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# Gorbachev's Visit to Japan and Soviet-Japanese Relations

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Gorbachev's long-awaited visit to Japan was largely a non-event. Not only did this visit, the first visit ever to Japan by the head of the state from the Soviet Union as well as from the Russian Empire in the prerevolutionary period, produce no result on the disputed problem of the northern territorial issue. But also it was a non-event, since Gorbachev's failure to come up with a proposal acceptable to Japan did not provoke the Japanese government to walk out of the conference table or refuse to issue a joint declaration, thus causing a major setback for Soviet-Japanese relations. In a way, while facing each other at the negotiating table, both Gorbachev and Kaifu were playing to a different audience who was perhaps more important than the immediate negotiating partner. Although some progress was made, in the end the summit must be characterized as a failure, not because, as many have argued, they could not come up with a mutually acceptable solution to the territorial problem, but rather because too much attention was given to this parochial issue at the expense of more fundamental ones.

## 1. Shevardnadze's Visit to Japan, September 1990

From Shevardnadze's second visit to Japan in December 1988 until the fall of 1990 Soviet-Japanese relations looked inexorably moving in a direction towards gradual improvement.<sup>1</sup> On the Soviet side, it became clear to the Soviet leadership that without rapprochement with Japan the Soviet Union would not be able to achieve its ultimate objective of its Asian policy enunciated by Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in July 1986: to become a bona fide member of the Asia-Pacific region that could play an active role in political, economic, and cultural interactions in this region. Globally, Japan remained the only stumbling block for Gorbachev's foreign policy guided by the new political thinking. While the rest of the major powers responded positively to Gorbachev's initiatives, and completed a process of reconciliation with the Soviet Union, Japan adamantly refused to respond to Gorbachev's olive branches, not merely withholding its massive economic and financial power to help the Soviet economy, but also exercising a veto at the G7 summits in Toronto and Houston over a concerted economic aid plan. The Soviet leadership had clearly understood that rapprochement with Japan would not be possible without solving the thorny question of the northern territorial dispute. Soviet opinion leaders outside the government began voicing various constructive proposals for the solution to the territorial dispute, while the Soviet government dropped its intransigent position that there existed no territorial dispute. After Shevardnadze's second visit to Japan in December 1988, both governments agreed to establish a working

group to prepare for the conclusion of a peace treaty, whose most important task was to find a solution to the territorial dispute.

Along with the Soviet attitude toward the territorial question, it is important to note that the Soviet Union significantly changed its position on the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Shevardnadze made it clear to then Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno in May 1989 that improvement of relations between the Soviet Union and Japan would be possible under the present framework of the security alliance between Japan and the United States. Some analysts even went as far as to advocate that for the stability of the region the maintenance of the U.S.-Japanese security treaty would be in the interests of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> If the Soviets raise no objections to the existing U.S.-Japanese security treaty, there are no justifiable grounds for Khrushchev's abrogation of the 1956 joint declaration in which the Soviet government, in the mutually ratified agreement, pledged to return the two smaller islands, Shikotan and Habomais, and which Khrushchev unilaterally abrogated when Japan revised the security treaty with the United States in 1960.

It was announced in September 1989 that Gorbachev would finally visit Japan in 1991. Although it was strange that the visit was not to take place until two years later, this news was greeted in Japan with enthusiasm. Aleksandr Yakovlev, the then closest and most influential advisor to Gorbachev, visited Japan in November 1989, suggesting that "a third way" should be found for the territorial dispute.

On the Japanese side, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which had taken an intransigent entrance approach [*iriguchiron*], which meant the return of the northern territories should be the precondition for rapprochement, began to soften its position by adopting a policy of "expanded equilibrium" [*kakudai kinko*], which took the position that both countries should expand the realm of cooperation before the settlement of the territorial dispute. Since the level of cooperation should be determined by the degree to which the Soviet Union constructively responded to the territorial dispute, it was not the adoption of the exit approach [*deguchiron*]. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the policy of "expanded equilibrium" meant the virtual abandonment of the intransigent entrance theory. It should be noted that what was responsible for the MOFA's change of policy was external pressure [*gaiatsu*] that comes from a profound change in the international environment; in other words, it was not necessarily accompanied by MOFA's fundamental re-examination of Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

There was another important change in Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union. While previously the MOFA dominated the formulation of Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) began taking an active leadership in an attempt to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In fact, it was Shintaro Abe, who seized the initiative of taking Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union from the Foreign Ministry's backburner. In January 1990 Abe visited Moscow, and made a eight-point proposal for improvement of relations. Abe's proposal was followed in July by

MOFA's ten point proposal to expand the realm of cooperation.<sup>4</sup> "Expanded equilibrium" began to be implemented into concrete actions. The Presidential Council's economic mission headed by Miliukov visited Japan twice (November 1989 and April 1990), and prepared an important report in September on how the Japanese models could be borrowed for economic reform in the Soviet Union. The former residents on the islands were allowed without a visa to visit their ancestors' gravesites on Etorofu for the first time in August 1990.

Nevertheless, "expanded equilibrium" remained only "equilibrium." The Japanese government adamantly took the position that as long as the territorial question was not solved, this "equilibrium" would not be broken. More concretely, the strategy of the Japanese government was that the greatest leverage that Japan possessed – economic and financial aid – would not be forthcoming without the settlement of the territorial dispute, thus maintaining the principle of inseparability of politics and economy [*seikei hukabun*] although technical and intellectual aid and cultural exchange might be expanded. Thus, at the Houston summit Japan sided with the United States in blocking the Europeans' request to inject into the Soviet Union massive financial aid.

Shevardnadze's third visit to Japan in September 1990 was the culmination of the momentum for improvement of relations. Although no specific proposal was made on the territorial issue, differences between both countries seem to have narrowed on other contested problems. Shevardnadze and Nakayama issued a joint statement with regard to the Gulf situation, which marked the first such statement on issues other than bilateral ones. On security matters, responding to Shevardnadze's ten-point proposal on confidence-building issues, the Japanese side agreed for the first time to discuss these measures at the joint consultative committee.<sup>5</sup> A mechanism for consultation on arms control was created for the first time. It appears that for the first time the Soviets broke Japan's stonewalling on security issues in the Pacific. Previous to Shevardnadze's visit, the Self-Defense Agency had been ordered to drop the expression referring to the Soviet Union as a "potential threat" from the 1990 edition of Japan's Defense White Paper, the reference that had continued to be the predominant theme of the White Papers since 1980.<sup>6</sup>

After Shevardnadze's visit to Tokyo, however, the momentum for improvement suffered a series of setbacks. The first setback was the domestic situation in Japan. The LDP, which had suffered an unprecedented defeat in the Upper House election in the aftermath of the Recruit scandal, scored a landslide victory in the Lower House election in February. In fact, the margin of victory was so huge that it was impossible to oust Kaifu from the position of premier. This meant that if Gorbachev visited Japan in early 1991, his counterpart at the summit would be most likely Kaifu, a weak prime minister, who represented the weakest faction in the LDP, not powerful Abe, as the Soviets seemed to have wished. From the Soviet perspective, it would

require a strong leader to persuade the Japanese public and the LDP to swallow a proposal that fell short of the return of the four islands. The Japanese domestic landscape was presumed to be a factor for Gorbachev's decision to postpone his visit until 1991; certainly by this time the dust of the Recruit scandal would have been settled, and Abe might have been the candidate closest to the position of the prime minister. However, not only did Abe not become prime minister, but also he was stricken by cancer before his scheduled trip to Moscow in September, although the nature of his illness was not immediately revealed. The driving force for rapprochement with the Soviet Union on the Japanese side was lost without any powerful political figure to fill this vacancy. Gorbachev's decision made in 1989 to visit Japan in 1991, not in 1990, thus began to look like a serious miscalculation.

Nevertheless, Abe's illness, though damaging, did not stop the momentum for improvement in Japan. In November, the working group for a peace treaty held the fourth round of negotiations in Tokyo. Although each side stuck to its guns with regard to the territorial issue, both sides were willing to find a way out of the blind alley. The Soviet side referred for the first time to the 1956 joint declaration, while Hitoshi Owada, MOFA's councilor, noted: "it is high time to seek a political solution."<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) began a feasibility study on Japan's possible financial aid to the Soviet Union by interviewing representatives of trade companies.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Takeo Nishioka, LDP's head of General Affairs, as well as Ichiro Ozawa, its General Secretary, called for the abandonment of the Japanese government's rigid policy of nonseparability of politics and economy.<sup>9</sup> At the end of November the Japanese government, again pressured by the similar moves from the Western allies, decided to extend emergency medical aid to the Soviet Union that exceeded ¥100 million, virtually breaking the principle of inseparability of politics and economy. It should be noted again that it was the pressure from outside, not the fundamental reassessment of its Soviet policy that contributed to this change.

