

**Degeneration of Morals**

By Suetsune Takashi

**D**egeneration of morals appears to be occurring throughout the world. Offenses such as pick-pocketing, swiping and sneak-thievery have become all too common. Meanwhile, crimes such as robbery, murder, kidnapping, arson and lynching, having been let loose from all restrictions, are running rampant. Murders of foreign tourists in Florida, America; the indiscriminate shooting of passengers in commuter trains in New York; terrorism against foreign residents in Algeria; hate crimes against foreigners at the hands of skinheads in Germany and robberies by armed groups in Russia—these events, which were unheard of two, three years ago, are now somewhat commonplace.

Japan is said to be a much safer country in comparison with other nations. In recent years, however, wicked crimes are clearly on the rise. In major cities over the world, quieter areas where people feel safe enough to walk at night are fast disappearing. The world is full of drug addicts. Worse yet, there is a clear mental degeneration around the world. And the kind of rough language and reckless thinking which we thought died along with the Nazi Hitler are again beginning to run wild.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party which secured the largest share of the vote in proportional representation in the December Russian elections, has made open statements such as "If Germany chose to interfere with the domestic affairs of Russia, it should be fully aware of the danger of a nuclear holocaust." He also said "As far as we are concerned, there is no territorial dispute with Japan. If Japan insists on having its way, then we will create new Hiroshimas and Nagasakis." These are statements that cannot be taken as from someone in his right mind. What is intolerable though, is the fact that Zhirinovskiy gained wide support from within Russia and was able to win big. Sadly, a rebuttal expected from America's

Clinton administration never took place. Germany was the same. Meanwhile, Japan, deeming the remarks unworthy of any official comment, chose to ignore the statements.

However, are such statements something to ignore? The most wicked murderer Hitler also made very extreme statements. So ridiculous were his statements that respectable people chose to ignore them. The consequence was what we experienced. I believe that Zhirinovskiy's statements are related to the abnormal crimes that are happening around the world now. Crimes are challenges to the law and order of our society. The sense of unfairness, prejudice, distrust towards leaders and the government and uneasiness towards peace, these feelings all show up as challenges toward law and order. The easy, irresponsible attitude that whenever it is inconvenient for ourselves we should just blame it on society is becoming rampant. And Zhirinovskiy is a demagogue who senses the undercurrent of such attitude.

As long as one waves the banners of freedom of speech which serves as a pillar of democracy, he can assert that it is his freedom to say whatever he wants. Yet freedom of speech is a non-violent means created to fight disorder. And here, Zhirinovskiy is saying that he will not hesitate to deploy atomic weapons to rid his opponents. Don't you think that we are down playing the seriousness of the problem by believing that giving him an ear will only serve to puff up his head?

**COMING UP**

The Japanese economy, once hailed as a locomotive for the world economy, is now dragging up a hilly track. An overhauling of the economic structure appears necessary. The question is where to start and how long it will take. In the next issue, the *Journal* will propose some blueprints for an economic overhaul. Also, we will introduce a new column entitled "Finance."

**'Build Rather than Destroy'**

I received a copy of the December 1993/January 1994 issue of the *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry* from a friend. Mr. Matsuyama Yukio's "Viewpoints" article "My Criticism of American Society" made a significant impression on me, so much so that I decided to write to you.

Certainly Mr. Matsuyama Yukio's qualifications as a journalist and his time spent living in my country make him well qualified to precisely state his impressions and analysis of the United States. He evidently has adopted many aspects of American culture, albeit some of the bad ones, including a biased negativism commonly found in the American press and yielding to the temptation to criticize rather than to correct.

There is no denying the many social and leadership problems in my country. It is not difficult, nor is it very creative, to find a sensational, morbid photograph of a destitute homeless person lying on a sidewalk and to display it with the caption "Abrupt increases in brutal teenage crimes, illegal immigrants, the unemployed, drug addicts, and the homeless—America in the 1990s has turned into an ailing superpower." America is much more, and better, than that!

While I have lived in Japan for only five months, I have witnessed some of Japan's darker sides. I too could choose to take pictures of the homeless in Shinjuku Station or the poor woman who lives in a cardboard box under the bridge near my home in Nagoya. Or, I could write about the corruption and scandals running rampant in Japanese government and business. The most appalling fact is that almost every foreign woman I have met in Japan can tell a shocking story about being personally sexually propositioned or assaulted by Japanese men who cannot control their sexual desires. Last August, I too was assaulted in Kyoto on a busy street corner by a businessman who was too drunk to know what he was doing (I hope).

I could also write about the signifi-

cant problems facing Japan in the future. How will Japan cope with its aging and often unproductive white collar work force which is hiding under the protection of the lifetime employment system? How long will Japan continue to waste the talent and resources provided by its female population? Can the rate of alcohol and cigarette consumption in Japan not have an impact on its future.

Would such an article published in a journal read by your country's people be offensive to them? Is this the Japan of which its citizens can be proud?

Instead, I write about the kind people I have met in Japan and the wonderful places I have visited, such as the man who hosted me in Matsumoto for a weekend at the request of a mutual friend, or the homestay family I lived with in Kanazawa for three months. Many lost foreigners can tell the story about the man or woman on the street who not only provided directions, but took the time to escort them to their destination. And what wonderful traditions of gift-giving and humble respect for others this country has! Several of my letters to home about my best experiences are being published by the Eurocentres Japan so that others may read them and be interested in visiting Japan. Last month, I gave a speech on what I learned about Japanese culture from the Japanese Boy Scouts. My speech won third prize in a contest in Ishikawa Prefecture.

