

Japan-Soviet Ties Should Be Built From Broader

By Mineo Nakajima

When President Mikhail Gorbachev at last comes to Japan on April 16, it will be the first visit by a leader of the great northern power since the days of the Russian Empire, a fact that speaks volumes about the abnormal state of Japanese-Soviet relations. Ironically, this spring also marks exactly 100 years since "Russian Terror" gripped Japan and resulted in the Otsu Incident, an assault on Crown Prince Nicholas Alexandrovich (later Tsar Nicholas II) during his visit here. Gorbachev's trip must be made a departure, an event that sets a more harmonious tone for the next century of relations between the neighboring nations.

The further the Soviet Union falters economically, scientifically and technologically, and the more acute the political crises that Gorbachev faces at home, the more he is compelled to produce a diplomatic breakthrough on the Japanese front. And if he cannot afford to return to the Soviet Union without satisfactory results to show for his efforts, neither can he allow anything to happen that might invite scorn from the Japanese. He will therefore come prepared to mix it up with his counterparts here, but will no doubt make full use of his patented strategy of diplomacy.

We can surmise that Gorbachev will avoid letting the Northern Territories dispute become the centerpiece of his trip; he will put forth multifaceted proposals from a global perspective. For example, he may well call for troop and arms reductions throughout the North Pacific, press for the formation of a pan-Asian Pacific security structure and speak of creating a "common Asian home." He is also likely to touch on the mistakes the Soviet Union has made in its previous dealings with Japan, such as the postwar detention of Japanese nationals in Siberia.

As far as the Northern Territories are concerned, Gorbachev may suggest return-

unilateralism, in which he links the matter at hand (the islands) to other issues, presenting an overall package that those across the table are inclined to take rather than leave. He has employed this technique masterfully of late, both in his diplomatic approach toward Europe and in disarmament negotiations with the United States.

Should Japan attempt to counter Gorbachev's dynamic, wide-ranging initiatives

GUEST FORUM

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with a narrow agenda limited to consideration of when and how the Soviet Union will return the Northern Territories, it would be in disregard of diplomatic reality.

There is an international consensus that, given worsening ethnic strife in the Soviet Union and the threat of dissolution that that nation faces, capitulation on the Northern Territories dispute is completely out of the question. The Soviet Union is in no mood to hang itself on the international stage. Japan ought not to be either, which is why it should avoid staking the entire bilateral relationship on the fate of four islands north of Hokkaido.

Furthermore, as the then Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party demonstrated in Moscow last month, dangling great sums of money before the Soviet people as if to entice them to "exchange" the islands only succeeds in hurting their feelings and may narrow Japan's options. Of course economic cooperation between the two countries is necessary, but providing aid with one hand while extending the other for some kind of diplomatic payoff is a crooked thing to do.

Perestroika is in a worse way today than anyone

with it an impulse toward the disintegration of the union. The Russian Republic has actual jurisdiction over the Northern Territories. The possibility has arisen that the head of the Russian parliament, Boris Yeltsin, will become executive president of Russia, a position from which he would square off against the federal government.

Yeltsin is a populist in the sense that his politics appeal to the masses. On the Northern Territories issue, he is more conservative (or, more accurately, he is more nationalistic) than Gorbachev. Inasmuch as President Gorbachev would approach the Northern Territories from a more international perspective than Yeltsin might, Japan should take advantage of the opportunity Gorbachev presents to see things in the context of the big picture.

By working to open up the bilateral relationship from a variety of angles, Japan can help keep Gorbachev on the international political stage,



increasing the odds that the Northern Territories will eventually be returned to the Japanese.

As he arrives, President Gorbachev is in the midst of a balancing act, caught between the demands of reformists on one side and conservatives on the other. Perhaps the wisest thing for Japan to do during his short visit would be to give him a good

Vox Populi, Vox Dei

Still the Land of Opp

Over 10 years ago, in the last stages of the Vietnam War, great numbers of Vietnamese people fled their country. Afterward there was a long period in which these "boat people" were the object of worldwide concern. It's a terrible thing for those who, in fear of their lives, have left their own land behind them and arrived in a foreign country where they must try to settle down. I was in America during that period and was able to observe how things worked out.

The Vietnamese were attempting to live there together in extended families as they had done in their old country. A great many of them were packed into a single house, which didn't please their neighbors and gave rise to some friction. I was told by the new immigrants that a growing number of them were taking a psychological battering as a result of these tensions and frictions. I also heard that the Vietnamese community did not boast a single psychiatrist.

However, American scholars researching into the condition of the Vietnamese community argued that the psychiatric help so necessary to Americans was compensated for, in the Vietnamese case, by

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