On the Soviet side, largely due to Institute of Oriental Studies' senior researcher Aleksei Kirichenko's courageous effort, a list of Japanese prisoners-of-war who had perished in the Soviet Union after World War II had been uncovered in Soviet archives, and a partial list was handed over to the Japanese Association of POWs interned in the Soviet Union. It was announced that a more complete list would be brought by Gorbachev and delivered to the Japanese government at the summit, an act that would be accompanied, as many Japanese believed, by Gorbachev's official expression of apology for Stalin's crimes committed against the Japanese.

Thus, by November 1990, it was possible to predict, as I did, that the forthcoming summit would be a decisive event that would result in a historic reconciliation. By this time four major issues had emerged on the agenda of the summit: the northern territorial issue, economic aid, security, and accounting the historical past. With regard to the territorial issue, it was not

unreasonable to predict that the Soviet Union and Japan would reaffirm the validity of the 1956 joint declaration. For the other two islands, both sides would agree to disagree on the principle of sovereignty, while accepting demilitarization, joint development, and Japanese residents' non-visa access to the islands. In return, Japan would agree to grant massive economic, financial, and technological aid to the Soviet Union.

I predicted also that Gorbachev would not turn the territorial issue into the central theme of his visit; instead, he would make arms control and the security issue the central theme. This was not an unreasonable prediction, since the pursuit of a new security system in the Asia-Pacific region had been his consistent theme that ran through his two major speeches in Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk, while he had meticulously sought concrete measures to create such a system in achieving rapprochement with China in May 1989 and South Korea in September 1990. Shevardnadze's Vladivostok speech prior to his visit to Japan in September was largely devoted to security issues, while he sought to place security issues at the central theme of bilateral negotiations in Tokyo, thus indicating the general thrust of Gorbachev's strategy for the forthcoming summit. Also Shevardnadze-Baker meeting in Irkutsk in August, which produced a joint statement declaring that the Soviet Union and the United States did not regard each other as enemy in Asia, virtually nullified the Japanese position that the cold war was not over in Asia. This was coupled with the U.S. naval ship's visit to Vladivostok. These American moves underscored that the United States was not entirely averse to Soviet initiatives in new security relations with the Soviet Union in Asia. Security was precisely the area where Japan was most vulnerable, since she felt isolated from the global trend, and it would make sense to expect that Gorbachev would make a frontal attack on this vulnerability. As for settling the historical past, Gorbachev was expected to apologize for the illegal internment of Japanese prisoners-of-war. As it turned out, none of these happened at the summit.

## 2. Gorbachev's Domestic Problems

To understand why these predictions proved to be wrong, we must turn to the domestic development in the Soviet Union, which must be analyzed at three different levels: the highest political level, the level of conflict between the union and the RSFSR, and the level of conflict between Sakhalin oblast' and Moscow.

At the central level, the more the process of perestroika was intensified, the more the existing structure of the Soviet political and economic system was destroyed. While the Stalinist system was paralyzed, a new system did not emerge. The result was the unprecedented crisis of the Soviet state and society, the crisis that in turn consisted of the mutual interrelated triple crises: the crisis of federation, the crisis of the political system, and the crisis of the economy.<sup>10</sup> Until the summer of 1990, Gorbachev's foreign policy

success was sufficient to offset his failure on the domestic front. Nevertheless, by the summer the conservative-reactionary criticisms had become vocal, extending not merely to the domestic issues, but also to foreign policy issues, particularly over the reunification of Germany. As Gorbachev's political reform failed to create a mechanism to enhance the authority of the Presidency, his power became increasingly dependent upon the conservative forces entrenched in the military, KGB, and the military-industrial complex. The conservatives had been dissatisfied with what they perceived as Gorbachev's unilateral concessions to the West that ranged from the INF treaty, the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the CFE treaty, the unilateral reduction of troops to the reunification of Germany, and began to express their dissatisfaction openly. Shevardnadze's various statements, particularly his speech at the 28th party congress in July 1990, indicated that strident conservative criticisms were leveled against him personally for allowing the East European communism to collapse without Soviet intervention, and more particularly for the loss of East Germany. In November, Gorbachev was forced to abandon the radical economic reform measures drafted by Shatalin in face of strong objections from the military industrial complex. The conservative parliamentary group, Soyuz, stepped up its activities, forcing the resignation of Bakatin as Minister of Internal Affairs. A KGB man, Pugo, took over the MVD, and selected the hero of Afghanistan, General Gromov as his deputy, thus forming a powerful coalition of MVD, KGB, and the military. In the middle of December, Gorbachev attended the conference of the military representatives, and faced their angry denunciations of his policy. Colonel Alksnis openly advocated the creation of the committee of national salvation, serving notice to Gorbachev that unless the president took immediate steps to maintain the federation by suppressing nationalist and democratic movements, Soyuz would seek to oust him.

Shevardnadze's resignation in protest against the danger of a military dictatorship on December 20, 1990, signaled the right-wing backlash of the Gorbachev regime, which had hitherto maintained the balance between the conservatives and the radical reformers. The moderate reformers, who had been the driving force behind Gorbachev's perestroika either walked out of the presidential council, which was unceremoniously abolished, or were pushed onto the sidelines. And this right-wing swing culminated in the use of force in Lithuania and Latvia in January 1991. Also this backlash coincided with the outbreak of the Gulf War, which contributed to the sense of humiliation felt by the conservatives whose favorite client state, armed to the teeth with Soviet weapons, was to be defeated by the United States, while the Soviet Union could do nothing to influence the course of events.

All this deeply affected Soviet policy toward Japan. At the crucial moment, when the last foreign ministerial conference was to be held in December for the last-minute preparations of the groundwork for the summit, Shevardnadze, who had spearheaded the carefully orchestrated, intricate

process for rapprochement, suddenly disappeared. Moreover, Yakovlev, the vital link to the president, who had assembled experts and carefully coordinated policy toward Japan, was no longer the head of the team to prepare for Gorbachev's visit. Yakovlev's position was taken over by the newly elected vice-president Genadii Yanaev, who created a new team of advisors, soliciting new recommendations from the same institutes that had been closely working with Yakovlev before. The Institute of International Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), for instance, sent exactly the same report to Yanaev that it had prepared for Yakovlev several months earlier.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the entire mechanism for formulation of policy toward Japan became in disarray at the most decisive moment.

Gorbachev's right-wing swing also affected the substance of policy choices. It became almost impossible for him to make any territorial concessions to Japan without provoking protest from the conservative forces. Importance of the northern territory may look like trifle compared with the strategic and political significance of the German reunification. Nevertheless, despite the loss of the entire Eastern Europe, it is true that changes in Eastern Europe were possible because all parties involved never wanted to change the national borders determined at the end of World War II. This was the difference between East European revolutions and the German reunification, on the one hand, that Gorbachev accepted, and the Baltic secessionist movements, on the other, that Gorbachev could not accept. While Gorbachev allowed the OMON, the paratroopers, and the KGB special forces to use violence to suppress secessionist movements in Lithuania and Latvia, it was politically impossible for him to sacrifice even a square inch of the northern territories to the Japanese. Defense Minister Yazov stated that the Soviet Union would never give up the northern territories that "had been ours since Peter the Great."<sup>12</sup> Former Chief of Staff and Gorbachev's advisor Marshal Sergei Akhromeev stated that as long as the 1956 joint declaration was signed by the Soviet government at that time, it was inevitable that this question would be discussed at the summit, but he hastened to add that this did not mean that the Soviet Union was obligated to return the two islands. He also expressed the military's concern about the islands, whose "military significance is by no means insignificant – the aspect of which Gorbachev himself is well aware."<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, before Gorbachev made his proposal on the islands known to the public, he was criticized, not merely by the conservatives, but also by the radical reformers. Moreover, it was the radical reformers whose opposition was more vociferous to his putative territorial concessions than the conservatives. It should be recalled that Yeltsin called for Gorbachev's resignation, and used the conflict between the president and the RSFSR to his advantage. One of the weapons he employed was precisely the northern territorial issue. In January 1990, before he was elected head of the RSFSR, Yeltsin spoke at the Tokyo press club, and proposed a solution to the territorial question in five stages that were to be completed within the next

fifteen years. Nevertheless, when he came to Kunashiri as the head of the RSFSR in August 1990, he declared that the Russian Federation would never yield any territory to Japan, obviously courting Russian nationalist sentiments within his republic. Again on February 8, 1991, when he visited Kaliningrad, Yeltsin reiterated that “the Russian Federation will not make any deals on our territories. We will never give up either Kaliningrad or the Kuril islands.”<sup>14</sup> The Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation passed a law that stipulated that any territorial change of the Russian Federation should be accepted by RSFSR’s national referendum.<sup>15</sup> Although it was clear that a peace treaty that should determine the territorial issue could be concluded only by the union government, with which Japan had been at war, the northern territorial issue became directly involved in the “war of laws” between the president and the Russian Federation.

