

# Post-War Japan

After World War II had ended, Japan was devastated. All the large cities (with the exception of Kyoto), the industries and the transportation networks were severely damaged. A severe shortage of food continued for several years.

The occupation of Japan by the Allied Powers started in August 1945 and ended in April 1952. General MacArthur was its first Supreme Commander. The whole operation was mainly carried out by the United States.

Japan basically lost all the territory acquired after 1894. In addition, the Kurile islands were occupied by the Soviet Union, and the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, were controlled by the USA. Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972; however a territorial dispute with Russia concerning the Kurile Islands has not been resolved yet.

The remains of Japan's war machine were destroyed, and war crime trials were held. Over 500 military officers committed suicide right after Japan surrendered, and many hundreds more were executed for committing war crimes. Emperor Showa Hirohito was not declared a war criminal.

A new constitution went into effect in 1947: The emperor lost all political and military power, and was solely made the symbol of the state. Universal suffrage (the right to vote) was introduced and human rights were guaranteed. Japan was also forbidden to ever lead a war again or to maintain an army. Furthermore, Shinto and the state were clearly separated.

MacArthur also intended to break up power concentrations by dissolving the zaibatsu and other large companies, and by decentralizing the education system and the police. In a land reform, concentrations in land ownership were removed.

Especially during the first half of the occupation, Japan's media was subject to a rigid censorship of any anti-American statements and controversial topics such as the race issue.

The co-operation between the Japanese and the Allied powers worked relatively smooth. Critics started to grow when the United States acted increasingly according to her self interests in the Cold War, reintroduced the persecution of communists, stationed more troops in Japan, and wanted Japan to establish their own self-defense force despite the anti-war article in the constitution. Many aspects of the occupation's so called "reverse course" were welcomed by conservative Japanese politicians.

With the peace treaty that went into effect in 1952, the occupation ended. Japan's Self Defense Force was established in 1954, accompanied by large public demonstrations. Great public unrest was also caused by the renewal of the **US-Japan Security Treaty of 1960**.

After the Korean War, and accelerated by it, the recovery of Japan's economy flourished. The economic growth resulted in a quick rise of the living standards, changes in society and the stabilization of the ruling position of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), but also in severe pollution.

Japan's relations to the Soviet Union were normalized in 1956, the ones to China in 1972.

The 1973 oil crisis shocked the Japanese economy which was heavily depended on oil. The reaction was a shift to high technology industries.

## Japan's Economic Modernization:

The islands that make up the country of Japan are small and densely populated. Japan has very few natural resources and the country by itself cannot support the incredible amount of human lives that resides there. The vast majority of Japan's wheat, corn, raw cotton, iron ore, and crude oil are all imported. In 1970 metals and other basic raw materials accounted for thirty percent of Japan's imports, fuels accounted for twenty-one percent, and food accounted for fourteen percent of all imports due to Japan's meager natural resources. These massive importation are a far cry from Japan's earlier isolationist days when Japan intensely secluded itself from the rest of the world.

The defeat of Japan forced the Japanese people to rethink their national goals and policies. They were supported in this from 1945 until 1952 by the Allied occupation forces headed by General Douglas MacArthur. The occupation resulted from reforms politically, socially, and economically. The government was democratized and the Emperor was disclaimed of his divinity. In 1947 a new constitution with a bill of rights was put into effect and Japan renounced the right to use force in foreign policy. The occupation also purged right-wing extremists and communists from the government and the mainstream. Civil liberties were restored and the education system was liberalized. Adult suffrage was created and the old practice of feudal land tenure was dropped. The secret police were dissolved as well. In 1951 Japan signed a mutual defense and peace treaty with the United States, and although full sovereignty was restored in 1952, Japan was still considered much under the United States' protection. It was not until 1972 with the return to Japan of Okinawa that the end of Japanese subordination to the US was completed, however. Japan was now faced with the challenge of rebuilding its economy and this recovery was aided by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 through 1953. This focused the country on industrialization and the increasing amount of exports. From 1954 until 1972 the Japanese economy expanded rapidly and the Gross National Product increased at a rate of over ten percent annually. In 1958 textile products accounted for nearly one-third of the total composition of exports. Only twelve years later their importance had fallen to only twelve point five percent. Machinery exports grew at an amazing rate and their share of total exports grew forty-six point three percent.

Throughout the sixties and seventies Japan's economy continued to expand and to grow at an almost alarming rate as compared to the rest of the world. While the average exports in the world grew at a rate of approximately 8% annually, the Japanese recorded a growth of nearly 16%, which is greater than that of any other industrialized nation in the world. This leap was not nor has it ever been startling or brilliantly dazzling. The regular progressive movement has been occurring since the fifties. Textiles were the first movement, and cheap labor produced a product of a comparable quality and more inexpensively than was able in the West. The markets for other products were then taken from their traditional manufactures and became specialties of the Japanese. Industrial production rose 300% higher from 1962 to 1971. More recently, the reasons for this spectacular export performance are the variety of Japan's industrial output, the shift to products with a relatively high added value, and a higher export competitiveness and advanced sales and advertising techniques have all helped. By the early 1970s, Japan was the world's largest producer of ships and a leader in the production of steel, cars, and electronic equipment.

Currently Japan has the upper hand in trade relations with the US. Car shipments from Japan have recently increased six percent and America's trade deficit soared to \$12.7 billion in January. The trade deficit with Japan accounts for \$4.3 billion of that total. Imports, and Japanese imports in particular, have been cheap for American consumers because of the strength of the dollar, although the US dollar has decreased in value recently making Japanese imports more expensive for American consumers.

### How Did the Japanese Get Ahead?:

- First, in the 50s, textiles were produced by cheap labor and of a quality comparable to that of the West.
- Then, the market for watches was taken away from the Swiss.
- Followed by the photography market taken from the Germans.
- Followed by the market for radios, TVs, computers, and automobiles taken from the Americans.
- Many additional markets were then manufactured cheaper than traditional producers.
- Pianos, ski equipment, motorcycles, pottery, glassware, calculators, and photocopying machines have now all become particular specialties of the Japanese.