

Japan, Russia look to peace, development

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama told the U.N. General Assembly Sept. 24 that Japan is eager to sign a formal peace treaty with the Union of Sovereign States (the former Soviet Union), and begin helping to modernize the new Union's economy. First, he said, Russia must "resolve the territorial issue at the earliest possible time" of Japan's four Northern Islands, seized by the Soviet Army in the final days of World War II. The dispute over the islands, called the Kuriles in Russian, has prevented the two nations from signing a postwar peace treaty. Nakayama will go to Moscow in mid-October, Reuters reported Sept. 24, for talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S.S. President Mikhail Gorbachov.

Grigory Yavlinsky, vice chairman of the former Soviet interim administration, became the first Russian leader to declare that the islands rightfully belong to Japan Sept. 10. Russia is eager for Japanese technical and development aid, and the new Union should show "determination and good will about returning the Northern Territories," he said in a letter to Japan's Kyodo news agency. "I'm sure this problem can and will be solved in the near future. The first Russian-Japanese treaty concluded in 1855 through negotiations, could provide a moral and legal basis for such a solution. The border established by the treaty should also be confirmed. The islands of Iturup, Kunashir, Habomai and Shikotan should be returned to Japan, without infringing upon their residents' rights. This should take top priority. By observing this treaty we will get rid of yet another legacy of our totalitarian past."

Former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, of the new Union's Political Consultative Council, also said Sept. 19 regarding Japan's Northern Territories, "A fresh approach is needed." He renewed his offer to sponsor an independent conference on the issue.

Japanese sources say that Gorbachov, during his trip to Japan last April, began negotiations on turning over the islands. The Japanese had been expecting their rapid return, until a sudden dispute arose with Yeltsin.

During the summer, Yeltsin began to press the Russian nationalist stand, demanding a 20-year negotiation before releasing the territory. The population of the islands is significantly Russian, because the Soviet communists, after the 1945 seizure, settled Russians there, forcing Japanese families to leave the area, prized for its strategic military location. Today the population is more Russian than Japanese, creating a cultural problem.

Now, however, "Russia is determined to end the four-decade-old territorial dispute," Yeltsin's emissary Ruslan Khasbulatov, acting chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, told Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu during Tokyo talks in September.

Japanese say technology first

Nakayama's spokesman Sadaaki Numata told a U.N. news conference Sept. 24 that until the situation on the islands is worked out, there is no possibility of a major cash infusion for Russia, but that Japan "will go ahead with humanitarian aid, because the Soviet Union has a dire need. . . . There remains to be settled the question of large-scale economic assistance." *Izvestia* reported Sept. 11 that Japan is considering emergency food aid of \$100 million.

A source close to the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Economic Cooperation Bureau, which runs Japan's foreign aid programs, confirmed that for now, Japan will go along with George Bush's Group of Seven consensus on keeping aid to the former Soviet Union at a minimum. Japan does not agree with the Bush-Margaret Thatcher new world order approach which seeks to foster chaos and disintegration in the Soviet bloc, he said, but the Russians must put in place some basic structure of government, and then economic reform.

Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, in a July letter to Mikhail Gorbachov, specified that "Japan believes that a policy of new thinking must also be spread on to Asian countries, not confined to the Soviet Union's relations with Europe and the U.S. alone."

The Japanese are promoting for now not only humanitarian aid but, more importantly, technological assistance, in the hopes that a high-technology infusion would be the most dramatic way to improve both the economy and the condition of the individual. Talks began in Moscow in September on Japanese peaceful nuclear technology assistance focusing on control and manufacture of newer types of nuclear power plants, basic scientific research, disposal of radioactive waste, and technologies for construction of new nuclear plants in the Soviet Far East.

Japanese Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Eiichi Nakao has pledged to accept 1,000 trainees in nuclear power plant technology, construction, and operation from the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, and Third World in the 1990s.

MITI is also drafting a general aid plan for the new Union, Nakao said. On Sept. 11, MITI issued an eight-point proposal for areas of joint study: conversion of defense industry to civilian; energy and environment; atomic and energy security; production and processing of oil; financial insurance of business deals; development of small and medium-sized firms and enterprises; development of productive forces in the Far East; and planning of economic reform. There will be eight exploratory missions from Japan to the Union this year to identify priorities for assistance, Kyodo news reported.