

FOREWORD

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This special issue of Kawasaki Steel Technical Report commemorates the Twentieth Anniversary of the 1969 consolidation of the Kawasaki Steel Corporation's R&D laboratories at its Chiba Research facilities.

Although our current Technical Research Division (TRD) has its roots in laboratories established in August 1957 at Fukiai Works in Kobe, the move to Chiba was a decisive step in ensuring the subsequent two decades of R&D success. This, however, would not have been possible without the unstinting cooperation of customers, various governmental agencies, universities, and academic bodies. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all these people for the understanding and support they have given us over the last two decades.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the social and economic changes of the last twenty years have profoundly affected the steel industry, both directly and indirectly. The most notable trend of the 1980s was the maturing of steel as an industry and the diversification of individual steel-makers into new fields of growth.

The experience of the past alone, however, will not be sufficient to meet the challenges of a new era. Further, with the growth of Japan's economic power and position in the world, it is even more important than before that the activities of Japanese enterprises be in harmony with the global business environment.

It is also essential that we give careful consideration to other factors such as energy, protection of the environment, and demographic changes which can be expected to have a major impact on business activities in the mid and long term. These issues will not only face corporate management, but will also lead to qualitative changes in the demands placed on research and development.

On the other hand, a number of tasks face us in our day-to-day steelmaking operations, including the need for process innovation and functional upgrading in the areas of cost reduction, quality improvement, and new product development. The cost performance of steel is in no way inferior to that of the new materials, but if steel is to retain its position of superiority, we must continue to do our best to demonstrate its advantages and further extend its range of applications.

In the future, the TRD will need even greater responsiveness as it undertakes the solution of increasingly diverse and complex problems. Deeper insight and a sharper vision of the future will also be required, since research should be the first sector to anticipate and respond to changes in the environment surrounding its activities and those of the company which it serves. It is my hope that the TRD, bearing these points in mind, will carry forward with an appropriate reconceptualization of its role in the company and society. The same applies to the individual researcher who until now has stayed within his own deep but narrow specialty. The researcher

must take a broader view and actively apply his intellectual capabilities outside his own field. Of course, it is important in research work to create value by the development of new products and technologies, but at the same time, the importance of establishing a secure scientific foundation for the continuing growth of practical knowledge must not be forgotten.

Along with these remarks on the future course of research and development, I would like to conclude my message on the publication of this TRD Twentieth Anniversary Issue by requesting the continuing guidance and encouragement of all those both in and outside the Kawasaki group who have so generously supported our efforts in the past.