

## East vs. West on Human Rights

By Suetsune Takashi

I would like to discuss a few of my thoughts on the question of human rights. American and Chinese opinions on this question do not jibe. The U.S. describes the Tiananmen Square incident as an inexcusable violation of human rights and its position toward the Chinese government has been one of constant reproach. When Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited China this past March he once again urged the Chinese government to reflect upon human rights issues. The Chinese government responded with vehement counterarguments: arbitrary actions that would jeopardize the security of 1 billion citizens are impermissible, and human rights alone cannot take priority over the country's political security and economic prosperity.

As a rule, the Western way of looking at human rights is that not even one person should be sacrificed for the sake of the whole. This is the opposite of the view that it would not do to sacrifice many things in order to aid one person. The U.S. takes the former stance while China maintains the latter. It is not for us to judge which of these two conflicting positions is right or wrong. In this writer's opinion it would be wrong to pass judgment in that way. It is not a question of which is right or wrong; both are correct. Or, put another way, neither is incorrect.

We could expound on any number of arguments, but if we emphasize as a prerequisite that one or the other is wrong the result of the dispute will be confrontation and if this confrontation is carried over into relations between countries it inevitably leads to a decision by force of arms, or in other words, war. Thousands of people might be sacrificed in the name of protecting the human rights of a few. This is putting the cart before the horse.

Since the Carter administration, the U.S. has come to aggressively interject human rights issues into international relations. Equality and fraternity were integral facets of American's

founding ideals and it is absolutely correct for Americans to strive for their realization. However, it is common knowledge that just because something is correct does not mean that it can be accomplished immediately. There is a perception that the U.S. has pressed China for concessions on human rights issues as a condition for extending most favored nation status, but interjecting human rights in that manner is in itself misdirected. This is the equivalent of wanting to cancel a business contract because your business partner's family structure does not suit your taste.

In conjunction with human rights issues, the U.S. has now begun to make an issue of inadequate labor conditions in Asian regions where remarkable economic growth continues. Economic advances in Asia have in large part been based on low wages and inferior labor conditions and the U.S. is of the opinion that it is undesirable for great quantities of inexpensive products manufactured under those sorts of conditions to be exported to the U.S. However, Asian industries have not yet reached the stage that they could immediately pay wages at levels equal to those in America. The U.S. is heavily promoting NAFTA and it is a well-known fact that America's target is the cheap labor force in its neighboring country.

Universal human values form the foundation for the protection of human rights. If only for that reason it is undesirable to use human rights for other objectives.

### COMING UP

Following the bursting of the bubble, Japan is faced with the urgent task of reshaping its economy and industrial structure. Newly industrialized countries are swiftly catching up, employing technology advanced by their forerunners and producing items of excellent quality. To compete, Japan is obliged to upgrade its technologies.

The next issue of the *Journal* will display some blueprints Japanese industries are now designing.

## Think Broader than the U.S.

The cover story in the April/May 1994 *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry*, "New Economic Challenges," is an article detailing the U.S.-Japan trade friction and the phenomenal surplus—some \$60 billion—which Japan has over the U.S. This will always be a sore point for the U.S., and from time to time "Japan Bashing" will rear its ugly head.

The roaring eighties under Reagan (and his outdated Reaganomics) built up deficits totalling trillions of dollars which will take 100 years to pay off.

And now Japan, with astronomical trade surpluses internationally, somehow has to bear the brunt of envy in the corporate and industrial world.

Japan has had it too good for too long and it is time she opened up her markets to U.S. and international competition. Let Japan compete globally—if she cannot then the consumers have a right to fair prices which will greatly reduce their cost of living (presently among the highest in the world).

In India, Japan treads softly with only \$7 million in investments during the first half of 1993, this in spite of the fact that India is opening up her markets to the world. The U.S. has pumped in more than \$2 billion (and this figure will increase substantially soon) and Japan is most definitely the loser. The same applies to Japan when it comes to trade with South Africa—big, vast and mineral rich and one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Japan failed to help the ANC in spite of Dr. Nelson Mandela's request. (President Clinton is going

**Correction:** The photo caption which appeared on page 18 of the December/January 1994 issue of the *Journal* was incorrect. The pocket heater was produced by Kojima Press Industry Co., Ltd. The photo was provided by the same company. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused and for the delay in running this correction.

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.



## Hata Forms Minority Government

Japan's new Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu formed a minority government on April 28, following the walkout of a key coalition ally, the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The Socialists quit as they were angered by a move by conservative partners in the coalition, including Hata's Shinseito, to form a separate voting bloc aimed at isolating the SDP.

Hata suffered a further setback when Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto, a Shinseito member, was forced to resign, only a week after the inauguration of his administration, over a slip of tongue over Japan's military action in China during World War II, a statement which offended various Asian countries. Hata quickly filled the post by naming Nakai Hiroshi of the middle-of-the-road Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) as Nagano's successor. However, the scar left by Nagano's sudden resignation will likely remain unhealed.

Hata took over the reign of government from Hosokawa Morihiro, who resigned amid criticism of alleged dirty financial dealings while serving as governor of Kumamoto Prefecture several years ago. At the start of his administration, Hata said he was determined to continue deregulation and other reform policies set forth by his predecessor Hosokawa who ousted the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from power last August after 38 years of unbroken rule.

Hata, 58, who was

foreign minister in Hosokawa's Cabinet, is facing a steep uphill battle due to the fragile power upon which his government is based—it has only 182 seats against 206 for the LDP and 74 seats for the SDP in the 511-seat lower house of the Diet.

Some political observers go out of their way to predict that Hata's administration will last only a few months without defections from those two opposition parties. The LDP and SDP could bring down the Hata government at any time with a no-confidence motion. Among key ministers in Hata's Cabinet are Foreign Minister Kakizawa Koji, a recent defector from the LDP and a former parliamentary vice foreign minister, Finance Minister Fujii Hirohisa, who was retained, Minister of International Trade and Industry Hata Eijiro, who was shifted from the post of agriculture minister, and Economic Planning Agency Director General Terasawa Yoshio, a consummate financial whiz



the extra mile to help Mandela and South Africa.) Is it possible that Japan is losing out to the U.S. when it comes to other countries?

Japan is in for a roller-coaster ride and former Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro and his government had to do much more than water down their political and economic reforms. Now Japan has to go the extra mile and there is much Japan can do (like the U.S.) to help poorer countries with their technology and carry the credit for extended periods which will help Japan (and also the U.S.) and the poorer countries as well. India is all out to modernize, and in the next decade \$200 billion will be spent on this process. Now that this giant has awakened, there is no holding back.

Yours truly,  
Mac Lakhani  
Sacramento, Ca.



The Hata administration came to power following the fall of the Hosokawa Cabinet on charges of the former prime minister's dirty financial dealings.

Photo: Kyodo News Service



who has served as vice president of Japan's largest securities firm, Nomura Securities Co.

Japan's efforts to open its market wider will be tested in June when the new government unveils a second market-opening package. The first package, announced last March, features four items—deregulation, promotion of imports and investment, enhancing competition, and boosting government procurement. Deregulatory steps involve abolition of regulations that directly block foreign access, international coordination of licensing and inspections systems, and simpler application procedures. The measures center on four areas—housing and land, information and communications, distribution, and financial services and insurance. Under these basic guidelines, the package pledges to devise concrete measures to either abolish or ease government regulations by the end of June.

## Japan's Plutonium Reactor Reaches Criticality

On April 5 Japan's first prototype plutonium-fueled fast-breeder reactor reached criticality—the stage at which the nuclear reaction in the reactor's fissionable material is sufficient to sustain a chain reaction.

The reactor, christened "Monju," is installed at the nuclear facility of the governmental Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, on the Japan Sea. Monju is the second stage in the Japanese government's plan to develop a fast-breeder reactor that began with the earlier experimental reactor "Joyo" which reached criticality in 1977 in Oarai, Ibaraki Prefecture.

Japan has made fast-breeder reactors, which produce more fissionable material than they consume, a cornerstone in its nuclear power policy and part of the measures for the country to become self-sufficient in energy supply. The Japanese government and power industry plans to build two fully operational fast-breeder reactors by 2030.

