegally enter Japan aboard Vietnamese refugees' boats was that since the pro-democracy demonstrations by Chinese students at the beginning of the summer, the Chinese government has imposed strict restrictions on overseas travel by Chinese nationals. The military suppression of demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4 came at a time when an increasing number of young Chinese were seeking to come to Japan, ostensibly to learn the Japanese language or as tourists, but in reality to work, without a permit, to earn money. By working in Japan for several years, they believe they can earn an amount large enough by Chinese standards to ensure a comfortable life after returning home.

Chinese enthusiasm to come and work

in Japan is so strong that, because of the tighter screening of refugees, some Chinese now reportedly plan to enter Japan surreptitiously aboard their own boats, carrying passports and forged entry permits.

The influx of Vietnamese and Chinese into Japan has posed a serious challenge to Japan's immigration policy.

Japan has been internationally criticized for its lack of efforts to accept foreign refugees. Various advanced countries accept not only political refugees but also "economic refugees," people who are hard-pressed in their homelands and seeking jobs in advanced countries.

Critics say that at a time when Japan has become an economic superpower and is enjoying an unprecedented economic boom, it should open its doors to foreigners wishing to work in Japan. Even domestically, small industries are calling on the government to accept more foreign workers to ease a serious labor shortage which is causing difficulties for them.