

Japan walks a tightrope

by Linda de Hoyos

Attacks on Japan for its alleged failure to contribute to the multinational effort against Iraq in the Gulf crisis reached a fever pitch in the first week of September in the United States. Japan had promised \$1 billion to pay for the U.S. occupation in Saudi Arabia, and will ship hundreds of four-wheel-drive vehicles, generators, and housing units to the Gulf.

But, in talks with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshio Kaifu in Tokyo Sept. 5, Henry Kissinger, evidently acting as an unofficial U.S. emissary, insisted that the \$1 billion is not enough and that Japan—contrary to its U.S.-approved Constitution which bans military deployments outside of Japan's defense perimeters—must provide more than mere financial aid.

Kissinger's pronouncements echoed the threatening tones emanating from U.S. ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost, who declared Aug. 29, according to Kyodo news service: "We'd like a contribution [from Japan] that is worthy of a country that is one of the biggest countries in the world, one of the most prosperous countries in the world, a country that has the biggest stake in the oil resources in that region, and a country that has professed to be interested in leadership in the United Nations," referring to Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. He then made reference to the U.S. shift to an enemy posture toward Japan: "After an issue like this comes up, it tends to define for all Americans who their friends are."

The intent of such a tone has not been lost on Japan's officialdom. In reporting Japan's effort on Sept. 4, Japanese foreign ministry official Yukio Okamoto declared that American distrust of Japanese efforts and motivations in the Gulf crisis constituted the "gravest threat" in relations between the two countries in many years. Past confrontations on trade and other such matters were "mere pseudo-crises" compared to what is happening between Tokyo and Washington today.

Enter Shevardnadze

Against this backdrop, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze arrived in Tokyo in the first week of September for talks geared to pave the way for a visit of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov in April.

Marking a turning point in Japan-Soviet relations, the visit was notable for a joint statement by Shevardnadze and

his Japanese counterpart Taro Nakayama on the Gulf crisis. The communiqué condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and called for the release of foreign hostages. However, its joint issuing would tend to indicate that Japan favors the Soviet posture on the crisis—including Gorbachov's rejection of U.S. unilateral military action against Iraq—to the far harsher stance coming from Washington.

The importance accorded Shevardnadze's visit was also evidenced by Shevardnadze's audience before Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace, the first visit of its kind since 1976, when then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko met with Emperor Hirohito. Shevardnadze invited the emperor to Moscow.

The Japanese, however, stuck to their guns on all points of negotiation with Moscow. Nakayama rejected suggestions that Japan drop its security treaty with the United States and join a comprehensive security arrangement for the Far East—a security system Moscow has been pushing in the region to no avail. However, the two countries agreed to set up a working-level diplomatic forum to discuss Asian security concerns, according to the *Washington Post*.

And Tokyo held fast on demanding that the Soviet Union return four northern islands seized from Japan at the end of World War II, if Moscow wants to see any substantial investment in Soviet economic development. However, for the first time, Shevardnadze said that the Soviet Union is willing to negotiate this thorny issue, indicating that Moscow would like to construct a package by April.

In the meantime, Japan will dispatch economic specialists to Moscow in September to assist in restructuring the Soviet economy, reported the Sept. 10 *Journal of Commerce*. This visit will offer the Soviets a clear alternative to the Adam Smith "flea market" coming from London and Washington. The Soviets will be briefed on how Tokyo's postwar Economic Stabilization Board managed to rebuild the Japanese economy in the late 1940s and 1950s, and presumably the methods of the American System and Friedrich List that permitted Japan's dirigist development to become one of the most productive economies in the world. The Japanese mission will consist mostly of senior managers of major corporations, who will visit Soviet petrochemical, chemical, and heavy industry plants to determine what should be done to revive the economy. Shevardnadze told Nakayama that the Soviet Union hopes that the two countries can cooperate in developing oil and natural gas fields in various Soviet regions.

Another group of Japanese financial specialists will travel to Moscow in September to help the Soviets overhaul their banking system and set up a modern commodities exchange. The Japanese have also invited Shevardnadze to send managers of Soviet enterprises to Japan to study the latest Japanese management practices. Also invited to Japan was a group of Soviet technicians who will study production technology and quality-control methods.