

Asian and Arab leaders to promote cooperation between advanced countries, oil-producers and developing countries. Miki is believed to be making approaches to these countries for some kind of summit in Tokyo - a pan-Asian, Arab affair, The Yomiuri reports: "The premier believes that the formation of a new international economic order, which is one of the objectives of the 6-nation summit in Rambouillet, presupposes dialogs between the North and South and between the East and West by broad channels".

The only additional concrete moves in this regard is a report that the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry has come out asking for a loosening of the COCOM controls on East-West trade since "the COCOM list has lost its raison d'etre because of detente", according to the Yomiuri. A delegation from the Supreme Soviet is presently in Japan.

The Nov.26 Pravda, ran a straight-forward article on Japan-Soviet cooperation in Siberia.

PUBLIC WORKERS STRIKE IN JAPAN

The massive public workers strike now going on in Japan, one of the largest and most extensive in post-war history, is actually a crucial battle on the question of austerity. The immediate question is the demand for the right to strike for public employees which was taken away by Head of U.S. occupation forces Gen. Douglas MacArthur in 1948. However behind this is the massive debt crisis of the Japanese municipalities and particularly, the Japanese National Railways (JNR) which is at the center of the strike.

The strike has been set up as a provocation by Fukuda, with the obvious hope of providing the crisis which could damage or topple Miki. Fukuda and the Finance Ministry, less than a week before the strike, came out with their proposal for dealing the JNR crisis. The Finance Ministry proposed an outright austerity plan which included 80-90 per cent hikes in rail fares, layoffs of 13,000 employees, and cutbacks in trackage on local lines. This plan is opposed by the unions, the Transport Ministry and by circles in the LDP. They are proposing instead some kind of "shelving of debt" as an alternative to fare hikes. There are some differences between the unions and the Ministry (and JNR management) but they all agree on some kind of debt relief as opposed to austerity. It is clear that Miki had hoped for some kind of settlement that would combine the granting of a limited right to strike with this anti-austerity program.

This does involve, it should be noted, a corporatist setup for strike situations. Fukuda's move was made to preclude this and setup a confrontation. He was aided in this by anti-labor sentiment in rightwing LDP circles which back him. Therefore, if Miki is to get a settlement, which could end up improving his political position domestically, he must have a showdown with these elements in the party ---something he has felt too weak to carry out up to now.