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TORONTO SUMMIT: JAPANESE PRESS REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. THE JAPANESE PRESS SEE THIS OVERALL AS A SUCCESSFUL, IF NOT SPECTACULAR, SUMMIT. JAPAN IS SEEN AS HAVING PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE ECONOMIC DEBATE, BUT CARRIED LESS WEIGHT IN THE POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS. JAPAN'S EMERGING ROLE AS ASIAN SPOKESMAN NOTED. TAKESHITA THOUGHT TO HAVE DONE CREDITABLY, ROUNDING OFF HIS INITIATION IN DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS, AS HIS ENERGIES NOW RETURN TO DOMESTIC TAX AND AGRICULTURAL REFORMS.

DETAIL

2. THE JAPANESE MEDIA PORTRAY TORONTO AS A GENERALLY HARMONIOUS AFFAIR, AND MUCH EASIER FOR JAPAN THAN RECENT SUMMITS. ON THE MAIN ECONOMIC ISSUES OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS, AGRICULTURE, THE NIES, ODA AND DEBT, THE SUMMIT IS SEEN AS HAVING GONE SAFELY WITHOUT HAVING BROKEN MUCH NEW GROUND. ON MACROECONOMIC POLICY IT IS NOTED THAT JAPAN WAS PRAISED WHILE CRITICISM OF THE US WAS MUTED OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR PRESIDENT REAGAN AT HIS LAST SUMMIT. BUT THE GENERAL VERDICT IS THAT INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION IS WORKING REASONABLY WELL.

3. THE OUTCOME ON AGRICULTURE IS SEEN AS SATISFACTORILY PROTECTING THE JAPANESE POSITION IN THE URUGUAY ROUND, SINCE REFERENCE TO PSES IS QUALIFIED: MOST REFLECT FINANCE MINISTER MIYAZAWA'S PORTRAYAL OF AGRICULTURE IN THE GATT AS ESSENTIALLY AN ISSUE BETWEEN THE NORTH AMERICANS AND THE EUROPEANS. REPORTING ON THE SUMMIT WAS ALMOST OVERSHADOWED BY COMMENTARY ON THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE AGRICULTURE AFTER THE US-JAPAN AGREEMENT ON BEEF AND CITRUS, WHICH IS SEEN AS HAVING MUCH MORE FUNDAMENTAL IMPLICATIONS THAN THE GATT ROUND NEGOTIATION.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF THE NIES AS A TOPIC IS SEEN AS A FEATURE OF THIS SUMMIT, AND THE COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE AS OWING A LOT TO JAPANESE VIEWS.



SEVERAL PAPERS COMMENT ON JAPAN'S ROLE VIS-A-VIS ASIA. THE YOMIURI SUGGESTS THAT JAPAN IS SHIFTING AWAY FROM BEING THE SOLE ASIAN AT SUMMITS TO BEING ASIA'S SUMMIT REPRESENTATIVE. SOME EDITORIALS SUGGEST THAT THE ECONOMIC DECLARATION IS UNBALANCED IN WELCOMING THE US-CANADA FREE TRADE ZONE AND EUROPEAN SINGLE MARKET WHILE IMPLICITLY CRITICISING EAST ASIAN ECONOMIC VITALITY, AND THAT IT WILL BE JAPAN'S ROLE IN FUTURE TO ACT AS A BUFFER TO AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PRESSURE ON EAST ASIA. ON AID AND DEBT THE FRAME WORK AGREEMENT ON DEBT RELIEF MEASURES FOR THE LLDCS WAS GIVEN A WELCOME. IT WAS NOTED THAT TAKESHITA HAD RAISED THE IMPORTANCE OF ASIAN AS WELL AS SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THIS CONTEXT. THE PAPERS GENERALLY AGREE THAT JAPAN'S OWN INITIATIVES HAD BEEN USEFUL AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. HOWEVER, SEVERAL PAPERS ALSO SOUND A WARNING NOTE ABOUT COMPLACENCY. THE NIKKEI CONTINUING A CONSISTENTLY DISSIDENT THEME IN ITS EDITORIALS, SAYS THE RESOLVE TO TACKLE EXTERNAL IMBALANCES EXPRESSED AT THE TOKYO AND VENICE SUMMITS HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED, IN SPITE OF BLACK MONDAY. DISCUSSION OF THE AMERICAN DEFICIT IN TORONTO IT SUGGESTS WAS INADEQUATE: THE AMERICANS NEED TO EXERT MORE EFFORT NOW THOUGH THE PAPER CONCLUDES THIS IS UNLIKELY. IT ALLEGES THAT POLICY COORDINATION AMONGST SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS IN PRACTICE DOES NOT EXTEND MUCH BEYOND COORDINATED EXCHANGE RATE INTERVENTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE IMBALANCES REMAIN, 'UNTIL THERE IS ANOTHER CRISIS, COORDINATION WILL CONTINUE TO SLEEP'.

6. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, THE JAPANESE PRESS SEE THE SOVIET UNION AS HAVING DOMINATED DISCUSSION. THEY WELCOME THE RECOGNITION IN THE POLITICAL DECLARATION OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN EAST/WEST RELATIONS SINCE VENICE. BUT JAPANESE COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT PRIME MINISTER TAKESHITA WAS MORE CAUTIOUS THAN HIS COLLEAGUES IN GIVING GORBACHEV CREDIT FOR CHANGING SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. TAKESHITA'S STATEMENT THAT PERESTROIKA HAS NOT YET MADE ITS INFLUENCE FELT IN ASIA IS WIDELY QUOTED. THE REFERENCE IN THE DECLARATION TO THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP IN THE FAR EAST AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF INSTABILITY IN ASIA IS SEEN AS REFLECTING THE CONCERNS OF THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT. THE JAPANESE PRESS REGARD IT AS SIGNIFICANT THAT TAKESHITA RAISED THE RETURN OF THE OCCUPIED NORTHERN TERRITORIES

THEY SEE THIS AS AN ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN JAPAN'S BARGAINING POSITION WITH THE RUSSIANS BY RALLYING WESTERN SUPPORT FOR JAPAN'S CLAIMS. SEVERAL PAPERS NOTE WITH APPROVAL THAT YOU RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH THE RUSSIANS EARLIER THIS YEAR.

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7. THE JAPANESE PRESS GAVE TAKESHITA A CREDITABLE PASS MARK FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AT HIS FIRST SUMMIT. THERE IS SOME IMPLICIT CRITICISM OF TAKESHITA FOR HAVING FAILED TO SECURE THE INCLUSION IN THE POLITICAL DECLARATION OF ANY SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE REGIONAL ISSUES OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO JAPAN (EG CAMBODIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND KOREA) EVEN THOUGH THE SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS DECLARED THEIR SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE. FOR THE JAPANESE PRESS THIS SHOWS THAT THE SUMMIT REMAINS ESSENTIALLY A TRANS-ATLANTIC FORUM AND THAT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE JAPAN CAN PLAY A ROLE IN POLITICAL DISCUSSION AT THE SUMMIT COMPARABLE TO HER CENTRAL POSITION IN THE DEBATE ABOUT ECONOMIC ISSUES.

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