The most damaging broadside came from a radical reformer, a cooperative millionaire, and a champion of the market economy, Artem Tarasov, who accused Gorbachev of conspiring to sell the northern territories to Japan for \$200 billion in order to perpetuate the communist party dictatorship and enhance his personal dictatorial power. He even hinted that Gorbachev had already concluded a secret agreement with Japan on the return of the islands.<sup>16</sup> Gorbachev immediately denied Tarasov’s accusations, and threatened to bring him to court for disseminating false information.<sup>17</sup> Although subsequently Tarasov publicly withdrew his statement and apologized, the damage was considerable: the whole Tarasov episode made it difficult for Gorbachev to actively seek economic aid from Japan. While he could not make any territorial concessions to Japan, he was put in a position where he could not actively seek economic aid from Japan, either. In retrospect, at this point any possibility of solving the territorial question had evaporated.

If he could not expect to deliver a proposal acceptable to Japan and could not expect to gain any tangible economic benefits from Japan, there was a danger that his visit might become counterproductive. In fact, until the middle of March, there was a possibility that Gorbachev’s visit might be canceled.

A move for a new political alignment began with the March 17 national referendum on the federation. Despite radical reformers’ campaign against Gorbachev’s formula of maintenance of the federation on the ballot, an overwhelming majority (over 70 percent at the all-Union level) voted for the federation. Thus, Gorbachev gained a vote of confidence on this crucial issue, and salvaged his prestige sufficiently to conduct negotiations at the summit in Tokyo. Nevertheless, the result of the national referendum should not be characterized as Gorbachev’s complete victory, since the six republics which declared their intention to secede from the union effectively boycotted the referendum, while in the Russian Federation the elected principle of the Russian presidency, as advocated by Yeltsin and opposed by Gorbachev, also received an overwhelming majority. Thus, the March 17 referendum can be

better termed as a stalemate, and this stalemate was to produce a momentum among various political groups for a compromise, which culminated in the 9 plus 1 agreement at Novo-Ogarevo on April 23. It should be remembered that the Tokyo summit took place during this delicate, fluid political situation where the process for compromise had not been completed.

In terms of Soviet-Japanese bilateral relations, the March 17 referendum had another significance. Together with the national referendum, in three districts (the Southern Kuril district, which includes Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomais, the Kuril District, which is Etorofu island, and the Ugoregorsk district in Sakhalin) in Sakhalin oblast conducted their opinion polls on the northern territories. Of 13,137 voters eligible to vote in the Southern Kuril District, 11,704 (88.8 percent of the total voters) participated in the ballot: of these, those who voted against the return of the islands were 8,067 (68.9 percent of those who voted), and those who voted for the return was 2,520 (21.5 percent), while 910 (7.7 percent) opted for other solutions such as joint development. In the Kuril District, two questions were asked: whether they supported the return of Etorofu to Japan, and if it were to be returned, whether they would remain on the island. Of 10,755 voters eligible to vote, 9,291 (86.4 percent) voted: of these 7,552 (81.3 percent of those who voted) were against the return of the island, while only 891 (9.6 percent) voted for. Although the voters were asked to choose for or against, there were 592 (6.4 percent) wrote for joint development. Those who answered that they would remain on the island even if it was returned to Japan numbered as high as 4,581 (49.3 percent), while those who answered they would not were 4,094 (44.1 percent). Undecided were 616 (6.6 percent). In the Ugoregorsk District in Sakhalin, the question was whether the northern territories were likely to be returned to Japan. Altogether 73.3 percent voted for "unlikely," while 24.4 percent voted for "likely."<sup>18</sup> On the four northern territories combined, the results showed that approximately 74 percent were opposed to the return of the islands, while 16 percent were in favor of the return.

This opinion poll, the first public opinion survey ever conducted on the northern territories on the territorial issue, indicated two important facts. First and foremost, as expected, an overwhelming majority of the population living on the disputed islands were opposed to the return of the islands. This buttressed the Soviet resistance to the Japanese irredentism. In fact, it proved that as long as both governments based their arguments on the public will, there could not be a solution on this question. Secondly, however, this opinion poll also indicated that a substantial number of the population (up to roughly one fifth of the population) either supported the return of the islands or some form of a compromise solution through joint development, a potential hope for a political solution. In fact, the communist party leadership in Kunashiri and other conservative leaders in Sakhalin were shocked to learn more than 20 percent supported some form of a compromise solution, if not the return of the four islands.<sup>19</sup>

Radical reformist governor of Sakhalin, Valentin Fedorov, decided to cash in on the first aspect of the opinion poll. While implementing a series of measures intended to create a market economy in Sakhalin, Fedorov had been adamantly opposed to the return of the northern territories, which he saw as an indispensable asset to the development of Sakhalin. In opposition to “the third way,” as Yakovlev had proposed, Fedorov had advocated a “fourth way,” by which to create a free economic zone including the northern territories and Hokkaido. In view of the strong opposition among the residents on the islands to any territorial concessions to Japan, Fedorov stated that the return of the islands would be “political suicide.”<sup>20</sup> In contrast, the Chairman of the Sakhalin Supreme Soviet, Akshenov, a political rival of Fedorov, expressed his support for a compromise solution on the basis of the 1956 joint declaration.<sup>21</sup> The territorial issue became embroiled in the local political squabble in Sakhalin oblast. In the meantime, Mikhail Tereshko, Chairman of the district soviet in the South Kuril District, declared: “We will never return the islands. Even if Gorbachev agreed to return the islands to Japan when he visited there in April, and even if this agreement became legally binding, we would never abide by such an agreement.”<sup>22</sup> The “war of laws” was extended to the northern islands as well.

If Gorbachev expected to succeed in regrouping a political force for reform, it became obvious that he could no longer ignore such local pressure that came from the Russian Federation as well as from Sakhalin. On March 22, Yeltsin revealed that he had demanded the inclusion of a representative from the Russian Federation in the Gorbachev’s negotiating team. If the request were rejected, he stated, any agreement with Japan on the Russian Federation’s territory would be invalid. The Russian Federation’s first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Khasbulatov, reiterated at the news conference that representatives from the Russian Federation and from Sakhalin would have to participate in the territorial negotiations with Japan.<sup>23</sup> It appears that intensive negotiations were conducted between Gorbachev and the Russian Federation, in which they seem to have reached a consensus on the territorial question, and this consensus, while diverse opinions existed, could not be other than no concessions to the Japanese demand. According to *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, the agreement between Gorbachev and the Russian Federation consisted of (1) recognition, of the territorial question, (2) no concessions to return of any islands, and (3) creation of a mechanism to solve the territorial dispute.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, as for the selection of delegation, they seem to have disagreements. According to Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Russian Federation’s Supreme Soviet, by February the president and the Russian Federation reached an agreement on the composition of the official delegation that included six representatives from the Russian Federation – Kozyrev (Russian Federation’s foreign minister), Lukin, Valentine Fedorov (Governor of Sakhalin), Kuznetsov (Governor of the Maritime Region), Litvinov (Governor of Khabarovsk) and Nikolaev (Chairman of the supreme

soviet of the Yakut-Sakha Autonomous Republic). But Gorbachev changed the composition without the approval of the Russian Federation on the eve of his departure. He dropped Lukin, Fedorov, and Litvinov, all reformers and Yeltsin supporters, and instead added Isaev, first-deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet, who had championed a move to oust Yeltsin from the position of the chairman only a few months before, and Daniliuk (Chairman of the congress of the People's Deputies in the Khabarovsk Region), a Gorbachev supporter. Angry with this maneuver, Yeltsin did not give Isaev permission to leave the post; thus, Isaev had to take a vacation without pay to participate in the negotiations. As for Fedorov, he was not included in the official delegation, but allowed to go to Japan as a "representative of social organizations." Met with Yeltsin's strong protest, Gorbachev at the very last minute, dropped Kuznetsov, and included Lukin.<sup>25</sup>

The timing of Gorbachev's visit to Japan could not be worse. He no longer had the political leverage with which he had scored dazzling success in his dealings with the United States, Western Europe, China, and South Korea. Nor could he expect a "Gorby fever" in Tokyo after the Baltic bloodshed. He was in the middle of a delicate political process in reaching a modus vivendi with the Russian Federation and other republics on the federation. Strikes were spreading among coal miners, egged on by the radical reformers, while Soyuz was planning to hold a meeting to call for Gorbachev's resignation. His hands were tied with no room for maneuver. All he could hope for at the summit was to prevent a Japan's walkout while offering no concessions on the territories.