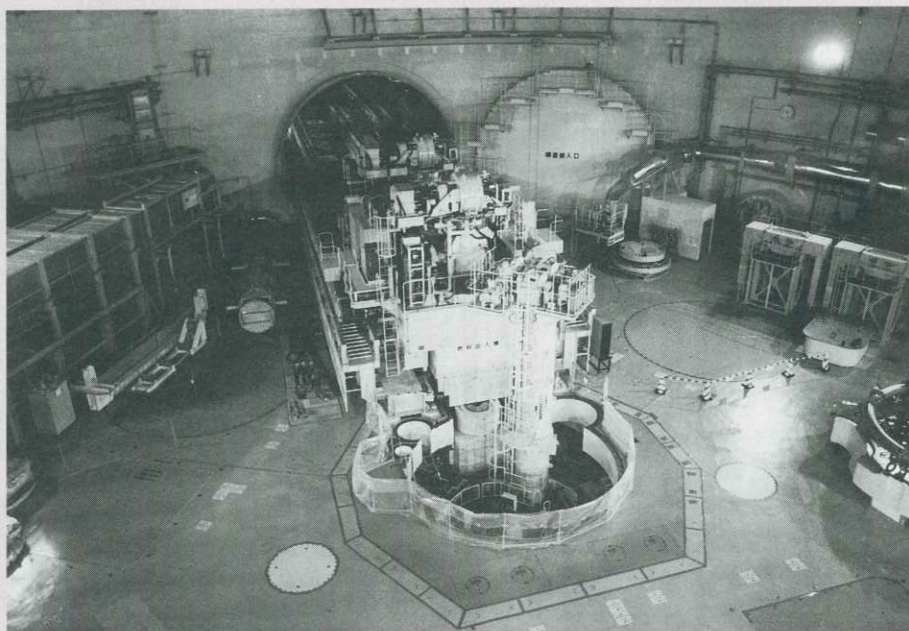
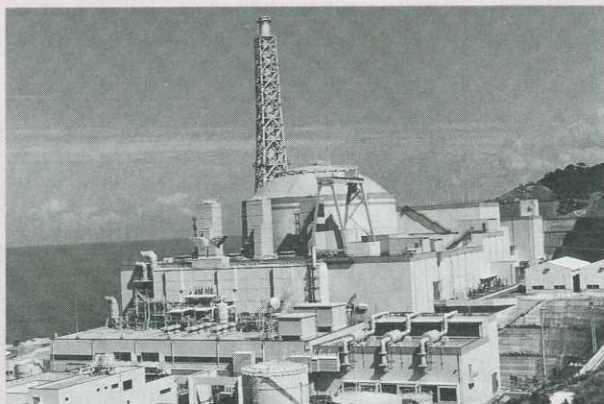
The 280,000-kilowatt Monju, fueled by a mixture of plutonium oxide and uranium oxide, cost ¥600 billion to build. Some scientists claim Monju-type reactors, which use liquid sodium as a coolant, consume fuel 60 times more efficiently than conventional light-water uranium reactors.

Given the easing of the demand-supply balance, including an oil glut and lower uranium prices, as well as the excessive availability of plutonium due to the dismantling of nuclear weapons, most major industrialized countries have opted out of the development of fast-breeder reactors.

Japan is now the only country to pursue the breeding of uranium for power generation. But recoverable uranium deposits are estimated to last only 74 years from now. In addition, fast-breeder reactors can generate energy from waste nuclear fuels that would otherwise only be dumped. Thus, Japan finds fast-breeder reactors quite relevant for its future.

There has been international and domestic anxiety over Monju's safety, but one nuclear energy expert at the Fukui Prefectural government's Nuclear Safety Division dismissed the possibility of the reactor's adverse effect on the

environment, saying that Monju is designed with fail-safe mechanisms. Officials of the division, emphasizing they kept a strict watch on the building of Monju, said top executives of the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation were called in on various occasions for briefings to ensure the safety of the project.



Monju, the fast-breeder reactor located at the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation's nuclear facility in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, reached criticality and "Atom Fire" occurred.