

## Good and Evil Nations

By Suetsune Takashi

**T**wenty-five years ago, the United States sent men to the moon. This contributor covered the event from lift-off to re-entry at Cape Kennedy and Houston as a special correspondent for a Japanese television network. Through that event, people realized for the first time the magnificence of civilization.

When we look at today's international situation, however, we find that despite scientific and technological progress, mankind, in terms of relations between nations and ideas regarding people of certain races or tribes, remains unchanged throughout history. Consider the bloodshed in Rwanda or Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example. It proves that men are not so far removed from barbarians in some ways. It's hard to believe that such acts of aggression are being committed by the same human beings capable of creating exquisite art and developing technology sophisticated enough to enable travel to the moon.

When confronted with problems regarding other nations or races, human beings lose the power of reasoning. The nation as a political entity is a relatively new phenomenon when viewed in the context of the history of man. That people exist collectively now does not necessarily mean this will be the case in the future. In several thousand years time, if mankind continues to exist, war, international politics, trade friction and other problems with which we are plagued today, are bound to be meaningless.

These days, the world, when viewed from the perspective of international politics, is divided into countries which are good, and those which are evil. The words good and evil, however, have only a vague meaning, and provide no universal standard. Using these definitions, Iran, Iraq or North Korea—the countries that attempt entry into the club which possesses nuclear weapons—are immediately designated as evil by the U.S. Those countries which refuse to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are also viewed as evil.

Ironically enough, today, countries that already possess nuclear arms are not considered to be evil. Within the framework of the Cold War, the former Soviet Union was thought to be the most evil country of all, with China next on the list. Now, however, neither Russia nor China is considered to be an evil country for possessing nuclear arms. On the other hand, though, the U.S. does not necessarily consider countries to be good just because they have signed the NPT. Today's member nations may become enemies tomorrow. Just look at how Murayama Tomiichi, chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Japan who spoke out so strongly against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, now heads the Japanese Cabinet as prime minister. The U.S. was concerned that Japan would become one of the evil nations, but Prime Minister Murayama reassured Americans by vowing that Japan would honor the treaty.

Nonetheless, the U.S. does not entirely believe that Japan is a good nation. Japan is an evil nation because it hordes a trade surplus, generating unemployment in the U.S. and Europe. Japan, if armed with nuclear weapons, would be an evil nation, without doubt. There are no Japanese citizens, though, who believe that Japan should possess nuclear weapons, except for a few misguided individuals.

However, authorities in the U.S. and Europe as well often argue that Japan, South Korea and Taiwan will opt to enter the nuclear club if North Korea's possession of nuclear arms becomes clear. Of all foolish things, some people claim that it is unnatural for an economic superpower such as Japan not to become nuclear. Such speculation by ultranationalists and other misguided individuals is not only meaningless, but also dangerous.

The NPT is known throughout the world as being an unequal treaty. In order to accept this in a positive way, we must believe that such inequality today will ensure happiness in the future. We can't let good nations become evil ones.

## Socialist Murayama Heads New Government

Murayama Tomiichi, chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), heads Japan's new administration. Murayama formed his coalition Cabinet on June 30 with his party's long-time foe, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), in a historic rapprochement.

Murayama is the first Socialist prime minister in 47 years and Japan's fourth prime minister in a year. The 70-year-old Murayama succeeded Hata Tsutomu, who resigned along with his minority Cabinet after only two months of service.

Of the 21 Cabinet posts in the administration led by Murayama, 13 went to the LDP, which wrestled back power after 11 months in the opposition bleachers, five to the SDPJ and two to New Harbinger Party. The LDP holds the key foreign, trade and defense portfolios in the new administration.

### COMING UP

During the period when the Japanese economy was heavily industry-oriented in order to build strong and competitive muscles, Japanese consumers were labeled the most tamed and patient in the world. Today the consumers are witnessing remarkable changes taking place around them.

The Japanese economy is now more consumer-oriented with the introduction of a product liability law, approved by the Diet, and deregulation steadily increasing. The strong yen is also something to watch. There will be detailed articles regarding these changes in the next issue.

**Correction:** The figure for bad loans incurred by Japanese banks mentioned in the "Toyota Regains No. 1 Slot in '93 Earnings List" article in the "Topics" column of the July/August issue should have read ¥14 trillion.

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.



With the heads of the LDP and Harbinger Party established in main Cabinet posts, the goal of the Murayama Cabinet is a stable governmental base.