### 3. Japanese Dilemma

In the meantime, Japan found itself in a dilemma. The problem was that while Japan was preoccupied with the single issue of the northern territories, the chance for rapprochement with the Soviet Union had passed her by. It was the fear of international isolation that drove the LDP, first, and then MOFA to seek belatedly some concrete measures to break the deadlock. Nevertheless, Japan took no initiative to break the deadlock in 1989 or even 1990, when there remained considerable political prestige in Gorbachev's leadership. In the meantime, Japan's inaction for the Gulf war invited an outcry from the Western world, although the Japanese government pledged \$9 billion to support the war efforts. Various criticisms were leveled against Japanese foreign policy for its lack of vision and philosophy and its reactive, and passive nature. It was inevitable that the northern territorial problem, which had been relatively isolated from other issues, became treated as a symptom of Japanese lack of vision, connected with the general malaise of Japanese foreign policy. Nevertheless, when the Japanese government began seeking ways to break the deadlock of the territorial dispute, it coincided with Gorbachev's right-wing turn, which cooled the Western enthusiasm to rush in to help the Soviet Union. Thus, Japan found itself in a dilemma. If Japan did

nothing to help the Soviet Union by insisting on the return of the four islands, she would be blamed for her lack of vision and selfish preoccupation of the parochial territorial issue; but if she tried too actively to promise massive economic aid in return for the islands without coordinating the aid policy with other Western nations, she would also be criticized for her egoism.

Moreover, Japan conducted in a manner that was most detrimental to the solution of the territorial problem. When discussing Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union, the government, the mass media, and scholars focused only on the territorial issue without relating this problem to the direction of Japan's foreign policy in general. In a way, this single-mindedness on the verge of simple-mindedness contributed to bringing this issue to the world consciousness, particularly to the consciousness of the Soviet public. But on the other hand, this backfired, since the territorial issue was brought to the Soviet public without taking into consideration the intricate dynamics of Soviet domestic politics under perestroika. If Japan was interested in solving this question, it was imperative that she should raise the issue in a quiet manner that would prevent this issue from being embroiled in a domestic dispute. The noisy, high-handed manner in which the Japanese brought this issue to the Soviet as well as to the world public attention guaranteed that it would become a hotly contested domestic issue within the Soviet Union.

One example of this clumsiness was vividly illustrated by the way a message from the Soviet Foreign Ministry (MID) to Abe through the Japanese Diet delegation was handled. This message indicated that Gorbachev was contemplating a possible solution on the basis of the 1956 joint declaration. Presumably, it was not meant to be an official offer, but rather a signal designed to sound out Japan's reaction. Instead of picking up the signal, and sending it to what Kissinger calls "a back-channel," Abe openly revealed its contents at Abe Faction's Study session in October 1990.<sup>26</sup> As expected, the news was immediately reported in bold headlines in major newspapers, which in turn obviously led to the MID's denial of such an offer.<sup>27</sup> This episode virtually nipped in the bud an early agreement on the territorial issue, also making the Soviet side extremely cautious in approaching the Japanese side.

Another important political reality under perestroika was the importance of public opinion in the political process. Japan's argument for the return of the four islands did not often take into consideration public sentiments of the Soviet people and the real fear felt by the residents on the islands that once the islands were returned, they would be uprooted from the islands. The Japanese government's past policy designed to cut off artificially any relations with the disputed islands – the policy that had been reciprocated by the Soviet Union as well until recently – magnified the distorted image of each other on this issue.

Another example of Japan's clumsy handling of this issue was Ichiro Ozawa's visit to Moscow. There was no secret that Ozawa, who represented the powerful Takeshita faction, was more powerful than Prime Minister Kaifu himself. The fact that this powerful figure visited Moscow just two

weeks prior to Gorbachev's visit to Moscow indicated (a) that no detailed arrangements necessary for the summit had been made; (b) that nevertheless the Japanese government desired a positive outcome from the summit; and (c) that Ozawa wanted to gain assurances that would satisfy a minimal condition for this successful outcome. Therefore, Ozawa's visit was a positive signal the Japanese government sent to the Soviet side. Nevertheless, the manner in which Ozawa conducted himself in Moscow made the matter worse. He proposed to Gorbachev that as long as the Soviet Union recognized Japan's sovereignty over the four islands, Japan would accept the return of the two islands as the first step. Ozawa reportedly offered that if such a solution could be reached, Japan would be forthcoming with a comprehensive economic cooperation package, which would include emergency aid for food and medicine, conclusion of a long-term economic cooperation financed by the government guaranteed loans, establishment of a center for Soviet-Japanese economic exchange, and possibly financial assistance for withdrawing troops from the northern islands, altogether amounting to more than \$20 billion.<sup>28</sup> Prior to Ozawa's visit to Moscow, the MOFA acknowledged for the first time that the condition for the comprehensive economic aid was the Soviets' recognition of sovereignty over the four islands, not their actual return.<sup>29</sup> This proposal, advertised with big headlines in Japan, at the wake of the Tarasov affair, was exactly the way Japan should have behaved only if she was interested in complicating the negotiations.<sup>30</sup>

In the end, it was the MOFA that played the most decisive role in formulating Japan's policy toward the summit, specifically a troika in the MOFA – Hisashi Owada (Councilor), Nagao Hyodo (Chief of the European-Asian division), and Kazuhiko Togo (Chief of the Soviet Section). Since the beginning of April, this troika visited the prime minister's official residence in Nagatacho almost daily, bringing with them thick papers outlining major points. Kaifu studied these materials assiduously, since he believed that successful negotiations with Gorbachev would be a great chance for rebuilding his prestige that had been undermined by Ozawa's resignation.<sup>31</sup>

The MOFA's efforts were almost exclusively concentrated on the territorial issue. According to diplomatic correspondent Tadashi Yagi, the MOFA anticipated the following five scenarios: (1) Gorbachev will recognize the existence of the territorial problem; (2) he will go as far as to respect the spirit of the 1956 joint declaration; (3) he will reaffirm the 1956 joint declaration, and agree to negotiate on the sovereignty of the two other islands; (4) Reaffirming the 1956 joint declaration, he will promise to return the two islands; and (5) he will recognize the Japanese sovereignty over the four islands, and agree to negotiate the terms of returning the islands. Hyodo judged that the third or the fourth scenario would be most likely, and advised Kaifu that the most important task for him would be to place the reaffirmation of the 1956 joint declaration and the question of the sovereignty over the four islands on the negotiating table. On this judgment, he had already testified at the Budget Committee at the Upper House: "We are of the

opinion that the Soviet Union has recognized the Japanese-Soviet joint declaration as the starting point of the negotiations.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus, from the Japanese side, the criterion for success at the summit was set for Gorbachev’s recognition of the 1956 joint declaration, while for the domestic reasons, Gorbachev was in no position to make this concession. The battle line for the summit negotiations was thus clearly drawn here.

#### 4. The Summit

Gorbachev arrived in Japan on April 16. The summit negotiations between Gorbachev and Kaifu were conducted six times during the three days, altogether fourteen hours, of which two sessions were broken by a recess. Gorbachev later said that he had conducted eight sessions with Kaifu, the longest summit negotiations worthy to be recorded in the Guinness Book of Records.

##### (1) Territorial issue

With the exception of the second session on the morning of the second day, which was devoted to the discussion of security issues, the summit concentrated almost exclusively on the territorial issue. Kaifu raised the territorial issue from the very beginning, repeating the litany of Japan’s fundamental positions. Having listened silently to Kaifu’s long list of Japan’s justifications, Gorbachev retorted: “I am fully aware of Japan’s arguments, and I am ready to discuss any problems. But there are two ways of conducting diplomacy. The first way is to confront each other with ultimatums. The second is to seek a way acceptable to both. Don’t we need a compromise from both sides? Isn’t there really anything that Japan can add to the arguments I have just heard?” Having played the tough negotiator in different arenas many times, Gorbachev turned out to be a more skillful player than inexperienced Kaifu, who did not know what to say once he was forced to depart from the prepared script. Having answered that Japan was also interested in achieving a breakthrough at this summit, he again returned to reiteration of principles.<sup>33</sup> In the meantime, the MOFA was keenly interested in the way Gorbachev would react to the 1956 joint declaration. It was Gorbachev who referred to this question, when he said that in 1956, when “Khrushchev decided to return the two islands illegally seized by Japan, there was a chance to solve the territorial question, but this chance was completely lost.” Kaifu corrected Gorbachev’s historical misinterpretation by reminding him of the Soviet illegal seizure of the islands in 1945, and argued: “The 1956 joint declaration is a formal diplomatic document. Shouldn’t it be observed by both sides in accordance with the standard of international law?” Gorbachev never answered this directly, and only insisted upon the need to focus on the future rather than the past. Then Gorbachev proposed to create a mechanism of negotiations at a higher level than the working group in order to “define the territory,” and invited Kaifu to visit Moscow. This expression, “to define the

territory," was a new departure; the Soviet side had previously only referred to "defining the border." The MOFA representatives remained unimpressed, since it was taken for granted that Gorbachev would recognize the existence of the territorial problem. Rather they thought that this was Gorbachev's maneuver to postpone the decision. Kaifu, ignoring the proposal for a high level mechanism, accepted only Gorbachev's invitation to visit Moscow.<sup>34</sup>

The second session on the morning of April 17 was completely devoted to discussions on the international situation. Kaifu was coached by Owada to raise the territorial issue even at this session. But since Gorbachev spoke endlessly on the global situation, the Gulf war, and the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, Kaifu did not have any chance to raise the territorial problem. In the afternoon, Gorbachev delivered his speech to the Diet. This speech was characterized only by its banality. Not only were there no new proposals on substantial issues, but also there was no passionate appeal for creating a new world that would capture the mind of the audience, as did his Stanford speech in 1990 or Roh Tae Woo's Diet speech in May 1990. Also the text of prepared speech had been printed in major newspapers before he delivered his speech. This amazing lack of discipline exercised by Japanese mass media helped to take an element of surprise from Gorbachev's Diet speech.

As for the territorial issue, Gorbachev did not mention anything in his speech. Two factors should be mentioned, however. First, there was one important discrepancy between the English text and the Japanese text done by the Soviet Embassy. The English text stated: "World War II had broken out and was fought in quite a different world, which has become a thing of the past – along with its perceptions, laws and the rules of the game.' That's what history is all about. Decisions which were taken then were taken by people of different generations who did not see things the way we do. And we cannot be held responsible for what they did or said. At the same time, *past mistakes should be corrected with prudence and due regard for the obvious fact that over the decades a new reality has emerged which must be reckoned with.*"<sup>35</sup> It is possible to interpret, as some Japanese did, from this translation that Gorbachev was willing to accept that some mistakes had been made by the Soviet side, and that the seizure of the northern islands could be included in these mistakes. Nevertheless, the Japanese text never referred to "the past mistakes, only stating: "*We cannot correct what they did without taking into consideration the obvious fact that a new reality has emerged over the decades.*"<sup>36</sup> This translation gave the audience the impression that Gorbachev was telling the Japanese that whatever happened in the past had become a reality over the decades, and could not be changed by re-examining the past--a more belligerent declaration than was given to understand in the English version. A comparison with the Russian text, which was printed in *Izvestiia*, makes it clear that the the Japanese text was more faithful to the English translation.<sup>37</sup>

Apparently, realizing that the original would alienate the Japanese audience, Gorbachev slightly modified the prepared text: the original text

stated: "I believe their outcome and over a dozen documents we are to sign will be clear evidence that Moscow and Tokyo are taking a resolute step toward a full understanding between the two countries and a final settlement of the issues the war has left behind."<sup>38</sup> Departing from the original text, Gorbachev added: "a final settlement of the issues, *including the most difficult task of defining the territories*, that the war has left behind." But this important addition was left untranslated by the simultaneous translator, and therefore left the audience unimpressed, who did not know that an important addition was made.

The third session held in the evening on the second day was attended only by a limited number of participants: in addition to Gorbachev and Kaifu, only Owada and Hyodo from the Japanese side, and the president's personal advisor, Chernyaev, from the Soviet side. Originally, Gorbachev wanted to have a *tête-à-tête* session with Kaifu alone, but this suggestion was strenuously resisted by the MOFA troika, who feared that Kaifu was no match for the most talented, experienced debator of all world leaders. But this session was a mere continuation of the first session, where the Japanese side only repeated the familiar historical and legal arguments. No new proposal was forthcoming from Gorbachev. The only thing they agreed on was to open the unscheduled fourth session on the morning of April 18. The failure of the third session created an awkward atmosphere at the banquet organized by Kaifu.<sup>39</sup>

After the banquet, Kaifu convened a conference with the four key leaders of the LDP. Mutsuki Kato, head of the Policy Planning Board, insisted that if there was no progress on the territorial issue, there was no need to issue a joint statement, while Nishioka suggested that Japan should cancel signing the fifteen agreements and memoranda. The LDP presidium was unanimously of the opinion that no joint statement should be signed, unless Gorbachev made some concessions to include a reference to the 1956 joint declaration.<sup>40</sup> After this meeting, Kaifu summoned MOFA troika, and mapped out the strategy for the next session. They agreed on two points: (1) to have Gorbachev accept that specifically the four islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomais would be the area for negotiations; and (2) the 1956 joint declaration should be the starting point of negotiations. Thus far, Gorbachev had not specifically referred to the joint declaration, limiting himself to such ambiguous expressions as "international obligation" and "positive elements."<sup>41</sup> In the meantime, Gorbachev moved from the Geihinkan to the Soviet Embassy. It was clear that Gorbachev also conducted a strategic session with his advisors.

At the fourth session held in the morning of April 18, Kaifu proposed that the joint statement should refer specifically to the four islands. Gorbachev accepted this demand, and further proposed reduction of Soviet troops stationed in the northern islands, joint economic activities on the islands, and Japanese residents' non-visa access to the islands. Kaifu withdrew his insistence that the Soviet Union recognize sovereignty over the four islands at

the summit, deciding to postpone the sovereignty issue for further negotiations. Differences between both sides became narrowed considerably. The draft proposal for the joint statement had been almost written. But they could not agree on the issue over the 1956 joint declaration. From Kaifu's position, since he made concessions on the sovereignty issue, it was imperative to have Gorbachev refer to the 1956 joint declaration as the basis for further negotiations, since otherwise, he would be accused of gaining nothing from Gorbachev. On the other hand, from Gorbachev's point of view, he had already made enough concessions by agreeing to place the four islands on the subject of further negotiations, and showing flexibility on demilitarization, joint development, and non-visa-access. But to refer to the 1956 joint declaration meant to accept the return of the two islands, which for domestic political reasons mentioned above, he was in no position to accept. The fourth session ended in failure. They finally agree to have an additional unscheduled fifth session after the lunch break.

The fifth session was held in the evening of April 18. Kaifu insisted on including a reference to the 1956 joint declaration. Finally, Gorbachev agreed on the expression: "The prime minister and the president... expressed the firm will to continue the constructive and energetic work [for a peace treaty] making use of all positive factors that have been accumulated through bilateral negotiations over the years *since 1956, when Japan and the USSR jointly declared the end of the war and the restoration of diplomatic relations...*" As it turned out, this expression left room for different interpretations. It did not specifically refer to the 1956 joint declaration and the return of the two islands, and thus, Gorbachev could claim that he did not make any territorial concessions. The Japanese government, on the other hand, could interpret that this expression was Gorbachev's tacit approval of the 1956 joint declaration, and therefore, unquestionably included the return of the two islands.

After they finally agreed on this expression, however, it was Gorbachev's turn to drop the bomb. To the expression in the draft joint statement: "constructive cooperation in trade-economic spheres," he proposed to add "large-scale" cooperation. Obviously, this is an attempt to nullify the Japanese principle of "inseparability of politics and economics." Kaifu flatly rejected this proposal, insisting that it was strange to single out "large-scale" only in economic cooperation, while for negotiations for a peace treaty, only "constructive and energetic work" was mentioned. Gorbachev exploded: "Foreign policy under the new political thinking makes no sense whatever unless both sides receive benefits. What benefits do we gain in return for our concessions such as referring to the four islands and to the 1956 joint declaration? It is absolutely necessary for us to receive guarantee for expansion in economic cooperation." Nakayama wrote down in his notebook: "Gorbachev's face flushed with anger. Almost ready to walk out." The fifth session also ended in fiasco.

