

ECONOMY/POLITICS

Island focus wasted chance to show capitalism's power

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The Japanese government has been placing too much emphasis on the reversion of the Soviet-held islands. Unfortunately, President Mikhail Gorbachev was forced to spend most of his stay in Japan discussing the territorial issue.



I think it was more important for Japan to let the Soviet leader observe Japan's economic dynamism. He should have been given more opportunity to visit intelligent buildings, factories and other places, which would have made him realize that the market economy works far better than the socialist system. We lost a good opportunity to "convert" him to a believer in the market system.

From a long-term perspective, it would be in Japan's great interests to help

Island issue left for future talks

(Continued from Page 1)

ern islands, since they belong to his Russian Federation.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, Gorbachev's opponents flayed him for trying to buy Tokyo's financial aid with the islands.

But the Japanese official said they did not even have any concrete discussion

transform the Soviet society by transferring Japanese economic know-how.

However, Gorbachev's visit was not totally without substance. It seems to have helped change the Japanese public's perception of the Soviet Union. Now that the Japanese people have been informed of the Soviets' domestic difficulties, they do not seem to view it merely as a frightful country.

I feel relieved that the two countries somehow managed to issue the joint communique. Although its wording is equivocal, we avoided a worst-case scenario in which Gorbachev would have left Japan with contemptuous words.

If that had been the case, Tokyo's relations with the great neighboring power would have likely remained chilly for years to come, and that would have placed Japan in quite an unbalanced position in the international political arena. By Akihiro Tamiya, Journal staff writer



Warmer Japan-Soviet relations are important for the world

KIICHI MIYAZAWA
Former foreign minister

Through the visit to Japan of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, the Japanese people have found out what Russians are like for the first time.

But Gorbachev's way of negotiation shows us that it will be hard for us to become real friends.

Gorbachev should be commended for trying to amend an odd situation, whereby the Soviet Union did nothing for a long time to improve its foreign relations with Japan. Moreover, he confirmed the existence of territorial disputes.

I have always believed that the Soviet Union would return the four islands if conditions were beneficial. But I could never foresee when such a situation would occur.

At last that time has come. Compared to the profits that the Soviets might take (if they return the islands), I don't think

the territories are valuable to them any more.

As for economic aid, no matter how much the government strongly encourages the private sector to develop business activities, businesses will never be able to increase trade if they can't receive good profits.

It's important that Japan and the Soviet Union strengthen political, economic and cultural relations altogether. It's no good for the world if these two neighboring powers are hostile to each other. So first, we need to remove our prejudices.

Bilateral relations between Japan and the USSR should get warmer so that both nations can respond appropriately to new international conflicts, such as the recent Gulf war, even after the end of cold war between the U.S. and USSR.

By Itaru Oishi, Journal staff writer



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