

Japan offers olive branch to China

by Kathy Wolfe

Japanese Emperor Akihito made the first visit in history by a Japanese emperor to China on Oct. 23-29, for reasons wildly speculated upon but never explained in the western media. Japan's internationalists planned the trip in fact to try to stabilize China, which is in economic collapse, to keep Asia from going up in flames. While it might seem better to boycott the butchers of Beijing, from where Tokyo sits, it appears that they have no choice.

"The West says the Cold War is over. Well, the Cold War in Asia is *not* over," a top Japanese executive told *EIR* recently. Japan, he said, is still faced with heavily armed communist regimes in China and North Korea, and has little faith that the Anglo-Americans would back Tokyo if push came to shove. Tokyo must try to build bridges to China and try to develop its economy.

So far, the trip has not caused the expected anti-Japanese uproar inside China. Many Japanese observers feared Beijing would try to churn up popular hatred of Japan in China as a scapegoat for the wreck the communists have made of their nation. There is no question that Japan committed atrocities in China, exterminating millions from 1927 to 1945, but the Japanese, at least, halted such behavior some decades ago.

Beijing's equally strong need to polish up its blood-stained image since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, when most countries cut diplomatic relations, kept their Japan-bashing down to a dull roar.

The heated issue before the trip—will the emperor apologize for the World War II-era Japanese atrocities?—had cooled somewhat by the time he departed. Akihito's first speech in Beijing on Oct. 23 stressed his sorrow at the suffering caused by Japanese troops in China, but he did not kowtow to Beijing, as demanded by some communist hardliners. "In the long history between our two countries, there was an unfortunate period in which my country inflicted great sufferings on the people of China," Akihito said at a state banquet hosted by Chinese Premier Li Peng and President Yang Shangkun at the Great Hall of the People. "I feel deep sadness at this."

"The emperor resolved to go forward, dedicated to peace and advancement of friendly relations," the emperor's press spokesman Hideo Kagami said. "We want to strengthen relations with countries like China."

Asked if the lack of an imperial apology would hamper relations, Kagami said: "It will be very difficult for the

wounds of war to heal. We are very much aware of that. . . . It will take years for the wounds to heal."

Even the Chinese declined to complain. President Yang told the emperor, "Do not forget the past, but use it as a guide for the future. Learning the lessons of history will bring fundamental benefits for the people of the two countries."

Terror or development

While Beijing itself was calm, a wave of terrorism and demonstrations swept Japan, Taiwan, and other countries because of the trip. On Oct. 19, a car went up in flames after two explosions, half a mile from the emperor's Akasaka Palace in Tokyo. Following this, a police spokesman said, 26,000 police were mobilized to guard the central Tokyo palace and major roads.

Protests by Japanese leftists continued through the Beijing trip. On Oct. 23, leftists set fire to a Shinto shrine, the Memorial Hall in Aichi prefecture in central Japan, and burned it to the ground hours before Akihito left. It housed remains of wartime Prime Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo and six other war criminals hanged by Allied authorities after the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

In Taiwan, protesters hurled eggs at Tokyo's unofficial embassy in Taipei on Oct. 23 and demanded Akihito apologize for Japan's atrocities in China. Students, professors, and legislators staged a sit-down protest outside the Interchange Association, Tokyo's representative office in Taiwan.

More importantly, Japanese spokesmen publicly addressed the bigger issue of Beijing's massive naval and other military buildup in the days leading up to the trip. "I am aware that [Communist Chinese] Secretary General Jiang Zemin called for a naval buildup, and there is also the problem of Beijing's claim over the Nanxia [Spratly] Islands," Defense Minister Sohei Miyashita said Oct. 19. "We must start to seriously think about this," he told the Foreign Correspondents' Club.

"We are fated to live with China," a Japanese government official told *EIR*, explaining the policy. "We didn't choose them as a neighbor, but at this point we have no choice but to do whatever we can to try to stabilize the relationship and the Chinese economy" to prevent any foreign military adventures.

As part of this policy, the emperor was able to announce during his trip that six Japanese major trading companies have just completed a study for a \$4 billion petrochemical complex in Darien, northern China (formerly Manchuria) which would be the biggest Japanese-Chinese venture yet, the Oct. 26 *International Herald Tribune* reported. A senior Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) official said that the Japanese government would invest, too.

While the Japanese government has provided a huge \$28 billion in low-interest, 20-year yen loans for China's development, the Japanese private sector until now has been fearful and has made only tiny direct investment.