

**POLICY AND TRADE ISSUES OF
THE JAPANESE ECONOMY**

edited by Koza Yamamura

(University of Washington Press: 332 pp.: \$25.00)

JAPAN'S WASTED WORKERS

by Jon Woronoff

(Allanheld, Osmun & Co. [Totowa, N.J.]: 296 pp.; \$10.95/\$19.95)

TWO HUNGRY GIANTS

by Raymond Vernon

(Harvard University Press: 161 pp.: \$16.00)

Walter E. Ashley

The first two of these books—one a collection of essays by ten Japanese and American professors of economics, the other the work of a business reporter living in the Far East—are heralds of good news: A reappraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese economy is under way. After a spate of books urging American business to adopt Japanese management methods or recommending that the U.S. Government coordinate American industrial policy to compete with "Japan Inc.," the careful analyses of *Policy and Trade Issues of the Japanese Economy* are a welcome contribution to the ongoing debate on U.S. industrial policy. So too, at a more popular level, is *Japan's Wasted Workers*, first published in Japanese two years ago.

The essays in *Policy and Trade Issues* trace Japan's rapid economic progress after 1955, based on readily available Western technology, cheap raw materials, and an expanding international market, followed by efforts to adapt to a world of high energy prices and increased trade restrictions. Several authors discuss the role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in encouraging the development of industry cartels to expand industrial capacity, productivity, and exports.

In general the essays point to a single conclusion: that Japan is entering a new period in which much of its erstwhile competitive edge will be lost. While the country may have some success in moving toward a greater emphasis on non-energy-intensive, high-technology industries, readily borrowable technology was exhausted in the early 1970s and present-day labor costs are high. With tensions between government and industry on the rise, MITI's guidance and procartel policies are a hindrance, not a help, to Japan's future economic well-being.

It would surely be the height of folly for the United States to create its own version

of MITI just as it is becoming clear that Japan's spectacular successes in international trade were based on a set of circumstances not likely to be repeated. The authors have performed a valuable service by documenting this conclusion and otherwise clarifying the limits and potential of Japan's future role in world markets.

Japan's Wasted Workers looks at the inside workings of Japanese industry and comes to similar conclusions. High wages are now pricing some companies out of their market, yesterday's dynamic entrepreneurs have given way to careful bureaucrats in top executive positions, cultural hangups prevent industry from taking advantage of the abilities of educated women, older workers are shunted aside, and younger workers no longer bring the old work ethic to their jobs. Even if, as one suspects, this indictment is exaggerated to shock the book's original Japanese readership, it remains damning. The conclusion, again, is that Japan must admit its problems and start on another path. Here they will find that competition with other nations in export markets will be stiffer, internal problems more difficult, and the need to divert capital and energy to urban renewal and development of better health and education services more compelling.

Two Hungry Giants, about the competition between the U.S. and Japan for raw materials, is of limited value. The text. re-

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markably short, breaks no new ground. Certainly the title and the jacket copy ("this unique commingling of political and economic analysis") promise far more than the book delivers. After a survey of U.S. and Japanese involvement in world petroleum, iron ore, bauxite, and copper markets, the volume concludes that "at worst, the problems foreseen in oil and metals...add up to little more than a set of quite ordinary headaches in the diplomatic agenda." Quite so. But one is left wondering why a book was needed to get such a message across.

**CHRISTIANITY IN THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

by G. Thompson Brown

(John Knox Press; 227 pp. ; \$6.95 [paper])

Ralph Buultjens

For almost fourteen centuries Christians of one kind or another have attempted to convert China. However, despite valiant efforts, the faith has not been much more than a footnote in Chinese history—unable to attract more than a hundredth of the population or to make a serious impact on society.

This peripheral position has never really been accepted by Catholic or Protestant churches. Generations of well-meaning Christians saw China as a magnificent stage on which to incarnate their own visions of global redemption. This effort, while unsuccessful, did little harm to China, and some of the social and humanitarian missions achieved useful results. What was harmed was Christianity itself—presented as a Westernized vehicle of salvation and frequently identified with Western cultural and political imperialisms in China.

Finally, the Revolution ended all this, or so observers thought. Now, in the past few years, some renewal of Christian activity has taken place. An indigenous church, run by Chinese for Chinese and monitored by the government, is emerging. Once again, not content to leave Chinese believers to themselves, some foreign churches have begun to display an immoderate interest—from smuggling Bibles into the People's Republic to launching preparations for missionary efforts.

This long story of Christian involvement is told with some sensitivity by Thompson Brown. The son of missionaries in pre-revolutionary China, Brown has made recent visits there. is active in theological education and in establishing links between Protestant churches and China. His perspective, while reflecting his own Christian