

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# New Atlanticist Challenge Confronts Japan's Miki

Oct. 30 (NSIPS) — After a brief respite, the government of Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki has again plunged into political crisis. A month-long truce in the fierce inner party struggle within the ruling conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was broken after forces grouped around the pro-Atlanticist Deputy Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda announced their intention to force Miki out of office. The anti-Miki factions of the LDP grouped in the Kyotokyo ("Party Unity Council") met last week and declared that Fukuda was their nominee to succeed Miki following the general elections to be held in early December.

Fukuda, known as a Carter supporter in Japanese political circles, has taken advantage of Miki's foot-dragging imitation of U.S. President Gerald Ford to stage a comeback from what looked like a decisive political defeat in his earlier attempt to overthrow Miki. He gained the Kyotokyo nomination with the agreement of the previously reluctant allies within the factions of Finance Minister Ohira and former prime minister and Lockheed scandal target, Kakuei Tanaka.

Miki has been hurt not only by his failure to move more forcefully off his previous victory, but more importantly by the general political stagnation of Japan's potential anti-Atlanticist allies in Europe, the developing countries, and the United States. The sense of isolation now prevailing in political and business circles in Japan, a vulnerability to the pressures of the New York banks and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was demonstrated in the obsequious capitulation to U.S. pressure in Japan's handling of the affair of the Soviet MIG-25 jet that landed in Japan. The resulting deterioration in Japan-Soviet relations — not helped by the heavy-handed approach of the Soviet Union — is reflected in the complete absence of Japanese initiative at international forums in support for the new world economic order and has turned Japanese politics inward.

Miki's political maneuvering over the past month or two has failed when measured against the startling collapse of Japanese economic activity as the brief "export boom" recovery evaporated. Japan's industrial production is sinking through the floor. In September the mining and manufacturing index fell 1 per cent from August; in August it had fallen 1.7 per cent from the previous month; and it is expected to fall at least another percentage point in October. At the same time, Japan's overseas export trade has come under panicky attack from both European and American industrialists who, with Atlanticist encouragement, are turning to protectionism, and trying to use Japan as a whipping boy for the general economic collapse.

The Japanese dilemma was graphically evident in the just-completed visit to Europe by top Japanese industrialists, led by the head of Japan's major business federation, Keidanren. Keidanren head Toshio Doko, according to the Journal of Commerce's Japan correspondent, was "shocked" by the outcry from not only Britain and France but also from West Germany and Belgium for protectionist curbs against Japanese exports. Doko, whose original mission aimed at overcoming protectionist sentiment by offering the Europeans a share in joint ventures to develop the Third World, was forced by the end of his trip to issue a statement promising that Japan would use "voluntary curbs" on its exports to Europe.

### Protectionist Ploy

Japan's steel and shipbuilding industries have come under special attack from the European Economic Community, and the EEC threatened to impose special curbs on Japanese steel at its upcoming Nov. 29 meeting. "Chances of an ugly trade war breaking out between Japan and the EEC before the end of the year are increasing almost by the hour," the Journal's E.A. Cullison wrote. Also eight major U.S. stainless steel manufacturers petitioned the U.S. International Trade Commission to impose restrictions on Japanese steel pipe.

The absence of political leadership from Tokyo and outside Japan has seriously undercut the ability of industrial circles to push for a new world economic order — the only real answer to protectionism.

### Fukuda's Drive for Fascism

Miki has answered Fukuda's latest bid in a national television address, angrily vowing never to resign and to fight the elections with the intention of remaining premier. Miki's resistance has forced Fukuda to back down from his threat to force an LDP split at the party convention Oct. 31. This has left as the key battleground the post-election selection of a prime minister from the LDP parliamentary delegation, presuming they hold their majority in the Diet.

Fukuda is determined to establish a regime that can impose fascist economic austerity in the country. He is openly trying to force a secession from the LDP of Miki and his major factional ally, Yasuhiro Nakasone, leaving a clean LDP which he then hopes to control.

The generally pro-Atlanticist newspaper Asahi has aided Fukuda by publicizing another round of rumor-mongering that tries to link Nakasone personally to the Lockheed scandal hoax manufactured in the U.S. Fukuda fears that unless the Miki-Nakasone alliance is smashed, Miki and Nakasone, aided by other dissident LDP members and the LDP splitoff "New Liberal Club" could form a "second LDP" with widespread popular support. Such a party would rapidly gain support from businessmen like Doko who are fed up with Fukuda's policy of zero economic growth.

### Where Will Miki Go?

Fukuda has tried to prepare the ground for trapping Miki should he leave the LDP with a parallel operation within the opposition parties where an anti-communist corporatist alliance is being forged. The umbrella for this is the so-called Society to Think About a New Japan, a group formed just two weeks after the Lockheed scandal broke which includes in its leadership the heads of the right-wing Democratic Socialist Party, the anti-communist Buddhist Komei (Clean Government) Party and the right-wing faction of the Japanese Socialist Party (the largest opposition party) led by Saburo Eda.

The society recently put forward its program, which calls for the creation of "civic socialism" — a label that stands for the decentralization and deindustrialization of Japan, junking economic growth to establish a "welfare society." Sound familiar? Jimmy Carter would be right at home, and so is Takeo Fukuda who has long favored a low growth policy of austerity for Japan. The main target of the society, the Japanese Communist Party, denounced the social fascist scheme as an operation to shore up the U.S.-Japan security alliance and continue conservative rule in Japan.