

## Not Built in a Day

By Toshio Iwasaki

The ruins of ancient cities are one of the most vivid reminders of history and its flow. There are, for example, many ancient cities rimming the Mediterranean, and visiting these historic sites and standing in the grassy squares creates as no other experience can a sharp awareness that once there were crowds of people milling in these streets, laughing and crying with the vicissitudes of life, and an acute sense of loss at their passing. The empty shell of the city is one of the most powerful symbols there is of the fragile, gossamer and transitory nature of our lives.

Yet there are also cities that come back, Phoenix-like, to live again. If you stand in the Foro Romano in the center of Rome, you stand surrounded by relics dating back to the great city of 2,000 years ago. Yet if you step out of this charmed circle, you are in the middle of modern Rome with its futuristic architecture and dynamic population. Changing with the ebb and flow of history, Rome has come back in every era to be a political, economic and cultural center of human civilization.

Indeed, Rome stands as a monument to the way that, so long as it offers the convenience and other amenities to attract a creative and ambitious population, the city can continue to change and evolve over the years to meet the needs of succeeding generations until it is destroyed by war or natural forces. The crucial thing here, however, is that the people of the city must have the desire to preserve their city and to modernize it in keeping with the flow of history.

What of Tokyo? Tokyo was first established as a city in the late 16th century. Called Edo at the time, it was the seat of civil government under the Tokugawa shogunate. Even 300 years ago, Edo was a powerful magnet attracting talent from all over the country. Just as it was the crux of Japan's feudal system in the 18th century, so was Edo a world-class commercial center, having a population of over one million.

With the Meiji Restoration, Edo was re-named Tokyo and retained as the capital. Taking on an even greater political hue, Tokyo also moved quickly to become an industrial center befitting Japan's bid for modernity. While much of the physical trappings of the old capital were lost in the firebombing and other devastation of war, today's Tokyo retains the vitality and dynamism that has made it Japan's first city for centuries. Although Tokyo has only a 400-year history, it has, like Rome, managed to change and adapt to the changing times.

Arising from the rubble of war so quickly as to leave virtually no time for urban planning, Tokyo has in places grown so fast and frantically that it has become a bit unlivable. With the urban sprawl and the sharp population increases of the last few decades, Tokyo land prices have soared and this has in turn forced people to live in smaller and smaller homes farther and farther away from their downtown offices. While these are serious problems demanding prompt governmental attention, it is also true that Tokyo has become a world information center and that Tokyo's residents now have ready access to the best cultural, artistic and other attractions that the world has to offer.

One commentator has thus observed that living in Tokyo, crowded though it may be, is like having the best seat in the house in the theater of mankind. In many ways, it is this combination of attractions and disattractions that characterizes Tokyo today. And like any other city, Tokyo can only grow if it preserves the best from its past and constantly adopts and adapts the most promising facets for the future. While there is no doubting Tokyo's dynamism, it is imperative that its current residents have the foresight to take the longer-term perspective and to create a vital city for all posterity.

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.

## A Dream that Money Can't Buy

I've found very interesting the article "Brushing-up Market for Young Women" in your May-June issue. I agree completely with the conclusion of the writer, Kei Uchimura: "What do Japanese women actually get out of these experiences? ...Attending a finishing school or taking party in JAL's package tour amounts to nothing more than a consumer game unless the participants succeed in applying the experience in their everyday lives afterward." I wonder about my own feelings—as a young woman—reading everywhere and hearing from every radio and TV station and minute by minute getting more aware that I'm simply part of that fabulous target, that my existence is considered (and "important") because I belong to the big pie (the young Japanese market) that is attracting all sorts of consumer product makers.

I'm sure I could feel simply exploited: not only in my financial, but mainly in my "spiritual" resources. How can the young Japanese women stand it? Why don't they say NO? How can they believe that "to be" is equal to "to consume," and that the eventual quality of their life is proportional to the high-quality (and price) of the goods that they purchase? Sophistication, travel abroad, looking for a more refined education, culture, sports...all these things are wonderful. But only if they can *really* represent a personal need and experience. Not just the "latest trend" of a more sophisticated type of consumption. But such a personal experience is not easy to enjoy: because it will require a certain amount of bravery, the bravery to be herself—the bravery to be a real individual: *really* unique and different from everybody else! *A dream that money can't buy...* (like in the title of the famous 1930s movie).

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## COMING UP

Since the 1960s, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry has consulted the Industrial Structure Council about the industrial and trade policies Japan should follow in each coming decade. The council's recommendations have been landmarks for Japanese policymakers.

In early July, the council submitted a report to the ministry which sketched out a vision for the 1990s, calling for Japan to take more international responsibility abroad and provide more leeway for improvements in lifestyles at home.

The September/October issue of the *Journal* will focus on this report in its Cover Story item, with Sumiko Takahara, former minister of state for economic planning, Ian Rodger, Financial Times Tokyo Bureau chief, as well as leading figures from economic circles and labor unions, and others discussing key points of the report.