They decided to have the unprecedented sixth session at midnight. Nonofficial negotiations through the diplomatic channel during the break did not result in any agreement. The MOFA troika was prepared to accept the worst: they might not be able to produce a joint statement, and hence, the failure of the summit. The final session was devoted only to the expression in economic cooperation. This time, Gorbachev, after threatening to walk out for the second time, finally accepted a compromise: to add the word: “development” [*razvertyvanie*] of economic cooperation, instead of simply “economic cooperation.”<sup>42</sup>

It was already on the early morning of April 19 that the ceremony of signing the joint statement as well as the fifteen other agreements and memoranda took place. Despite a symbolic *yubikiri* – a Japanese gesture for keeping a promise, not to be confused with *kubikiri*, chopping a head, (though the summit negotiations came close to be broken off, which might have led to someone’s *kubikiri*, if not *harakiri*) – , the ambiguity of the expressions with regard to the territorial issue immediately led to different interpretations. At the press conference held at the prime minister’s official residence, Kaifu stated that there was no question that all aspects of the 1956 joint declaration including the return of Habomais and Shikotan were reaffirmed by the joint statement. Gorbachev, on the other hand, at the press conference held in the Japan Press Club, stated: “As for the reason why we did not refer specifically to the 1956 joint declaration, it was because while making use of the parts that have been established as historical facts and become effective in international law, we decided not to restore what has not been realized, and what history has prepared a different path. I believe we can move forward by taking into account only the positive contributions made in 1956.”<sup>43</sup> He reaffirmed that he had rejected Japan’s demand for the return of the two island by specifically refusing to include the reference to the 1956 joint declaration in his report to the Supreme Soviet, and characterized the negotiations at the summit as a draw.<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, the Japanese government made its official interpretation public, according to which “the 1956 joint declaration, which specifically stated the return of Habomais and Shikotan, was unquestionably reaffirmed in the joint statement, even though it was only indirectly referred to.”<sup>45</sup>

## (2) Economic Cooperation

The business community awaited Gorbachev’s luncheon speech with anticipation on April 17 at the Hotel New Otani for the business leaders representing seven business organizations, including the powerful *Keidanren* and *Keizai Doyukai*. But the speech left the audience greatly disappointed. Although Gorbachev spoke for one hour, extending beyond his scheduled 20 minutes, he dwelled on generalities. As for specific proposals, he solicited Japanese cooperation for such projects as the Sakhalin project, the Tiumen oil project, expansion of Vostochnyi and Vanino, constructions of infrastructure and resort-recreational facilities in the Far East, and the establishment of the

free economic zone in Nakhodka. Also he proposed the establishment of a Soviet-Japanese Regional Developmental Bank devoted to enhance the development of the Soviet Far East. As Hokkaido Chiikisoken's Arai Nobuo pointed out, Gorbachev's approach to economic cooperation was reminiscent of the old type of approach under Brezhnev; it was no more than an assemblage of various proposals that had come up through various ministries.<sup>46</sup> As for the question of how to solve the accumulated delay in payments to Japanese firms in trade with the Soviet Union, all Gorbachev could say was to request a moratorium. In fact, the Japanese government was willing to extend \$1.6 billion emergency loan to the Soviet Union to cover the delayed payments, but Gorbachev failed to obtain even this assistance he could have had only by asking.

Thus, surprisingly little was accomplished in economic cooperation. This was partly connected with the lack of progress on the territorial issue, and partly because Gorbachev could not afford to give the Soviet public the impression that the Soviets were begging for Japanese money. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Gorbachev did not take full advantage of the willingness of the Japanese government and the business community to extend the areas of economic cooperation within the framework of the unresolved territorial issue. One could not but have the impression that Gorbachev and his team did not know exactly what to seek from Japan in economic cooperation.

Incidentally, Gorbachev's lack of preparation was displayed not merely in Japan, but also in the Soviet Far East as well. In the Soviet Far East, a loose association of economic cooperation had been formed among the Far East oblast and regional governments. An economic plan for the development in the Far East had been drafted by a prominent Far East economist, Pavel Minakir, and approved by the association. The Far East representatives had been eagerly waiting for Gorbachev's arrival in Khabarovsk to present this plan. To their disappointment, Gorbachev was not interested, and the hearing never took place.

This unpreparedness and indifference reflected also the ambiguous state at the domestic front with regard to economic policy as well. Had the summit taken place one month later, after the 9 plus 1 accord, when Gorbachev regime in cooperation with the Russian Federation, decided to adopt a policy to seek actively Western economic aid at the London summit, Gorbachev's attitude toward Japan might have been different.

### (3) Asian security

Contrary to my prediction, Gorbachev did not make Asian security the central theme of his visit. Only the second session was devoted to this issue, and this was only in the general framework of international relations. Nor did he make any new substantial proposals for the creation of a new security framework in the Asia-Pacific region. He proposed to hold a foreign ministerial conference in 1993 to discuss security issues in Asia, as this had been, proposed by Shevardnadze in September 1990. The only new element

was his proposal to hold a five-power conference among the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan, China, and India.

There are two problems in his proposals. First, as I have discussed elsewhere, an Asian version of CSCE (Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe) that could be termed as CSCA is not appropriate to Asian reality.<sup>47</sup> Gorbachev's arms control proposals from his Vladivostok speech to the Krasnoyarsk speech showed an improvement in the sense that, sensitive to the complexities of Asian security issues, he abandoned the notion of a comprehensive conference. Shevardnadze's proposal for an Asian foreign ministerial conference, though gaining support from the Canadian and Australian governments, was a step backward from Gorbachev's Krasnoyarsk speech in that it had reverted to the CSCA notion. Gorbachev's summit proposal was a continuation of this wrong approach.

Secondly, his new proposal for a five-power conference is not well thought out. Not only is the relationship between the foreign ministerial conference and the five-power conference unclear, but also other powers such as North and South Korea, ASEAN nations, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand which are excluded from this conference are bound to raise objections. If the naval arms control is the main purpose, a multi-nation conference is unlikely to yield a positive result.

Gorbachev's ill-conceived approach was met with treatment from the Japanese government that he deserved: the Japanese government rejected these proposals as unrealistic. Nevertheless, Japan agreed to discuss security issues at the policy planning conference established in December 1990.

#### (4) Settling the past accounts:

Another important agenda for Gorbachev's visit was to achieve a historical reconciliation by putting an end to the dark past that had inflicted pain on each other. From the Japanese point of view, three events that happened since August 1945 had decisive impact on the Japanese perceptions of the Soviet Union: the violation of the neutrality pact, the seizure of the northern territories, and the internment of the prisoners-of-war. Of these issues, time was not ripe for the Soviets to accept the guilt on the seizure of the northern islands and the violation of the neutrality pact. On the other hand, as the Stalin's repressions had been universally accepted as crime, it became possible to raise the question of Japanese prisoners-of-war interned in the Soviet Union in violation of the Geneva Treaty. Aleksei Kirichenko of the Institute of Oriental Studies had been single-handedly campaigning to correct this mistake by arguing that the first step to remove the enemy image among the Japanese would be to admit that the internment of the Japanese POWs was a mistake committed by the Soviet government.

Before he arrived in Tokyo, Gorbachev stopped by a cemetery in Khabarovsk where Japanese POWs were buried, and prayed for their souls. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's speeches during his stay in Japan were not enough to meet the Japanese expectations. In a speech delivered at the Emperor's