I feel that I can never repay the kindness that many Japanese people have shown me. I have tried to show my gratitude by learning, working and volunteering with the Japanese people. I hope that everyone who reads Mr. Matsuyama Yukio's article has a chance to witness my America, not Mr. Matsuyama Yukio's America. While in Japan, I learned the danger of judging a country, its people, or its culture from my own context or perspective. Such is a very difficult challenge. I am surprised that Mr. Matsuyama Yukio, especially given his many years of living in my country, has not been more fair in passing judgement on my country.

Mr. Matsuyama Yukio wrote that



"The applause for my lectures, I surmise, illustrates American intellectuals' sympathy with my view." Perhaps Americans are more similar to Japanese than Mr. Matsuyama Yukio would be comfortable admitting. I believe the applause could possibly be similar to what such applause could mean in Japan—a polite, respectful response masking a hidden disappointment and offense to what the speaker has said.

The many social problems in America and Japan cannot be denied. But let us try to better understand them and correct them in a manner which recognizes and builds upon the many wonderful aspects of our countries. Let us build rather than destroy.

Sincerely  
Charles R. Budd  
MI, U.S.A.

### Keep Up the Good Work

Upon reviewing the October/November 1993 edition of the *Journal*, we would like to take this opportunity to express our admiration about the continuous excellent quality of the publication.

The very informative essays are well selected and written by Japanese experts of high international standard. We particularly emphasize the recent "Viewpoints" articles with friendly advice for America which are also valuable.

Keep on like this! Best regards.

Yours sincerely,  
Woerner Consult  
Eppstein, Germany

The *Journal* welcomes letters of opinion or comment from its readers. Letters, including the writer's name and address, should be sent to: 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.

## New Training Program Provides Firsthand Experience of Japan

A new scheme has started to enable young engineers from the major industrial countries of the West to study the ways of thinking and behavior of the Japanese by working alongside Japanese colleagues at plants in Japan. The first group of 41 participants in this program, called the Manufacturing Technology Fellowship, arrived in Japan at the beginning of January.

The training begins with one month's study of the Japanese language under the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the affiliate of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) that organizes the program. Then from February the participants will go to their assigned recipient companies in various branches of industry around the country, such as Sony Corp., Toyota Motor Corporation, and Nippon Steel Corp., to gain a fresh on-the-spot experience of up to one year of working for a Japanese enterprise and living in a company dormitory.

One of the participants is Elizabeth Altman, an employee of Motorola Inc. who graduated as an engineer from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has been active in the field of industrial design. Altman decided that she would like to study Japanese culture and thinking in Japan. When at Polaroid, her previous company, she undertook a joint development project with a Japanese employee and became aware of differences in their approach to problem solving. Now Altman will work at the Sony Corp. Koda factory in Aichi Prefecture. Her present employer, Motorola, hopes that she will be able through the program to study such topics as manufacturing technology, the handling of machines and equipment, and team thinking and that, after her training in Japan, she will be able to use her experience to make judgments about how new products can be introduced into the factory environment.

Another participant is Stephen Jones of TRW Inc.'s Transportation Electron-



(Left) At the Inaugural Reception of the Manufacturing Technology Fellowship Program, held on January 10 at ANA Hotel, Kumagai Hiroshi, MITI minister delivered the keynote address. Guests included (from left) U.S. Senator J. Rockefeller; Canadian Ambassador Donald Campbell; Australian Ambassador Dr. Ashton Calbert; U.S. Minister-Councillor Rust Deming and Toyoshima Toru, chairman of JETRO.

(Below) Forty-one engineers (30 from the U.S., seven from Canada and four from Australia) will receive one year of on-the-spot experience working for a Japanese company.



ics Division, who, after hoping to work at several Japanese automobile companies, finally has been assigned to the plants of Toyota Motor Corp. And Michael Yearwood of Grumman Corp. will join the research institute of Nippon Steel.

Until now international exchange has taken place at various private-sector levels, for example between business leaders, scholars, and business people, but discussions at conferences and seminars have tended to be abstract. Engineers have had very little opportunity to gain direct experience in other countries.

To overcome this flaw, MITI acquired the budget to carry out the new training program in the spirit of the "global business partnership," which the Japanese government has been promoting.

After MITI had solicited Japanese companies to accept foreign trainees and non-Japanese companies in the major industrial countries of the West to find candidates for the scheme from among engineers who desired to visit Japan and had coordinated the conditions, the companies concerned signed

contracts between them.

While the dispatching company pays the trainee's salary and transport expenses, the recipient firm in Japan provides training, living, and other expenses incurred in Japan. The Japanese company can then receive a subsidy from JETRO for half of the bill.

All participants in the program have had at least two years of working expe-

rience as engineers. Of the 59 applicants this time, JETRO accepted 30 trainees from the United States, seven from Canada, and four from Australia. Although no applications were received from Europe this time, the region can be expected to join the scheme as it expands from next year. It is hoped that an increasingly wide range of participants will take part in the future.

### **What is MTF?**

More and more companies are seeing a need to cooperate internationally, to create global business partnerships. Japanese manufacturing companies are no exception; they are eager to encourage global industrial cooperation through the exchange of engineers. The Manufacturing Technology Fellowship (MTF) program is one way to accomplish this goal.

The MTF is a new, innovative program, based on the voluntary initiative of Japanese corporations, that gives overseas engineers the opportunity to spend up to a year in Japan, learning all aspects of Japanese manufacturing, as well as the language, culture and way of life.

The program is a joint effort of each nation's implementing body and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) with the support of the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI).