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TRADE

BARRIER?

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FOR APPROXIMATELY 20 YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II, THE U. S. WAS THE LEADER IN PRODUCT TECHNOLOGY AND WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC DOMINANCE, AND ENJOYED A PRODUCTION-ORIENTED SELLERS' MARKET IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE. HOWEVER, WITHIN THE LAST DECADE, THE MARKET AREAS IN WHICH THE U.S. PREVIOUSLY LED -- CARS, CALCULATORS, TELEVISIONS, COMPUTERS, AND SHIP-BUILDING, TO NAME A FEW -- ARE CURRENTLY BEING CONTROLLED IN A LARGE WAY TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE JAPANESE AND EUROPEANS.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO BEMOAN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL TRADE BARRIERS IMPOSED BY COMPETING NATIONS AS UNCHANGEABLE OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN TRADE AND THE MAJOR CAUSE OF THE U.S.'S DECLINING TRADE POSITION. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SEVERAL POINTS OF WEAKNESS IN THAT ASSERTION. FIRST, TRADE RESTRICTIONS ARE NOT IMMUTABLE BARRIERS IMPERVIOUS TO CHANGE THROUGH EFFECTIVE COOPERATION AND NEGOTIATION. ROBERT S. STRAUSS, SPECIAL TRADE NEGOTIATOR TO FORMER PRESIDENT CARTER, STATED THAT THE MAJOR BARRIERS TO TRADE ARE NOT TARIFFS, BUT MORE OFTEN THE PROCEDURES WHICH ARE USED IN NEGOTIATIONS. AN EFFORT TO ENHANCE CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION WOULD BE A BOON TO SUCH NEGOTIATION.¹

MOREOVER, EVEN OPERATING ON THE PREMISE THAT TRADE BARRIERS CANNOT BE CHANGED OR DIMINISHED THROUGH OUR OWN ACTIONS, THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION THEN SHOULD BE THAT MORE EFFORT BE SPENT ON THE ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE THAT ARE CONTROLLABLE -- FOR EXAMPLE, QUALITY OF THE PRODUCT, PRODUCTIVITY OF OPERATIONS, INCREASED MARKETING EFFORTS, AND IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS (BOTH LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL).

WHILE THE IMPOSITION OF TRADE BARRIERS CAN HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON A NATION'S TRADE BALANCE, CULTURAL AWARENESS, A GOOD PRODUCT, AND

COMPETITIVE MARKETING WILL HELP INSURE A RECEPTIVE AND PROFITABLE MARKETPLACE AS THE JAPANESE AUTOMAKERS AND ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURERS HAVE DEMONSTRATED SO WELL IN THIS COUNTRY.

THEREFORE, IN ORDER TO SURVIVE IN AN OPEN MARKET SYSTEM, THE U.S. CAN NO LONGER REST ON ITS DIMINISHED TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGE, BUT MUST OPERATE TO DISMANTLE ITS SELF-IMPOSED TRADE BARRIERS BY EMULATING ITS RIVALS' COMPETITIVE MARKETING POSITIONS. ONE OF THE BEST STARTING POINTS WOULD BE TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF POTENTIAL CONSUMERS' LANGUAGES AND CULTURES WHICH WOULD GIVE BETTER INSIGHT INTO THE NEEDS OF THE MARKET AND MORE STRENGTH IN NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. REGRETABLELY, THIS IS AN AREA WHICH THE U.S. HAS PREVIOUSLY CHOSEN NOT TO DEVELOP, AND IN WHICH IT IS FAR OUTDISTANCED BY FOREIGN COMPETITORS. THEREFORE, THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER THIS EVENING IS TO EXPLORE THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN ADVANCING THE U.S. TRADE POSITION AND TO EXAMINE THE FOLLOWING HYPOTHESES:

- 1.) THERE HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE A DECREASING INTEREST IN AND ASSIMILATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN THIS COUNTRY.
- 2.) THE U.S.'S DECLINING TRADE POSITION IS LARGELY A FUNCTION OF CULTURAL INSENSITIVITY IN WHICH THE LACK OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IS A SUBSTANTIAL FACTOR.
- 3.) THE EUROPEAN, JAPANESE, AND OTHER NATIONS' TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE SKILLS GIVE THEM A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN CLINCHING INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEALS AND BUSINESS
- 4.) THERE IS MUCH BUSINESS LOST EVEN WITHIN THE U.S. AS A RESULT OF LIMITED EXPOSURE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES.

ACCORDING TO MANY STARTLING FINDINGS SPANNING THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE U.S., IN SPITE OF ITS DIVERSE CULTURAL ORIGINS WHICH IN THE PAST HAVE PROVEN TO BE HIDDEN SOURCES OF STRENGTH, IS HARBORING A POPULATION OF XENOPHOBES -- PEOPLE WHO HAVE AN UNDUE FEAR AND/OR HATRED OF STRANGERS, FOREIGNERS, AND FOREIGN CULTURES.. IN 1979, A REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT'S

COMMISSION ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES STATED, "AMERICANS' INCOMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IS NOTHING SHORT OF SCANDALOUS. REP. PAUL SIMON (D., ILL), WHO FIRST PROPOSED CREATING THIS COMMISSION, HAD THIS FACT BROUGHT HOME TO HIM IN 1977 WHEN HE WAS EMBARRASSINGLY LATE FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH EGYPT'S LATE PRESIDENT ANWAR EL-SADAT. HE WAS LATE BECAUSE NOT ONE OF THE U.S. EMBASSY STAFFERS ESCORTING HIM COULD SPEAK ARABIC TO THEIR EGYPTIAN DRIVERS. SIMON WAS SO DISTURBED THAT WHEN HE RETURNED HOME HE BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE THE STATE OF LANGUAGE STUDY IN THE U.S. HE WAS SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT REQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR ITS INCOMING FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER CANDIDATES. FURTHER INVESTIGATION REVEALED THE FOLLOWING DISCOURAGING FACTS:

- 1.) ONLY 1 PERCENT OF THE 11 MILLION GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THIS NATION'S UNIVERSITIES ARE STUDYING THE LANGUAGES USED BY THREE-FOURTHS OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION. THERE ARE MORE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN THE USSR THAN STUDENTS OF RUSSIAN IN THE U.S.
- 2.) ONLY 15 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOW STUDY A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. THIS IS A DECLINE FROM 24 PERCENT IN 1965, AND ALL INDICATIONS SHOW THE TREND IS NOT MOVING SIGNIFICANTLY ENOUGH THE OTHER WAY.
- 3.) ONLY 1 OF 20 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS STUDIES FRENCH, GERMAN, OR RUSSIAN BEYOND THE SECOND YEAR ALTHOUGH 4 YEARS IS CONSIDERED A MINIMUM PREREQUISITE FOR USEABLE LANGUAGE COMPETENCE.¹⁴

A CIA SURVEY OF RECRUITS HIRED BETWEEN 1975-78 SHOWED THAT ONLY 18 PERCENT DEMONSTRATED "MINIMUM PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY" IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. ONLY 1 IN 5 CANDIDATES ACCEPTED INTO THE FOREIGN SERVICE TODAY MEETS STATE DEPARTMENT LANGUAGE-COMPETENCY STANDARDS. WHEN DENG XIAOPING, THE THEN SENIOR VICE PREMIER OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, VISITED THE WHITE HOUSE FOR SENSITIVE TALKS IN JANUARY, 1979, PRESIDENT CARTER HAD TO RELY ON ONE OF DENG'S OWN INTERPRETERS. THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE FULLY COMPETENT CHINESE TRANSLATOR OF ITS OWN.

OCCASIONALLY, THE RESULTS OF LANGUAGE INCOMPETENCE IN OUR FOREIGN SERVICE ARE AMUSING IN ONE SENSE. AN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER TRIED TO APOLOGIZE TO PERUVIAN LEADERS FOR HIS POOR SPANISH AND, BUMBLING HIS IDIOMS, ANNOUNCED TO EVERYONE THAT HE WAS PREGNANT. AND SOME REPERCUSSIONS OF LANGUAGE INCOMPETENCE ARE TRAGIC. CRITICS CLAIM THAT THE LIFE OF ADOLPH DUBS, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN AFGHANISTAN, COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED HAD MORE EMBASSY STAFFERS TRYING TO NEGOTIATE WITH HIS KIDNAPPERS BEEN FLUENT IN DARI, THE OFFICIAL AFGHAN LANGUAGE. AND WHO CAN FORGET PRESIDENT CARTER IN WARSAW TELLING THE POLES -- THROUGH A STATE DEPARTMENT CONTRACT INTERPRETER WHO SPOKE WITH A UKRAINIAN ACCENT -- HOW HE "LUSTED" FOR THE PEOPLE OF POLAND WHEN HE MET HE DESIRED BETTER RELATIONS?

OTHER CONDITIONS REFLECTING CURRENT TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SHOULD BE OF DIRECT INTEREST, AS WELL, TO AMERICAN BUSINESSES. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT MOST U.S. BUSINESS FIRMS WILL RELY IN SOME WAY ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON AN INTERNATIONAL SCOPE, A RECENT SURVEY BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOUND THAT 75 PERCENT OF THE PH.D.'S AND D.B.A.'S HAD NEVER HAD ANY INTERNATIONAL STUDIES COURSES, AND THAT MANY CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE PRESIDENTS OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS LACK ANY INTERNATIONAL COURSE BACKGROUND OR WORK EXPERIENCE. AND AS ACTION (OR THE LACK OF IT) SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS ABOUT INDUSTRY'S CONCERN IN THIS AREA, PRIVATE CORPORATE FUNDING IN THIS FIELD REPRESENTS LESS THAN 2 PERCENT OF ALL GIFTS AND GRANTS GIVEN.⁶

THE OVERALL PROBLEM IS CRADLED NOT ONLY IN THE SPARSITY OF BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL CITIZENS, BUT ALSO IN THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FOREIGN CULTURES AND EVENTS AS A WHOLE. AMERICANS' INTERESTS AND CURIOSITIES FAIL TO EXTEND PAST THEIR NATIONAL BORDERS. A UNESCO SURVEY OF 100 NATIONS SHOWED THE U.S. LAST IN TELEVISION COVERAGE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS (A SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP EXISTS WITH PRINT

MEDIA), AND A 76 NATION SURVEY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY ALSO SHOWS THE U.S. IN LAST PLACE. THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION'S DELVINGS ALSO REVEALED THAT 40 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS COULD NOT PINPOINT EGYPT ON A MAP WHILE BELIEVING ITS PRESIDENT TO BE GOLDA MEIR, AND 20 PERCENT WERE EQUALLY AS IGNORANT REGARDING THE LOCATIONS OF FRANCE AND CHINA. SHOULD ONE SUGGEST THAT MOST ADULTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO HAVE A HIGHER THRESHOLD OF AWARENESS -- A 1977 GALLUP POLL SHOWED THAT 50 PERCENT OF ALL AMERICANS WERE UNAWARE THAT IMPORTING PETROLEUM WAS^A A NECESSITY, WITH UNDER 10 PERCENT ENLIGHTENED THAT OVER ONE-HALF OF U.S. ENERGY REQUIREMENTS ARE IMPORTED.⁴

IN PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS, AMERICAN FAUX PAS DUE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEFICIENCIES ARE AT THE VERY LEAST EMBARASSING. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THEY CARRY SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES. FOR EXAMPLE, NO ONE IN THE U.S. EMBASSY IN INDIA SPEAKS HINDI, AND AT THE U.S. EMBASSY IN KABUL, A RUSSIAN WHO RECENTLY SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM COULD NOT FIND ONE PERSON WHO SPOKE RUSSIAN. 14

FROM A BUSINESS AND TRADE STANDPOINT, SUCH FAUX PAS CAN AND HAVE DAMAGED THE U.S. POSITION. NOT VERY LONG AGO, BECAUSE OF UNIDIOMATIC TRANSLATIONS, GENERAL MOTORS' "BODY BY FISHER" CAME TO BE TRANSLATED "CORPSE BY FISHER" IN PUERTO RICO. IN CONVERTING THE "COME ALIVE WITH PEPSI" CAMPAIGN TO THE CHINESE MARKET, TRANSLATED COPY THROUGH THE MEDIA PROMISED TO "BRING YOUR ANCESTORS BACK FROM THE GRAVE". WHEN MARKETING THE CHEVROLET NOVA IN PUERTO RICO, GENERAL MOTORS EXECUTIVES FAILED TO REALIZE THAT NOVA PRONOUNCED BY THE SPANISH MEANS "NO VA" OR "IT WON'T GO". BY CHANGING THE NAME TO "CARIBE", SLUGGISH SALES ROSE TO EXPECTED LEVELS. UPON OPENING AN OUTLET IN BARCELONA, SEARS SENT CREDIT CARD APPLICATIONS TO MEMBERS OF A LOCAL COUNTRY CLUB. THE SPANIARDS CONSIDERED THIS AN INSULT, BELIEVING SEARS TO IMPLY THAT THEY COULD NOT IN FACT PAY FOR PURCHASES MADE AT SEARS.⁹ SUCH GAFFES ARE BECOMING LESS

RARE. NOT LONG AGO THE MARKETERS OF "BIG JOHN BEANS", MAKING AN EFFORT TO COMPLY WITH QUEBEC PROVINCE'S NEW CONTROVERSIAL BILL 101, NEARLY UNWITTINGLY FOUND THEMSELVES SELLING LARGE NIPPLES OF FEMALE BREASTS. AS THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THIS COMPANY DISCUSSED THE PLAUDITS OF COMING UP WITH A CATCHY FRENCH NAME TO ALLURE THE CANADIAN CONSUMER AND, TOO, TO SATISFY THE NEW ADVERTISING LAW MAKING IT OBLIGATORY TO ADVERTISE IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE, IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THEY USE THE MORE ENDEARING FORM OF JEAN (JOHN) IN FRENCH; THEY DECIDED ON "JOS". LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT WHEN THE WORD "JOS" IS COUPLED WITH "GROS", BIG JOHN IS NOT WHAT YOU GET IN THE LOCAL FRENCH CANADIAN VERNACULAR; YOU GET WHAT BIG JOHN MIGHT LIKE! FOR "GROS JOS" MEANS, IN FACT, "BIG TITS". PLEASE EXCUSE THE CRUDE TRANSLATION, BUT, AS YOU SURELY MUST SEE, IT WAS NECESSARY TO TRANSLATE LITERALLY IN ORDER FOR YOU TO REALIZE JUST HOW ABSURDLY MISTAKEN THESE MEN WERE. OF COURSE, HAD THESE BEANS EVER BEEN MARKETED (AS THEY ALMOST WERE) UNDER THIS NAME, WE MIGHT HAVE SEEN TODAY THIS COMPANY NAMED IN THE TOP 10 IN FORBES MAGAZINE, AND THE BEANS MIGHT STILL BE AROUND. SUCH INCIDENTS ARE NOT ISOLATED, UNFORTUNATELY!

WHILE LITERAL LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS POSE PROBLEMS FOR THE UN-INITIATED, COLORS, GESTURES, AND OTHER SITUATIONS ARE ALSO INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY BY SEPARATE FOREIGN MARKETS. BUSINESS CUSTOMS AND OTHER CULTURAL VARIABLES CHANGE FROM ONE AREA TO ANOTHER. THESE ALL HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE METHODS USED IN TRADE. LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE MEANS MORE THAN BEING ABLE TO CONVERT A WORD FOR WORD TRANSLATION. THE IDIOMS AND UNIQUE MEANS OF EXPRESSING IDEAS REVEAL A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE TOTAL CULTURE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ITS SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENTS. LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AIDS IN FORMULATING STRATEGIES WHICH COMPLEMENT CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES.

PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY PREVIOUSLY GAVE AMERICANS AN ADVANTAGE, MAKING DEMAND ALMOST AUTOMATIC AND REQUIRING LITTLE FORMAL MARKETING, BUT THE UNDERLYING FACTOR OF THE TRADE LAG IS PRIMARILY IN-ATTENTION TO BASIC MARKETING PRINCIPLES. ONLY RECENTLY HAS AN EFFORT BEEN MADE TO SEGMENT FOREIGN MARKETS, ADAPT PRODUCT AND SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS, AND UTILIZE AGGRESSIVE MARKETING TACTICS. YET THERE IS STILL A RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK THE CUSTOMER'S LANGUAGE. AMERICANS EITHER NAIVELY OR ARROGANTLY BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD SPEAK ENGLISH. FOR ANY U.S. SALESPERSON APPROACHING IBM NOT TO SPEAK THE "LANGUAGE " OF COMPUTERS OR SELLING TO ULTIMATE CONSUMERS WITH LITTLE OR NO EMPATHY FOR THEIR ENVIRONMENTS OR PERSPECTIVES WOULD BE UNHEARD OF AND LEAD TO CERTAIN FAILURE. WHY THEN SHOULD INTERNATIONAL MARKETS BE APPROACHED DIFFERENTLY?

TO A GREATER EXTENT, AMERICANS WILL BE MEETING WITH PEOPLE WHO USE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OR NOT AT ALL TO EFFECT THE PURCHASE OF AMERICAN GOODS AND TO OBTAIN AGREEMENT ON PROPOSALS WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY BENEFIT U.S. TRADE. AS SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH, MOST OF THESE PEOPLE WILL DO THEIR THINKING IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE, AND CONDUCT THEIR PRIVATE LIVES IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE. HOWEVER CORDIAL THE CONVERSATION, TO SOME EXTENT THE AMERICAN WILL BE AN OUTSIDER TO THE OTHER'S WORLD.

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION HAS ARGUED THAT AMERICANS DON'T SPEAK OTHER LANGUAGES WELL ENOUGH TO PERSUADE FOREIGNERS TO PURCHASE THEIR PRODUCTS -- ONE GOOD REASON FOR U.S. BILLION DOLLAR DEFICITS¹² MONOLINGUAL AMERICANS DAMAGE THEMSELVES BUSINESS-WISE NOT ONLY IN DIRECT SELLING, BUT IN ESTABLISHING SUBSIDIARIES IN OTHER NATIONS. EMPLOYEES SENT FROM THE HOME OFFICE IN THE U.S. GENERALLY EXPECT TO BE RECEIVED AS EXPERTS AND IMMUNE TO LOCAL CUSTOMS AND PROCEDURES. THE ABILITY TO PLAN, ORGANIZE, DIRECT AND CONTROL, THAT IS, TO MANAGE THE RELEVANT PUBLICS (EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS, RESIDENTS, GOVERNMENTS, SUPPLIERS, COMPETITORS) IS SEVERELY

IMPAIRED BY AN IGNORANCE OF THE NATIVE TONGUE. IT PRECLUDES THE FORMATION OF USEFUL LOCAL CONTACTS. AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "NOBODY LIKES TO WORK FOR THE AMERICANS" STATES THAT EVEN AFTER RESIDING OVERSEAS FOR MANY YEARS, MANY AMERICAN MANAGERS DO NOT SPEAK THE HOST COUNTRY LANGUAGE. THE OVERSEAS MANAGER OF A U.S. BANK WHICH HAD ACQUIRED MAJORITY INTEREST IN A EUROPEAN BANK DEMANDED THAT ALL BUSINESS BE CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH. HOWEVER, THE U.S. CORPORATIONS MOST SUCCESSFUL AND RESPECTED ARE THE ONES HIRING HOST-COUNTRY MANAGERS OR EMPLOYING AMERICANS INTERESTED IN ASSIMILATING THE NEW ENVIRONMENT.¹³

FINALLY, THERE IS AN INCREASING INTOLERANCE OF USING ENGLISH AS THE FOREMOST LANGUAGE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS. THE TREND FOR THESE MEETINGS IS TO SPEAK THE HOST COUNTRY LANGUAGE, NOT ENGLISH. JAPANESE AND EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS ARE URGING U.S. BUSINESS TO STUDY THE LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND NEEDS OF THE MARKETS IN WHICH THEY WILL BE WORKING IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH "A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH."¹³

IF FAILING TO COMMUNICATE CORRECTLY WITH CONSUMERS DOES NOT CREATE ENOUGH OF A PROBLEM ITSELF, THE DISADVANTAGE IS INCREASED BY THE FACT THAT FOREIGN COMPETITORS GENERALLY ARE ABLE TO DO SO AND THEREFORE HAVE AN EDGE OVER AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS. IN NEW YORK CITY ALONE, THERE ARE OVER 10,000 JAPANESE SALESPEOPLE SPEAKING ENGLISH, WHILE IN JAPAN, ONLY ABOUT 900 U.S. SALESPEOPLE SPEAK JAPANESE. NEARLY ALL EUROPEANS IN THIS COUNTRY SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH. ACCORDING TO FRANK A. VEIL, FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR INDUSTRY AND TRADE, ONE REASON THE JAPANESE AND GERMANS ARE EFFECTIVE MARKETERS IN THIS COUNTRY IS THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN PAINS TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE PRODUCTS CONFORM TO OUR PARTICULAR MARKET PREFERENCES.¹³

IN NEGOTIATING, THE MULTILINGUAL COMPETITORS ARE AHEAD OF AMERICANS WHO MUST SPEAK THROUGH INTERPRETERS. PAUL HIRSCH, RETIRED AMERICAN BUSINESS EXECUTIVE, POINTS OUT THAT ANY NEGOTIATIONS CAN ENCOUNTER UN-

ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES WHICH REQUIRE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS. IDENTIFYING AND AGREEING TO SUCH SOLUTIONS IS FACILITATED BY SPEAKING THE LOCAL LANGUAGE, AND MANY TIMES THIS KNOWLEDGE DETERMINES THE BOTTOM LINE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. 13

FOREIGN COUNTRIES' ATTITUDES REGARDING THE ASSIMILATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN DIRECTLY OPPOSITE THAT OF THE UNITED STATES. CHINA STRESSES FOREIGN LANGUAGES, PROVIDING 8 YEARS OF SCHOOL INSTRUCTION IN MOST LANGUAGE AREAS. IN FRANCE, TWO FOREIGN LANGUAGES ARE REQUIRED BY OUR EQUIVALENT 9TH GRADE, AND EAST GERMANY REQUIRES RUSSIAN WHILE ENGLISH AND FRENCH ARE ENCOURAGED. MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF JAPANESE STUDENTS ADOPT A FOREIGN LANGUAGE REGARDLESS OF REQUIREMENTS -- TWO ARE NEEDED FOR COLLEGE GRADUATION. YET IN THE U.S. IT IS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A DOCTORAL DEGREE WITH ABSOLUTELY NO EXPOSURE TO ANY LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH. OF JAPANESE, 1 IN 5 SPEAK A SECOND LANGUAGE COMPARED TO 1 IN EVERY 50 AMERICANS. 2

AN EXAMPLE AT THE CORPORATE LEVEL IS A SCANDINAVIAN CORPOPATION, EAST ASIAN COMPANY, LTD., WHOSE EMPLOYEES NORMALLY HAVE AN EXTENDED BACKGROUND IN ENGLISH, GERMAN, AND FRENCH BEFORE HIRING AND RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTION IN THESE LANGUAGES AS WELL AS IN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE OVER A THREE YEAR TRAINING PERIOD. BECAUSE OF HIGH VOLUME TRADE WITH CHINA, ALMOST ALL UPPER LEVEL MANAGERS SPEAK CHINESE. COMPANY OFFICIALS FEEL THIS PROVIDES MORE FAVORABLE TRADE CONSIDERATIONS, BUT ALSO CONSIDER IT A COMMON COURTESY EXTENDED TOWARDS THE COUNTRY HOSTING ITS AGENTS AND EMPLOYEES. 13

EVEN ANY TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGES THE U.S. MAINTAINS ARE THREATENED BY ITS RIVALS' COMPETITIVE LANGUAGE STANCE. THE USE OF ENGLISH AS THE MAJOR LANGUAGE OF TECHNOLOGY PUBLISHINGS IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO AMERICAN RESEARCH AND INVESTMENT. HOWEVER, OTHER COUNTRIES ARE VYING FOR RECOGNITION AND PARTICIPATION IN THESE AREAS. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE

AND TECHNOLOGY ARE BEING PUBLISHED IN OVER 70 LANGUAGES -- 55 PERCENT IN TONGUES OTHER THAN ENGLISH, AND PRIMARILY JAPANESE, RUSSIAN, CHINESE, FRENCH, AND PORTUGUESE. ONLY SMALL NUMBERS OF THE U.S. POPULATION ARE ABLE TO TRANSLATE THIS POTENTIALLY VALUABLE INFORMATION. THE PROBABILITY IS GREAT THAT ONLY A MINIMAL PERCENTAGE OF THE SOVIETS' SCIENTIFIC AND SCHOLARLY WORK WILL APPEAR IN ENGLISH, THUS THE NECESSITY FOR QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS.

THE DISCUSSION OF COMPETITORS' TRADE ADVANTAGES CAN BE SUMMARIZED BY A JAPANESE TRADE OFFICIAL'S ADMONITION TO A GROUP OF BUSINESS SCHOOL GRADUATES:

WE HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL IN SELLING OUR MANUFACTURED GOODS ABROAD BECAUSE WE UNDERSTAND THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEEDS. OUR PEOPLE DO NOT OPERATE THROUGH INTERPRETERS. YOUR PEOPLE MUST GIVE GREATER CONSIDERATION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES AND CUSTOMS OF FOREIGN LANDS OR YOU WILL LOSE IN THE COMPETITIVE MARKETS OF THE WORLD.²

A FINAL ASPECT TO CONSIDER IN ENCOURAGING U.S. FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IS THAT POTENTIAL BUSINESS GAINS ARE LOST EVEN WITHIN THE NATION AS A RESULT OF MINIMAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SUBSTANTIATION OF THIS PREMISE IS FOR THE MOST PART SPECULATIVE AND INTANGIBLE, BUT IT SEEMS RATIONAL TO ASSUME THAT SALES DOLLARS ARE LOST FROM LACK OF CONCESSIONS MADE FOR FOREIGN VISITORS. IMPORTANT HUMAN CULTURE LINKS, FOR EXAMPLE -- POLICEMEN, BANKERS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, OR HOTEL CLERKS -- CAN RARELY COMMUNICATE IN ANY LANGUAGE BUT ENGLISH. THERE ARE FEW IF ANY MULTILINGUAL TOURS AT MAJOR HISTORICAL OR CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS, TRANSLATED MENUS, BILINGUAL FLIGHT ATTENDANTS, OR MULTI-LANGUAGE INFORMATION SIGNS. IT IS HARD TO DETERMINE JUST HOW MUCH BUSINESS IS LOST OR HOW MUCH COULD BE GAINED BY ANY ADAPTATIONS, BUT ONE HOTELMANAGER ADMITTED TO LOSING JAPANESE AND FRENCH BUSINESS AND INCALCULABLE OTHER BUSINESS FROM AN INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN FOREIGN DIALECTS. HE ALSO STATED THAT LANGUAGE SKILLED HOTEL MANAGEMENT PEOPLE ARE RARE.¹³

FINALLY, THE LACK OF LANGUAGE SKILLS HINDERS ESTABLISHMENT OF IMPORTANT FOREIGN PLANTS AND SUBSIDIARIES WITHIN THE U.S. OF EXISTING SUBSIDIARIES, MANY JOB OPENINGS MUST BE FILLED WITH HOME COUNTRY PERSONNEL DUE TO A LACK OF QUALIFIED U.S. CITIZENS.

ESSENTIALLY, THESE FINDINGS SUPPORT THE PRELIMINARY HYPOTHESES, SHOWING A DECLINING INTEREST IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ILLUSTRATING THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES HELD BY FOREIGN COMPETITORS UTILIZING THEIR TRADITIONAL SKILLS. THERE ARE SOME PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE HIGH SCHOOL IN JAMAICA, NEW YORK WHICH OFFERS NINE LANGUAGES AS WELL AS A TWO YEAR PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE, TOURISM, AND DIPLOMACY, AND A GRANT RECEIVED BY GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PROVIDES FOR STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS.³ SOME FIRMS SENDING PERSONNEL ABROAD ARE PROVIDING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING,¹⁴ AND A 1979 HARRIS POLL REPORTED 55 PERCENT OF AMERICANS WANT TO PLAY A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. WHILE REMAINING UNREPRESENTATIVE, IT IS ENCOURAGING AND INDICATES AN AWAKENING OF INTEREST.¹³

THOUGH A 1980 ROPER POLL REVEALED 49 PERCENT OF AMERICANS FEEL FOREIGN TRADE IS EITHER HARMFUL OR IRRELEVANT TO THE U.S.,¹¹ THE TRUTH IS THAT IT INVOLVES ONE OF EVERY EIGHT AMERICAN MANUFACTURING JOBS AND ONE OF EVERY THREE ACRES OF AMERICAN FARMLAND. MANY OF THE 500 LARGEST U.S. CORPORATIONS EARN MORE THAN HALF OF THEIR PROFITS OVERSEAS, AND FOREIGN COMPANIES LIKE VOLKSWAGEN, HONDA, AND DATSUN NOW INVEST OVER \$30 BILLION IN THIS COUNTRY AND NEED U.S. "LOCAL NATIONALS". BETWEEN FOREIGN INVESTMENT HERE AND U.S. INVOLVEMENT ABROAD, ONE AMERICAN IN SIX NOW OWES HIS OR HER JOB TO FOREIGN TRADE'S IMPORTANCE, YET RECENT STUDIES SHOW THE U.S. WORLD MANUFACTURING MARKET SHARE FELL FROM 25 PERCENT IN 1955 TO 14 PERCENT IN 1978. WESTINGHOUSE ECONOMISTS ESTIMATE A GNP RISE OF ONLY 5 PERCENT PER YEAR FOR THE EIGHTIES, INCREASING THE ROLE OF TRADE IN MAINTAINING SALES AND PROFITABILITY. OUR COMPETITORS FOR THESE MARKETS HAVE INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY, HIGH MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES, COMPARATIVE FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND A

DEDICATION TO LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC PLANNING.⁸

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS ARE MANY. IN A MARKET SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE DOMINATED BY FACTORS SUCH AS QUALITY, QUANTITY, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, AND STIFF COMPETITION, AMERICANS' MYOPIC RELIANCE ON A DECREASING TECHNOLOGY SUPERIORITY HAS CAUSED DISASTROUS RESULTS FOR THEIR TRADE POSITION. IN AN ERA WHEN LONG AND FRUSTRATING NEGOTIATION USUALLY BRINGS LITTLE RELIEF FROM TARIFF AND NON-TARIFF BARRIERS, COMPETITIVE MARKETING AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION ARE BARRIERS WHICH CAN BE CONTROLLED AND DISMANTLED FROM HOME.

ARGUMENTS MAY ARISE ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR FURTHERING LANGUAGE STUDY, BUT THE SYSTEM IS GREATLY DEPENDENT ON DEMAND AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT GENERATED BY BUSINESS. THEREFORE, FIRMS SHOULD ACTIVELY RECRUIT EMPLOYEES WITH BACKGROUNDS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES, AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESS SCHOOLS TO INCREASE THESE EMPHASES. ADDITIONALLY, GRANTS AND INTERNSHIPS SIMILAR TO MOBIL'S AND EXXON'S WILL INCREASE MOTIVATION AND ENABLE IMPLEMENTATION WHILE RETURNING ULTIMATE BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY. SUCH INTERNSHIPS INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND OPERATIONS. FINALLY, TO HEIGHTEN THE CAPABILITIES OF THOSE PRESENTLY IN BUSINESS, OUTSIDE STUDY THROUGH UNIVERSITIES OF BERLITZ-TYPE PROGRAMS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED THROUGH MONETARY OR CAREER INCENTIVES.

BY INCREASING U.S. COMPETITION ABROAD, PROTECTIONISM OF U.S. INDUSTRY IN THIS COUNTRY -- A TACTIC WHICH DIRECTLY INFLUENCES THE UPWARD MOVEMENT OF INFLATION AND INVITES COMPETITORS' RECIPROCITY -- WILL ALSO BECOME LESS NECESSARY. THIS PAPER DOES NOT PURPORT FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT TO BE THE SOLE SAVIOUR OF THE UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND TRADE POSITION, BUT ATTEMPTS TO STRESS THAT IF THERE IS ANY ONE LANGUAGE MOST USEFUL IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE, IT IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE CLIENT. WE TONGUE-TIED AMERICANS ARE PAYING A HEAVY PRICE, BOTH DIPLOMATICALLY AND

AND COMMERCIALLY, FOR OUR INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE. LEON PANETTA (D., CALIFORNIA) SAYS QUITE FRANKLY THAT "WE'VE BEEN GUILTY OF LAZINESS. . . WE'VE ASSUMED THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD WOULD SPEAK ENGLISH FOR US. WELL, IT WON'T." IT IS TIME FOR AMERICANS TO GROW UP AND START SPEAKING THE COMPETITIVE LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD!

FOOTNOTES

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