There will also be an unusual article by Toshihisa Nagasaka, a chief economist at the Institute for International Trade and Investment who is also a cinema enthusiast, seeking to make a comparison between the U.S. and Japan as the two nations are portrayed in movies.

## Businesses Urged To Limit Garbage

An advisory panel to the governor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has urged business corporations to share a greater responsibility for the disposal of the waste that comes from their products in its interim report submitted to Gov. Shun'ichi Suzuki.

Tokyo's incineration plants have been unable to catch up with the swelling amount of garbage, particularly wastepaper from offices that are using more computers and other office automation equipment. "Business garbage" discharged by offices and restaurants accounts for two-thirds of Tokyo's garbage, excluding industrial waste. The volume of business garbage has been increasing in recent years at an annual rate of 16% against a slow 3% for that of household garbage.

The report stressed the need for Tokyo to set strict guidelines aimed at encouraging businesses to take specific measures to reduce their waste or recycle it. The report said it should be made clear

that those who are reluctant to cooperate may be barred from using public incineration plants and required instead to dispose of their waste elsewhere on their own. As specific measures for consideration, the report also suggested making businesses responsible for the disposal of wastepaper, bottles and cans in separate bags or containers, and to produce detailed programs for cutting the volume of waste they discharge.

The report not only branded businesses as "waste dischargers" but described their production activities as "the source of waste." This marks a departure from the conventional concept tracing waste to the stage where the consumers use goods to a new one going back to the stage where the goods are produced.

The report said that the flood of disposable goods and containers that cannot be recycled is mainly to blame for the unnecessary increase in the volume of urban waste. Referring to electrical equipment and other durable consumer goods, it said that the expanding size and the use of new compound materials makes them harder to dispose of or recycle.

The report urged manufacturers to try to develop materials that can be easily



Wastepaper from offices or "business garbage"—one of the major problems in Tokyo today.

Photo: Bureau of Public Cleansing, TMG

disposed of or use containers that can be recycled and adopt what it called a "deposit system" in which the cost of waste recovery is included in the retail price of the goods.

The current Waste Disposal and Public Cleansing Law provides for steps to be taken by businesses to make waste from their products easier to dispose of or recycle. But the law is not binding because no penalty is specified for violations. The report advised the governor to persuade the central government to revise the law to make it work.

Meanwhile, a similar report was issued by "Women's Forum to Reduce Waste," an advisory panel to the health and welfare minister. It said that any attempt to cut the volume of waste is a matter that should be addressed not merely by consumers but by business corporations as well.

The report called on businesses to be more responsible for waste disposal at both the production and distribution stages. It urged them to develop products that can be easily disposed of. As a way to check the flood of disposable goods, the women's forum suggested levying a special tax on manufacturers of such goods or obliging them to put a label on their products indicating the cost of their disposal. ■

## Futuristic City Hall Starts to Take Shape

Tokyo will have a new attraction next March when the 243-meter high-tech-controlled Tokyo Metropolitan Government main building is completed in Shinjuku.

Soon to be the tallest "smart" building in Japan, the half-finished 48-story skyscraper already towers high over the Shinjuku subcenter like a futuristic ziggurat. It is fast becoming, in the words of one city official, the "symbol of the capital." Currently, the tallest building in



The new, 48-story Tokyo Metropolitan Government building

Japan is the Sunshine Building in Tokyo's Ikebukuro district.

Designed by internationally famed Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, the structure, coated with imported granite, is costing some ¥156.9 billion (\$1,046 million at the rate of ¥150/\$). It will cost another ¥13.3 billion (\$89 million) to move the entire metropolitan government to the new building from its present downtown complex.

The main feature of the building, besides its striking design, is the wide use of high-tech office systems. Employees will be able to clock in and out, lock and unlock doors, book conference rooms and pay for meals at the canteen using only an ID card.

Other high-tech facilities will include an optical fiber cable network for in-house liaison, an automated document delivery system, energy-saving functions to conserve electricity and water, and a computerized maintenance and management system for controlling the entire building. The disaster prevention center, for instance, will be able to directly monitor the scene of accidents. ■

The extensive office automation means that employees will need new desks. In all, 16,000 new desks and 60,000 new chairs will be installed. Smoking will be banned throughout the building except in the lounge. Food and drink deliveries by outside traders will also be banned because, says an official, such practices are "unworthy" of a modern office.

So far, only the framework and exterior of the new building have been completed, and workers are scurrying to finish the interior. But already a flood of visitors are coming to inspect Japan's most modern city hall.

Visitors since 1988, when construction began, already exceed 6,500, including 760 in the first four months of this year. Many are officials of local governments planning to build new offices of their own. Even foreign countries have shown interest, with Americans, Soviets, British, French and other foreign visitors totaling 465 having so far joined the tours of the towering structure. City officials are worried they will be swamped with applications for inspections when the building is finally finished. ■