

Tokyo and Washington undergo a widening split over policy questions

by Richard Katz

The election of Ronald Reagan had been seen in many quarters as a presage of a renewed "era of good feeling" in U.S.-Japan relations. It was hoped that Reagan's reversal of the Carter disasters in the economy, the China Card, and "human rights" destabilizations, would alleviate the substantive issues that caused so much friction between Japan and the Carter team.

Instead, U.S.-Japanese tensions have increased. The reason is that—with the important exception of Reagan's halt to the Carter-backed destabilization of South Korea—the new administration has continued, and often exacerbated, the Carter disasters, particularly on questions of credit policy and the basic premises of the U.S. defense security posture.

Part of Japanese Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki's response has been to form a quiet, behind-the-scenes, but very significant collaboration with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to persuade Reagan to fulfill the hopes his election victory had aroused. Nowhere is this collaboration seen more clearly than on the interest-rate issue. "Japan and West Germany are working very closely against Volcker's high interest rates," a Japanese banker declared. "The way it works is that Schmidt makes the public denunciations of Volcker, and then Japan tells Washington it shares Germany's concern."

Japan's choice of "quiet diplomacy" toward the administration rather than open denunciations of Volcker is only partly due to the customary over-polite Japanese demeanor in dealing with U.S. governments, according to Japanese businessmen. "The New York banks let it be known," said one source, "that if Japan publicly attacked Volcker, it would be more difficult for Japanese banks and firms to get credit in New York. They didn't say this in so many words, but we understood their meaning."

A Japanese banker added, "We don't think Reagan's economic program will lower interest rates, and we cannot accept any arguments that the interest-rate issue is an internal American affair. It is having adverse effects internationally."

Theater nuclear warfare

Japan also responded sharply to the Pentagon's latest moves and to Alexander Haig's China Card

initiatives. A wave of protest hit the Japanese press over reports that the Pentagon had approached Tokyo on the issue of stationing theater nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia. On Aug. 5, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* headlined a report that Rear Adm. Donald Jones, director of the Pentagon's East Asia and Pacific region, had confirmed to a visiting Japanese Dietman (member of parliament) the launching of a Pentagon study on such a deployment. Pentagon sources confirmed this to *EIR*.

Jones indicated that the missiles, cruise missiles, and Pershing II's would most likely be deployed in South Korea and on submarines. He vaguely indicated that Japan was not considered as a specific deployment site at this time, thus floating a "trial balloon" that a few years down the road, the United States may indeed want to station nuclear missiles on Japanese soil. Japan—a nation still scarred by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—has an absolute prohibition against the manufacture, use, or entry of nuclear weapons on its soil.

The reaction to the theater nuclear weapons, and to Caspar Weinberger's neutron-bomb announcement, was markedly unlike Japanese newspapers' customary pious denunciations of nuclear weapons in general. Instead, the specific accusation was made that current American limited nuclear warfare scenarios might make nuclear conflagration more likely, and/or target Europe and Japan as principal zones of conflict (see *Yomiuri* interview with Henry Kissinger, excerpted below).

Characteristic was the *Mainichi Shimbun's* Aug. 17 editorial: "The U.S. strategy is to step up the preparedness for limited nuclear war, with cities placed outside the boundary of nuclear targets. President Reagan's decision further demonstrates the strong determination of the American strategists, thus increasing the danger of limited nuclear war." Earlier in the week, the Japanese government had echoed West Germany in pointedly refusing to endorse the N-bomb decision, merely labeling it "an internal U.S. decision."

The government leaked to the press, e.g. the Aug. 6 *Asahi Shimbun* article, its own "concern" over possible U.S. theater nuclear weapon deployment. The Pentagon had broached the subject at U.S.-Japan security talks in

Hawaii in June.

Perhaps the most worrisome aspect of the theater nuclear weapons deployment is its link to what seems to be a growing receptiveness to a U.S. military umbrella over China, and Japan's involvement in this through demands on it to take on a regional military role.

Secretary Weinberger, in television interviews regarding the neutron bomb, and other Pentagon spokesmen, have indicated that the Far East was an area for neutron bomb deployment, and specifically mentioned China in their rationale for the N-bomb. Weinberger told an ABC audience that the N-bomb was needed, among other things, to deal with Soviet SS-20 nuclear missiles' accuracy in hitting targets in Europe and China. Henry Kissinger, in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* interview declared, "If there is a major war in Asia it will result . . . from an attack on China by the Soviet Union," adding that the United States and its allies would have to decide "what contribution, if any, to make to the defense of China."

Concern in Tokyo grows at the thought that the deployment of theater nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia could be devoted to defending China. This concern accelerates as Washington insists that Japan abandon its traditional self-defense role and, as Kissinger put it, take on responsibility to "defend at least its own region."

If U.S. demands for increased Japanese defense spending were couched in terms of the traditional U.S.-Japan relationship, the resistance in Japan would be far less. However, the Japanese recoil at Pentagon defense plans that seem to hinge on the China Card.

Several Japanese businessmen stressed to *EIR* that Japan holds a completely different perception of China from Washington's. "Japan believes it must aid China financially and economically," said one banker, "in order to prevent political disintegration there over the next 10 years. If China would totally concentrate on cleaning up its own economic house, and ensuring political stability, and avoid a lot of foreign activities, that is the greatest contribution China could make to international stability."

"The danger, when I say disintegration, is not that China will break up into different countries, but that it will become ungovernable: then it might lash out at its neighbors. ASEAN [Association of South-East Asian Nations] nations fear, not so much a direct Chinese threat to them, but if China again attacks Vietnam as a diversion from internal instability, this could have a destabilizing effect on the entire region." It is noteworthy that Japan supported ASEAN against Peking's defense of Pol Pot at the July U.N. conference on Kampuchea, while Haig supported Peking.

There are, of course, partisans of the Haig-Weinberger strategy in Japan. In fact, up until the May 16 firing

of Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ito by Suzuki, those Haig-Weinberger allies held sway. Suzuki appointed Sunao Sonoda as new foreign minister and came increasingly under the influence of former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, a longtime associate of Helmut Schmidt. Fukuda, and to a lesser extent Sonoda, engineered Suzuki's shift to collaboration with West Germany on the interest-rate question and on opposing Haig's simplistic confrontationist posture toward the U.S.S.R.

Dump Suzuki movement fizzles

As a result, in June and July a "dump Suzuki" movement arose in some backrooms of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Voices urging a more hawkish foreign policy in line with Haig's complained that "Suzuki listens only to Fukuda these days." Fukuda himself is no pacifist—in fact he was once regarded as a hawk—but like Schmidt, thinks the present U.S. foreign and economic posture is woefully misdirected.

One of the hawkish voices was that of Susumu Nikkaido, a Kissinger-associated member of the faction of former Prime Minister and Lockheed scandal defendant Kakuei Tanaka. Nikkaido hopes to replace Sonoda as foreign minister in the cabinet reshuffle, now expected for November, as a stepping-stone on the way to the premiership.

Yet, in all the byzantine maneuvering in Japan, Suzuki, Sonoda and, behind scenes, Fukuda, seem to have won the key battles. The "dump Suzuki" movement has fizzled, and Suzuki will likely receive another two-year term as prime minister when the current term expires in November. Similarly, against most previous expectations, Sonoda seems likely to hold his foreign minister's post during the cabinet reshuffle, according to *Yomiuri* of Aug. 21. Finally, even some of the old-line party elders and king-makers who opposed the Fukuda to make deals, establishing Fukuda as an increasingly critical powerbroker.

One Japanese reporter commented, "Suzuki will stay on, not because everyone likes him—many think he is too weak—but because his opponents cannot come up with a suitable replacement." This popularly accepted explanation is only partially true. It overlooks the most important factor: the policies of the Haig-Weinberger supporters in the "dump Suzuki" effort may fit Japan's desire to get along with U.S. administrations, but in most every other way jar with Japanese national interest and perceptions, particularly on the China Card question. Thus, for the time being, Suzuki and the Fukuda-engineered policy will remain in control and, as long as President Reagan adheres to Haig and Weinberger initiatives, policy friction between Japan and the United States will continue.

Kissinger on Asia's role in nuclear war

The following are excerpts from a series of interviews with Henry Kissinger published in the Japanese newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun in late July and early August during Kissinger's visit to Japan.

Yomiuri: The Reagan administration seems to take a very heavy-handed, clearcut, and simple policy vis-à-vis the U.S.S.R. [and] is receding back to the policies of the days of cold war . . . and we can detect some anxiety on the part of the Japanese people as to its impact on détente or the Third World or the relationship between the North and the South.

Kissinger: Unless we have forces capable of intervention . . . then the countries of [various] areas . . . may have to adjust to Soviet policy without having to be militarily attacked. . . .

It is my judgment that if there is a major war in Asia . . . it will result from an attack on China by the Soviet Union. . . . [The question] would then face all countries that had an interest in the independence of China . . . of what contribution, if any, they want to make to the defense of China. . . . We don't have an alliance with China. But I have always said that a military attack on China by the Soviet Union cannot be dealt with indifference by the U.S. and probably not by the friends of the United States.

Yomiuri: Is the U.S. capable militarily of coping with such an attack or aggression by the U.S.S.R.?

Kissinger: Supposing the Soviets do all that you described and supposing the U.S. declares war, and supposing the U.S. does nothing for the first year except gear up its production and mobilize, how long can the Soviet Union stand it? . . . If the war goes on a year or two, I think the Soviet Union will be in great difficulty.

Yomiuri: We feel that the Reagan administration's request to Japan to increase her defense forces is perhaps too hasty and too big.

Kissinger: I have the conviction that Japan had recognized the reality that America cannot alone defend the whole world with American forces. Now that Japan has

become economically strong, it will also have to defend at least its own region. . . .

I think, by the late 1980s, Japan's defense forces will be very considerable. The real problem will be how to coordinate them with ours. . . . The day may come when [Japan's defense buildup] will go faster than some Americans find comfortable. But that's 10 years from now.

Yomiuri: Because of the development of theater nuclear weapons, it seems that the cores of the U.S. and the Soviet Union have actually become sanctuaries, whereas the actual substantial nuclear exchanges are to take place in Europe or Northeast Asia. . . .

Kissinger: We don't need medium-range [nuclear] missiles in Europe as such; we can put them at sea. . . . The advantage of missiles in Europe is that the Soviet Union will not be able to threaten Europe without also threatening the U.S., because if they threaten Europe without threatening the U.S., our whole nuclear arsenal remains intact, and in Europe some of the weapons will be fired on the Soviet Union, doing huge damage. If they attack both Europe and the U.S. there will be general war. And they will be very reluctant to do it. . . .

I think it is total nonsense to say the U.S. wants to spare its territory and Soviet territory and that it wants nuclear war on the territory of its allies. . . . If strategy concentrates on the mass extermination of civilians, and it has no other objective, then you will see the growth of pacifism and neutralism in America.

Yomiuri: Because of the [Soviet] suspicion that nuclear weapons might be stored in the American bases in Japan, Japan might be attacked in a limited nuclear war, while the U.S. and the Soviet Union remain as sanctuaries. . . . Therefore, I would like to ask you if limited nuclear war is a realistic possibility or not?

Kissinger: I am not saying which particular weapons ought to be in Japan. That is a Japanese decision to be settled in agreement with us. But we must not let the Soviets blackmail us with their buildup . . . whether you put weapons at sea or on land. . . . That's a practical problem. . . .

Yomiuri: On previous occasions you mentioned that the central gravity of the world is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Kissinger: The Pacific, with the U.S., Japan, China, the Soviet Union, even Australia, with ASEAN, is the area of most rapid economic development and therefore the area which will be politically in the long term of greatest importance. . . . For Europe to maintain political stability, economic productivity, is going to be increasingly difficult. . . . So I would maintain that the Pacific will certainly be in the next few centuries the center of gravity of world history.