The heads of all the three parties forming the coalition took Cabinet posts. LDP President Kono Yohei, 57, assumed the post of deputy prime minister and foreign minister. Harbinger Party leader Takemura Masayoshi, 59, a former chief Cabinet secretary under the Hosokawa administration, was given the post of finance minister. Murayama also named Tanaka Makiko, daughter of the late Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, as director general of the Science and Technology Agency. Tanaka is the only woman in the Cabinet.

Murayama said in his inaugural speech in a plenary session of the House of Representatives that Japan's Self-Defense Forces do not violate the war-renouncing Constitution, breaking a long-standing taboo of his pacifist-oriented SDPJ. It was the first time for a SDPJ leader to formally endorse the Self-Defense Forces as constitutional. He also pledged to observe the duties of the Japan-U.S. security treaty, also a departure from past SDPJ policy.

## Product Liability Law Projected for July 1995

On June 22 the House of Councillors passed a bill to provide consumers with greater protection against accidents and injuries caused by defective products.

With the House of Representatives having approved the bill earlier, parliamentary action on the legislation is now completed. The law is expected to go into effect in July next year after adequate steps are taken, including the dissemination of the law among concerned industries.

The product liability law will require consumers seeking compensation to simply prove that a product was faulty, rather than the present system, under the civil code, whereby consumers must prove negligence by the maker, which requires professional knowledge.

The new law adopted the so-called "no fault" principle and drastically reduced consumers' burden of proof.

The corporate side wanted to limit the definition of "fault," but the law rejected the idea and defined "fault," in a wider sense of the word, as "something lacking normal safety."

However, the law does not incorporate a provision holding makers liable for damages or injury through assumption of a link between the damage or injury and a defective product. Similarly, the law exempts the maker from liability in case it can prove that it was unable to foresee fault at the time of shipment.

Consumer organizations criticize the provision as "corporate-oriented." They also expressed concern that the law has a number of vague provisions, which makers could use to their advantage.

## Japanese Longevity Reaches New High

Japanese men's average longevity reached a new high of 76.25 years in



Photo: Kyodo News Service

Japan is confronted with an aging society — expanded social welfare policies are needed now more than ever.

1993, extending its world record-breaking spree for the eighth year in a row, a Health and Welfare Ministry survey showed.

The life span of Japanese women is even longer, setting yet another world record of 82.51 years. The figure grew for the ninth year in a row. The difference in longevity between men and women also widened to a record gap of 6.26 years.

The ministry officials attributed the longer life span to medical progress and predicted that the upward trend in the average longevity would continue for the time being although the pace might slow down.

The longevity of Japanese men was followed by that of Iceland, where men's average life span is 75.74 years, about six months shorter than the Japanese average. Sweden ranked third with 75.35, followed by Hong Kong with 74.9 and Israel with 74.54.

The most common cause of death among Japanese men is cancer. Heart ailments ranked second, followed by pneumonia and bronchitis.

For women, the most common cause of death was heart ailments, while cancer took second place, followed by complications of the cerebral circulatory system.

## Academic Efforts Urged To Promote Science

Japanese youths are becoming less and less science-minded, as evidenced by a downtrend in the number of candidates for university science and engineering courses.

To address the situation, an Education Ministry panel, comprising leading scientists and educators as well as top figures in various walks of life, recently drew up a report recommending strong academic efforts to publicize the importance and pleasure of science among young people both on and outside the campus.

The report urged that university professors of science and engineering offer themselves as "science volunteers" and teach in open schools, museums and other public institutions. The report also called for the holding of various events for promoting science, such as the opening of university courses to the general public, granting of awards to ordinary citizens who submit

worthy scientific papers and the holding of science-related photo contests.

An Education Ministry survey showed that candidates for science-related courses in universities accounted for 25.6% in 1986, but the ratio dropped to 19.5% in 1993.

In a ministry-sponsored survey of 57 deans of science or engineering departments of universities, 44 or 77% expressed concern that brilliant young people increasingly tend to opt out of science. In March the ministry inaugurated a panel of about 20 leading young scientists to consider measures to motivate Japanese youths to learn science.

The panel members, including Mori Mamoru, the first Japanese astronaut, are expected to draw up in the autumn a report containing specific recommendations on the issue.



Photo: Kyodo News Service

Waseda University campus—In 1985 one in four university students was enrolled in a science and engineering program, but this percentage had dropped to one in five by 1993.