

The Modern Samurai

by Dr. Steven Myers (August 1977)

Good afternoon, again. Do you speak English?

In the Chamber, we are trying very hard to help the American businessmen find out something about living and doing business in Japan. In a way, we're trying to do a little bit of
5 what the Japanese do so very well. The Japanese are considered by some, and I'm one of them, to be the best informed businessmen in the world. In the case of business intelligence, the spy network of the Japanese business community is challenged by no one in the world. I was, the other day, reading a brochure by a very large trading company, and about a third of that brochure was describing the information network, the CIA network of this large trading company, and it was
10 absolutely marvelous! Some people would say that the success of Japan in the business battle that is conducted in the world, that the success of Japan is not because of Japanese decision-making, it's because of Japanese information gathering. And I'll talk about this later in my talk. This particular trading company has three information centers, one in London, one in New York, one in Tokyo, and these three centers are connected by satellite. And those three centers reach in all parts
15 of the world so that, within six minutes, any particular location can find out detailed market report about any other location. And so far as I know, there's no American equivalent of that kind of information gathering. People have wondered why Japan has been so very successful. Professor Gregory Clark has said that, on the average, Japanese businessman will know ten times what his American counterpart will know. So, his decisions are based on knowledge. And part of my job
20 with the Chamber of Commerce is to help the Americans close the gap so they can learn a little bit more about Japan.

Recently, I'm sure you are aware that there are criticisms by Europeans of Japan saying that the Japanese are too aggressive. And one of the answers of this has been from the Japanese side. It's not that we are not too aggressive; it's that you Europeans are not aggressive enough. You
25 don't send your people over to Japan, you don't try to find out about Japan, you don't study Japan; therefore, when you come to Japan, you have a hard time marketing 'cause you don't know what you are talking about. Come here, and as a matter of fact, many government and business groups, mostly government groups in Japan right now, are trying to prepare information to help foreigners do business in Japan. I think it's a tremendous effort. I think it's a very wise move. Instead of
30 raising restrictive practices, there is an attempt to help foreigners do their own homework. I think that's nice of the Japanese groups to do that, but I would also say it really should be up to the Germans and the French and the Americans and the Canadians to do their own homework. And as I say, that's part of my job. In doing our homework, we have to take a look at what Japan has been. That's why I call the talk this afternoon "The Modern *Samurai*" because I share with Greg Clark,
35 Professor Clark the feeling that Japan has its roots very much in the past, and Japan still represents