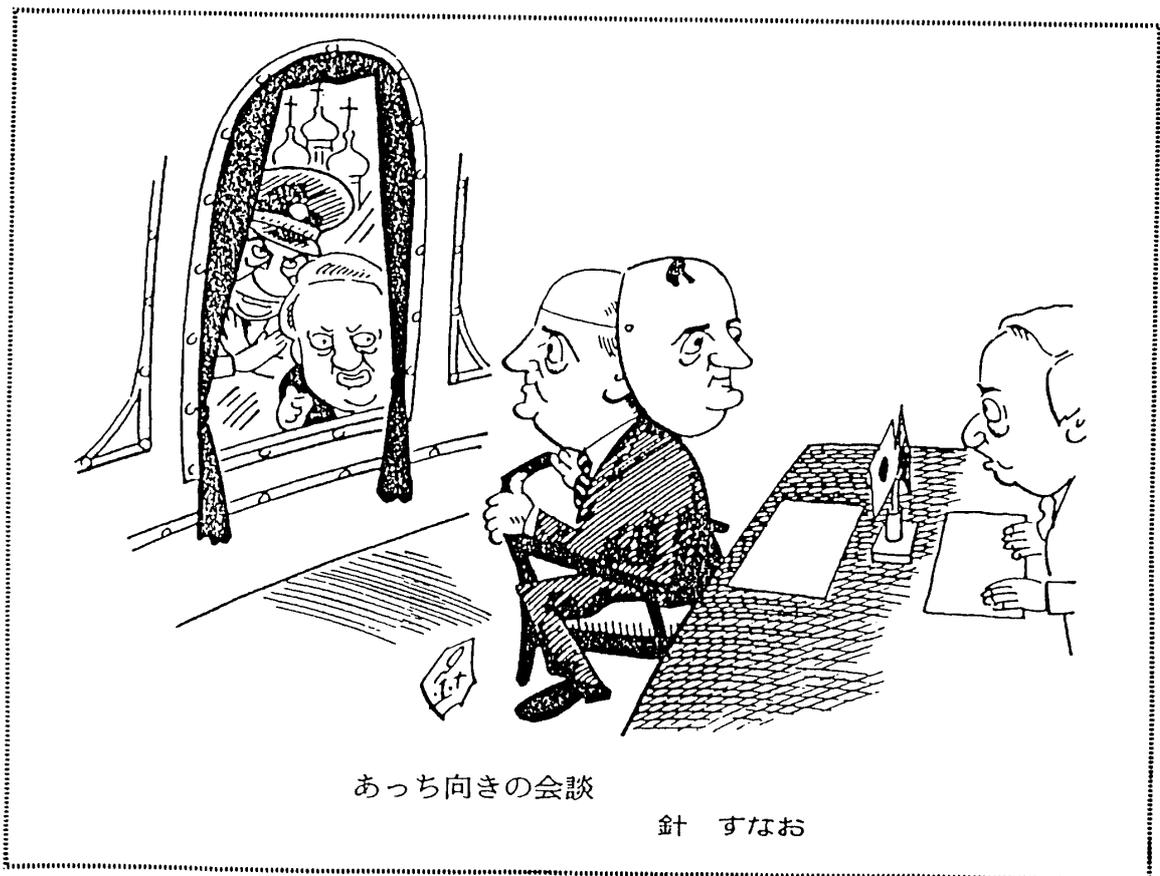
banquet at the imperial palace on the first day of his visit, Gorbachev expressed “his *sympathy* with the families of those prisoners-of-war who died in a foreign land.” “Sympathy [*dojyo* in Japanese]” was in the Russian original “*soboleznovanie*,” which was better translated as “condolences.” This was a major gaffe committed by a translator. But it was more than a translator’s mistake. Whether “sympathy” or “condolences,” the fact was that Gorbachev never apologized for the internment. Sophia University’s Gosuke Uchimura, who himself had suffered more than ten years of internment in Siberia, snapped: “Sympathy or condolences, this is not the word that should be uttered by those who had killed the Japanese POWs.”<sup>48</sup>

In a speech delivered at the Diet on the second day, Gorbachev was more specific about not apologizing. He stated: “Our countries share a lot of experiences which have left ill feelings and bitterness in the hearts and minds of both nations. What is to be done about it? We may cultivate the past and cherish our recriminations. This will be an exercise in futility. We should take a different path and reassess our common heritage for the sake of the present and the future.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, Gorbachev lost the chance to achieve a historic reconciliation, which would come only by accepting the past mistakes, not by brushing them aside.

#### (5) Soviet Domestic Context:

Sunao Hari’s political cartoon, in which the caption reads, “Negotiations facing the other side,” aptly captured the essence of Gorbachev’s negotiations with Japan. Gorbachev’s real head is turned toward Yeltsin and Yazov looking inside from outside of the window, with only Gorbachev’s mask facing Kaifu. While Gorbachev was in Japan, Yeltsin was visiting Paris. Appearing in an interview on French national television, Yeltsin stated: “It is unthinkable for the Soviet Union to sell the Kuril islands to Japan for money. The Russian people will not support such an action.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, on April 17 at the press conference in Paris Yeltsin reiterated his proposal for the five-stage solution for the territorial problem that would take twenty years.<sup>51</sup> Gorbachev obviously took Yeltsin’s warning seriously, as he took care to include the expression: “Japan and the Soviet Union including the RSFSR neighboring to Japan,” in the joint statement, and signaled for approval from Kozyrev. Asked about Yeltsin’s statement on the territorial issue at the news conference after the summit was over, Gorbachev answered: “You should wait a little, and we might bring you news that might pleasantly surprise you on my relationship with Yeltsin.”<sup>52</sup> It was obvious that he was referring to the negotiations with Yeltsin that were to lead to the 9 plus 1 accord.

As for Fedorov, he left in a hurry on the second day, as if he had come to Tokyo only to register his protest for having been left out of the official delegation. After returning to Sakhalin, Fedorov criticized Gorbachev on three accounts: first, he did not include Yeltsin or Silaev in the delegation, as he had recommended; second, although Gorbachev was aware that the residents on Sakhalin oblast also wanted to visit Hokkaido without visa, he



*Asahi shimbun*, April 19, 1991.

granted the privilege of non-visa visit only to the Japanese; and, third, the promise of the unilateral reduction of troops on the northern islands was not necessary. Accusing Gorbachev of “having made unilateral concessions without reason and having damaged the patriotic feelings of the Soviet people,” Fedorov called for Gorbachev’s resignation.<sup>53</sup> Such a statement made by a radical reformer, which might as well have come from Colonel Alksnis, actually lends support in retrospect for the correctness of Gorbachev’s decision to kick him out of the official delegation.

As for the right-wing critics, a little known episode, not reported in Japan, was significant. The commander of the Far East border district, M. Barybin, flew to Kunashiri on the eve of Gorbachev’s visit to Japan, “in order to confirm the reliability of security of the border at the time of our President’s visit,” an episode that indicated how much Gorbachev had lost control over the military, and how dangerously the military had come to assert itself in foreign policy.<sup>54</sup> On April 16, to coincide with Gorbachev’s arrival in Tokyo, the Soviet air defense units stationed on Etorofu conducted a larger scale military exercise than usual over Sakhalin and the northern islands, involving 20 to 30 MiG 23s, more than half of the aircraft stationed on the island.<sup>55</sup> These episodes indicated that the KGB and the military demonstrated opposition to any territorial concessions that Gorbachev might conclude at the summit.

(6) Other Agreements:

In addition to the four important areas that were discussed at the summit, it resulted in signing the following fifteen agreements and memoranda: (1) Memorandum on the governmental consultation mechanism on 18 specific areas including three new areas; (2) agreement on technical cooperation with regard to the transition of the Soviet economy to a market economy; (3) agreement on payment in trade; (4) exchange memoir on trade of consumer goods with the Soviet Far East; (5) joint declaration on encouraging exhibitions and trade fairs; (6) joint declaration on cooperation on fisheries; (7) exchange memoir on revision of aviation; (8) exchange memoir on expansion of air flight over Siberia; (9) agreement on protection of environment; (10) agreement on cooperation for peaceful use of nuclear energy; (11) memorandum on cooperation to reduce the influence of Chernobyl nuclear accident on residents; (12) exchange memoirs on cultural exchange agreement; (13) memorandum on protection of cultural treasures; (14) joint declaration on the establishment of the contemporary Japan research center; and (15) agreement on Japanese prisoners-of-war interned in the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup>

This list makes it clear that the network of Soviet-Japanese cooperation and interaction have come to encompass a wide range of areas. It also indicates that the principle of "inseparability" of politics and economy is becoming virtually meaningless.

## 5. Conclusion

The summit was neither a success nor a failure. It was a success to the extent that it did not end up with one side or the other walking out. There was even some progress on the territorial issue in the sense that not only did the Soviet government recognize the existence of the territorial problem but also for the first time the joint statement referred to the four islands as the subject of further negotiations. Thus the joint statement went one step farther than the 1973 Brezhnev-Tanaka joint statement.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the summit failed to break the deadlock of the territorial dispute. Gorbachev's visit could have been a good chance to make this breakthrough, but this golden chance was wasted. Obviously, the Soviet domestic situation did not allow Gorbachev any room for maneuver on the territorial issue. The timing of his visit could not be worse: his prestige sank to the lowest point ever, domestically attacked both by the right and the left, and losing international support due to the Baltic bloodshed, while he was right in the middle of the ongoing process of delicate negotiations with the republics for the new treaty of federation as well as in search for new ways to stabilize the economy and make the transition to a market economy.

