

OPENING OF CULCON XVII  
(AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS, JANUARY 19, 1995)

MR. SABA, DR. PYLE, MEMBERS OF THE CULCON PANEL, GOOD MORNING. I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE THIS MORNING AS YOU BEGIN YOUR MEETINGS.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, DURING THEIR TALKS LAST WEEK IN WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT CLINTON AND PRIME MINISTER MURAYAMA BOTH EXPRESSED ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FOR ENHANCING STUDENT AND CITIZEN EXCHANGES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. THE PRIME MINISTER MADE A SPECIAL VISIT TO SENATOR FULBRIGHT, ONE OF OUR GREAT STATESMEN, WHOSE NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING. THE VISIT WAS A GESTURE OF APPRECIATION AND RESPECT, NOT ONLY FOR THE GREAT MAN, BUT FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGES LIKE THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM WHICH HAVE BEEN SUCH AN INTEGRAL AND HELPFUL ELEMENT OF OUR EXTRAORDINARY POSTWAR RELATIONSHIP.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT WERE VERY CLEAR IN THEIR SHARED BELIEF THAT OUR EFFORTS AT BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING HAVE GREAT VALUE, AND THAT THEY MUST REFLECT THE VITALITY AND BROAD RANGE OF CURRENT JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS. PRESIDENT CLINTON RECOMMENDED THAT OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS WORK TOWARD HAVING A PLAN IN PLACE REGARDING EXPANDED EXCHANGES TO BE ANNOUNCED AT THE TIME OF HIS VISIT TO JAPAN NEXT NOVEMBER.

IT WAS ONLY THREE OR FOUR YEARS AGO THAT, AT LEAST IN THE MEDIA, THE MOST TALKED ABOUT ELEMENT OF THE U.S.-JAPANESE RELATIONSHIP WAS THE DEGREE OF MUTUAL BASHING. IT REACHED A POINT, I MUST SAY, WHERE PEOPLE WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER ON BOTH SIDES WERE MAKING COMMENTS THAT WERE BOTH VICIOUS AND LUDICROUS. THE RHETORIC THANKFULLY HAS CHANGED IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, BUT THE POINT REMAINS THAT EVEN BETWEEN DYNAMIC, SUCCESSFUL COUNTRIES, HEALTHY COMPETITION CAN BE INFECTED BY IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE. WELL-DIRECTED SCHOLARSHIP, EXCHANGES OF PEOPLE, AND A GENEROUS AVAILABILITY OF ALL KINDS OF INFORMATION ARE THE LUBRICANTS WHICH GUARD AGAINST FRICTION AND OVERHEATING.

I AM ENCOURAGED TO SEE THAT BOTH SIDES ARE MAKING NEW EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THESE KINDS OF EXCHANGES BETWEEN US. THE NEW JUNIOR YEAR ABROAD PROGRAMS AT JAPANESE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO ATTRACT TOP AMERICAN STUDENTS. THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S NEW INITIATIVE TO BRING MORE PACIFIC RIM STUDENTS TO JAPAN WILL SURELY INCLUDE A NUMBER OF AMERICANS. AND I WAS VERY PLEASED TO HEAR THE PRIME MINISTER'S WELCOME FOR THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED MANSFIELD FELLOWS PROGRAM WHICH WILL BRING AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATIVE STAFFERS TO WORK ALONGSIDE THEIR JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS IN A SPECIAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT WERE VERY POSITIVE ABOUT THESE EFFORTS, BUT AGREED AT THE SUMMIT THAT MORE COULD BE DONE. WHEN THEY MEET AGAIN IN OSAKA IN NOVEMBER, I EXPECT THAT ONE ITEM OF BUSINESS WILL BE TO ANNOUNCE FURTHER INITIATIVES IN THIS AREA.

NEW PROGRAMS TO BRING MORE AMERICAN STUDENTS AND EXCHANGEES TO JAPAN WILL, OF COURSE, BE WELCOME. BUT WE NEED ALSO TO LOOK AT THE CURRENT SYSTEM IN JAPAN TO SEE IF IT NEEDS ADJUSTING. AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, THE STATISTICS REVEAL AN UNHEALTHY IMBALANCE. WHILE THERE ARE ABOUT 47,000 JAPANESE STUDENTS IN AMERICA TODAY, THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT 1700 AMERICAN STUDENTS IN JAPAN AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS NUMBER IS DECLINING.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN EXPLAINING THESE NUMBERS. THE INCREASED VALUE OF THE YEN HAS MADE EDUCATION IN JAPAN MORE EXPENSIVE; AMERICAN STUDENTS NEED BETTER PREPARATION IN THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE; AND HOUSING IS SOMETIMES A PROBLEM.

BUT THIS ONLY PARTLY EXPLAINS THE LOW NUMBER OF AMERICANS COMING TO JAPAN. A RECENT JOINT STUDY BY U.S. AND JAPANESE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE WITH US TODAY, POINTED TO A NUMBER OF REGULATORY IMPEDIMENTS THAT MAKE IT MORE UNLIKELY THAN IT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE FOR AMERICANS GOING OVERSEAS TO CHOOSE JAPAN AS A DESTINATION. AS IT IS, ONLY ABOUT 3% OF AMERICANS STUDYING ABROAD COME HERE. GIVEN THE INTENSITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS, THIS NUMBER SHOULD BE MUCH GREATER.

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR THE PERTINENT MINISTRIES TO REVIEW THE REGULATIONS IDENTIFIED BY THESE EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS, WITH AN EYE TO MAKING STUDY OPPORTUNITIES IN JAPAN MORE ACCESSIBLE TO AMERICAN STUDENTS. FOR EXAMPLE: THE CURRENT GUARANTOR SYSTEM IS ONE WHICH I BELIEVE COULD BE HELPFULLY AND PAINLESSLY MODIFIED. ALSO, A MORE GENEROUS WAY OF GRANTING TAX EXEMPT BENEFITS AND SOLID LEGAL STATUS TO INSTITUTIONS WHICH PROMOTE EXCHANGE WOULD BE AN ENCOURAGING STEP. IT WOULD SURELY BE HELPFUL IF STUDENTS AT BRANCHES OF WELL ESTABLISHED U.S. INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE STANFORD CENTER IN KYOTO WERE ACCORDED THE SPECIAL BENEFITS THAT STUDENTS AT JAPANESE INSTITUTIONS RECEIVE. AND THOUGH I BELIEVE THERE ARE SOME VERY USEFUL SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS AT A NUMBER OF JAPANESE UNIVERSITIES, THERE IS ROOM FOR MANY MORE SUCH PROGRAMS.

I KNOW THAT IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS TODAY AND TOMORROW, YOU WILL CONTINUE A LONG-TERM DISCUSSION ON UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGES. THIS IS AN ISSUE WHICH I BELIEVE HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES, AND I OFFER MY MOST FERVENT SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WILL ALSO BE DISCUSSING MEDIA COOPERATION.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE MEDIA CAN PROVIDE AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE SITUATION IN EACH COUNTRY DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE DEGREE OF WISDOM WE HAVE AVAILABLE AS WE RELATE TO EACH OTHER, AND AS WE ACT TOGETHER IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION AND THE WORLD.

CULCON IS A UNIQUE BILATERAL INSTITUTION, WITH SPECIAL PRESTIGE AND CREDIBILITY. IT IS HEARTENING TO SEE THIS BINATIONAL PANEL COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF SUCH DISTINCTION AND DEDICATION. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THIS YEAR, AS IN THE PAST, CULCON ONCE AGAIN WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE QUALITY OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

THANK YOU.



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