

March 2, 2002

Newsweek
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To the Editor,

In the article "Trapped in a Chinese Box" in your February 18 issue, the writers stated that "Since 1979 Japan has given about \$45 billion in aid to the mainland (China)".

Official Japanese record shows that in 20 years from 1979 to 1998, Japan transferred to China a total of \$13.184 billion in ODA (Official Development Aids/Assistance). It includes \$9.900 billion in interest-bearing loans that required repayment; \$2.528 billion in "mutually beneficial technical cooperation" funding with strings attached to buy from Japan; and only \$0.756 billion without strings attached or repayment requirements. By the commonly understood definition of the word "give", Japan gave \$0.756 billion to China, not \$45 billion as stated.

After China lost the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China was forced to pay Japan a reparation estimated to be China's GDP for one year. This huge capital infusion fueled Japan's rapid development into a world power. By comparison, Japan paid a negligible amount of money to China after it lost the second Sino-Japanese War 50 years later. In view of this great disparity, Japan has little basis to be smug about its "generous" and "beneficial" role towards China.

I do, however, agree with the writers that Japan should feel uncomfortable about China's current economic growth. Japan has doggedly avoided owning up to its war time atrocities such as Unit 731, Rape of Nanking, "comfort women" slavery, and its "Three All Policy" to kill all, burn all, and loot all. I worked in China and observed a strong loathing towards Japan among the common folks in China. Unless ameliorated, such animosity will disadvantage Japan in the market place or business dealings, at the least.

For example, one city in China bought telecommunications equipment only from a Japanese firm in 1980s as required by Japanese loan conditions. But on the anniversary of Japan's invasion, misgivings towards Japan surfaced as the telecom bureau put up a large photo display of Japanese war time atrocities. When American equipment was proven as good a value, the Japanese equipment was kicked out of this market in 1990s. Everything being equal, the Chinese people prefer not to buy from Japan.

Japan has been very protective of its national interest. Therefore, it may be well advised to make amends with the Chinese people now to reduce their smoldering anger. If Japan attempts to make amends after China becomes prosperous, the gestures will be dismissed as cynical and insincere.

Truly yours,
Robert Wu

Please note:

(a) Robert Wu rsbt@mail.com served as the National President of the Organization of Chinese Americans which is based in Washington D.C. and has 45 chapters and dozens of college affiliates throughout the US.

(b) This letter is sent by email now; to be followed by a mailed, original, signed letter from Robert's home from Hong Kong SAR, China.

(c) For details about ODA, please check the official site of the Japanese Foreign Affairs Ministry at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/seisaku/seisaku_3/sei_3f.html and select "China".

(d) Dr. Jing Zhao jzhao@mail.h-net.msu.edu at US-Japan-China Comparative Policy Research Institute <http://cpri.tripod.com> would also be glad to answer inquiries regarding this issue.