It is, however, the Japanese side that should be blamed also for the failure to score a breakthrough. In fact, it gives one an eerie surrealistic feeling to

see that three days' protracted negotiations were almost totally devoted to the northern territorial issue. The MOFA and the Japanese government's sole concern was exclusively focused on this issue, while the media and experts never doubted this position without raising a fundamental question of what position the northern territorial issue occupied in Japan's overall foreign policy and her global responsibility.<sup>57</sup>

In retrospect, Japan had lost her opportunities to solve the northern territorial problem long before the summit with her inaction and the arrogant presupposition that it was the Soviet Union that needed Japan more than Japan needed the Soviet Union. The Japanese government had taken the position for a long time that perestroika did not constitute serious restructuring of Soviet the state and society. This judgment proved wrong, and by the time that the Japanese government belatedly realized this mistake, corrected this position, and began to take the positive attitude toward perestroika, the Soviet Union was already experiencing a serious crisis. While changing its attitude toward perestroika, the Japanese government had adopted the position that Gorbachev's new thinking foreign policy was not applicable to Soviet policy toward Japan, because the Soviet Union did not recognize Japan's demand for the return of the four islands. By the time the Japanese government finally came around to taking the new thinking seriously, because of the vast changes that happened in Eastern Europe, Sino-Soviet relations, and South Korean-Soviet relations, Gorbachev had already lost the leverage to bring the territorial problem to a solution. It should be remembered that the success in Gorbachev's foreign policy under the new thinking invited positive reactions from his partners and that mutual compromises and the spirit of reconciliation created by them provided the key for its success. In Japan, all Gorbachev encountered was an ultimatum. Had Japan taken the position that the 1956 joint declaration should be the basis for negotiation, earlier in 1989 or even in 1990, I have no doubt that the situation would have been significantly different. The ultimate victim of the northern territorial problem may be, therefore, Japanese foreign policy that could not respond adequately to the profound changes in the Soviet Union, and that proved unable, because of these failures, to fulfill global responsibility commensurate with her international influence.

After the summit, the Japanese position quickly reverted to the previous intransigent position, after the disappointment with the outcome of the summit sunk in. The London summit in July was an important summit, not merely Gorbachev was invited to discuss Western aid to the Soviet Union, but also it was a clear beginning of the determination on the Soviet part that the Soviet Union would henceforth act as a member of the Western international community. Nevertheless, narrowly focusing again on the northern territorial issue, Japan acted again as a spoiler. Now the paradigm has again completely changed with the attempted coup by the conservative forces and the formation of a new political alignment in which Yeltsin's influence is becoming predominant. The attempted coup helped the world to catch a

glimpse of the cataclysm that might result with the end of perestroika. It is predictable that international pressure will be exerted on Japan to change its intransigent position on its aid policy toward the Soviet Union, and this time Japan may lose the U.S. support for its position. While the rest of the Western allies took a resolute position from the very beginning against the national emergency committee, and supported Yeltsin's and citizens' courageous resistance, the Japanese government hesitated to take the position until the outcome became clear. Even some experts speculated whether the assumption of the coup d'état government would damage or enhance the possibility of the islands' return. The attempted coup has forced the Japanese more urgently than ever to place the territorial question in its comprehensive Soviet policy. Is Japan going to insist on the return of the four islands even at the expense of perestroika? If so, the question must be legitimately raised, as Paul Miliukov raised in 1916 with regard to the tsarist government: Is this stupidity or treason?

(The first draft was written on August 19, the day when the coup d'état against Gorbachev took place, and revised on August 23, when Gorbachev came back to Moscow).

## Notes

- 1 For this, see Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "Soviet-Japanese Relations in the 1990s," in Mike Mochizuki, James E. Auer, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, et al., *Japan and the United States: Troubled Partners in a Changing World* (Washington, New York, London, Oxford: Brassey's Inc., 1991), pp. 57-89; Ts. Hasegawa, "Sovetsko-iaponskie otnosheniia v 90-kh godakh," *Problemy dal'nego vostoka*, No. 1, 1991, pp. 89-99.
- 2 M. G. Nosov, "SShA i sovetsko-iaponskie otnosheniia v 90-kh godakh," a paper presented at the conference at the SRC, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, July 11-13.
- 3 See my articles cited in footnote 1.
- 4 For the details of these points, see my articles cited in footnote 1.
- 5 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, September 5, 6, 7 (both morning and evening editions); *Asahi Shimbun*, September 5, 6, 7 (both morning and evening editions).
- 6 *Asahi Shimbun*, September 6, 1990.
- 7 *Asahi Shimbun*, November 15, 1990, evening edition, November 16; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, November 15, evening edition, November 16.
- 8 *Asahi Shimbun*, October 13, 1990.
- 9 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, November 27, 1990.
- 10 See my articles, "Perestroika in Historical Perspective: a Reexamination," Takayuki Ito, ed., *The World Confronts Perestroika: The Challenge to East Asia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 1991), pp. 225-262; "Gorubachofu to soren gun: pressutoroika no nakano teremidoru hando [Gorbachev and the Military: the Thermidor Reaction of

- Perestroika,” *Chuokoron*, No. 3, 1991, pp. 110-123, “9 purasu 1 goi wa soren wo sukueruka [Can the 9 plus 1 Agreement Save the Soviet Union?]” *Chuokoron*, No. 9, 1991, pp. 101-111..
- 11 My personal interview with a Japanese expert at IMEMO in March 1991. Also it was in retrospect significant that when he visited Japan in October 1990, Yanaev, although referring to the 1956 joint declaration as a basis for the fundamental principle for bilateral relations, stated: “But the joint declaration was signed in the specific historical and political context of that time, and it did not solve all the existing problems... Also we should not interpret the 1956 joint declaration as the basis of bilateral relations as the return of the two islands.” In retrospect, this position was similar to the one Gorbachev was to take during the summit. *Asahi Shimbun*, October 15, 1990.
  - 12 *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 20, 1990.
  - 13 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 12, 1991.
  - 14 *Mainichi Shimbun*, February 9 (evening), 1991.
  - 15 “Deklaratsiia o gosudarstvennom suvernitete Rossiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki,” *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 24, 1990, p. 1.
  - 16 Artem Tarasov, “Pomoshch’ dektature KPSS pridet s vostoka,” *Kuranty*, No. 2 (February 2, 1991), p. 4.
  - 17 *Pravda*, February 1, 1991.
  - 18 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 20, 1991.
  - 19 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 19, 1991.
  - 20 *Mainichi Shimbun*, February 5, 1991; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 18, 1991.
  - 21 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 21, March 22, evening, 1991, March 23, 1991.
  - 22 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 1, 1991.
  - 23 *Asahi Shimbun*, March 23 (evening), 1991; *The Japan Times*, March 24, 1991.
  - 24 *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, April 25, 1991, quoted in *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 25, 1991.
  - 25 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 17 (evening), 1991.
  - 26 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, October 8, 1991.
  - 27 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, October 9, 1991.
  - 28 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 26, 1991; *Asahi Shimbun*, March 23, March 26, 1991.
  - 29 *Asahi Shimbun*, March 23, 1991.
  - 30 After this trip, Ozawa resigned as LDP’s General Secretary due to the defeat of the candidate he had backed for the Tokyo gubernatorial election.
  - 31 Yagi Tadashi, “Dokumenty: nisso shunokaidan [Documents: the Japanese-Soviet Summit]” *Ushio*, No. 6, 1991, pp. 107-8.
  - 32 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
  - 33 Yagi, p. 109.

- 34 Yagi, pp. 111-2, and April 17 issue of *Mainichi Shimbun*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Hokkaido Shimbun*.
- 35 I received a copy of the text from an AP correspondent. Also the full text was printed in *The Japan Times*, April 18, 1991.
- 36 The text was printed in full in the April 17 issue of all major papers, *Mainichi*, *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, and *Hokkaido Shimbun*.
- 37 *Izvestiia*, April 17, 1991; also see, MOFA's spokesman Taizo Watanabe's explanation in, "Text Translations Differ on Island Dispute," *The Japan Times*, April 17, 1991.
- 38 *The Japan Times*, April 17, 1991.
- 39 Yagi, pp. 110-111; *Asahi Shimbun*, April 18 (evening), 1991; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 18 (evening), 1991.
- 40 *Asahi Shimbun*, April 17 (evening), April 18, 1991.
- 41 Yagi, p. 111.
- 42 Yagi, pp. 112-113; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 19, 1991.
- 43 *Asahi Shimbun*, April 19 (evening), 1991; *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 19, 1991.
- 44 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 27, 1991.
- 45 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 24, 1991.
- 46 For Gorbachev's speech, see *Asahi Shimbun*, April 18, 1991; for Arai's comments, see *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 18, 1991.
- 47 "Soviet Arms Control Policy in Asia and the U.S.-Japan Alliance," *Japan Review of International Affairs*, 2, No. 2 (Fall/Winter, 1988): 204-230.
- 48 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 19, 1991.
- 49 *The Japan Times*, April 18, 1991.
- 50 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 16 (evening), 1991.
- 51 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 18, 1991.
- 52 *Asahi Shimbun*, April 19 (evening), 1991.
- 53 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 22, 1991.
- 54 *Rossia*, No. 16, April 20-26, 1991, quoted in Nosov, p. 5.
- 55 *Hokkaido Shimbun*, April 19, 1991.
- 56 For detailed contents of these agreements, see *Asahi Shimbun*, April 19, 1991.
- 57 Exceptions such as Nakanishi Terumasa, Wada Haruki, Shimotomai Nobuo, Ogawa Kazuo, and Morimoto Tadao must be mentioned, however.