

Prime Minister Takeshita resigns, but who is the real victor?

by Linda de Hoyos

Amid cheers and gloats from the Western press, Japanese Prime Minister Noburo Takeshita announced his resignation April 24, as a measure to save the rule of the Liberal Democratic Party. By the time of his resignation, the successive revelations of the LDP leaders' funding through the Recruit Corp. had reduced Takeshita's popularity rating to a reported 3%.

Although the Recruit scandal involved exposure of the normal methods by which electoral campaigns in Japan are funded through private industry, the scandal was conjured up and its momentum maintained by outside British and British-allied forces. The *New York Times* openly called for the LDP to relinquish power in the wake of the scandal; the *Times* is an affiliated agency of the left-liberal *Asahi Shimbun*, which first broke the scandal. The London *Financial Times* has also been leading the crusade for Takeshita's early resignation.

Prime Minister Takeshita announced that he will carry out his scheduled trip to the Southeast Asian countries in early May, because his resignation represents no change in the continuity of Japan's foreign policy. However, if the British and U.S. interests who were bent on destroying the LDP government have their way, the body-blows suffered to the ruling party from the Recruit scandal will mark a halt to the designs of Takeshita's predecessor, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, to set Japan on a policy-course that would make of it a political, not simply, an economic power on the global scene.

The British press agency Reuters, the day after the resignation, devoted long releases to quoting foreign sources that Japan's power had been cut down to size. "You're going to have a series of weak leaders who aren't going to be able to confront the important international issues," Reuters quoted Gerald Curtis, director of the East Asian Institute at Columbia University as saying. "The U.S. political analysts suggested that Japan's emerging leadership in global economic affairs may falter as the country's politicians turn inward to heal wounds caused by the Takeshita resignation and the ongoing scandal."

"If anything, the world's largest creditor and foreign-aid donor seems farther than ever from exerting political power commensurate with its economic power," chimed in the *Wall Street Journal*, which also quoted a European diplomat as stating: "It's going to take years before Japan moves forward

in the way any other democracy with this much economic power would. This transition just slows down the process."

If the Recruit scandal was the point upon which the Takeshita government met its end, the single greatest cause for Takeshita's downfall was the betrayal by the Bush administration on the negotiated agreement for the joint development and production of the FSX jet-fighter. The Reagan administration had demanded that Japan produce the jet-fighter, an upgraded version of the U.S. F-16, in cooperation with the United States. The Japanese, who had planned to develop it alone, acquiesced. Once the time came to sign on the dotted line, however, the Bush administration reneged, demanding the right to place conditions into the agreement that might make the pact acceptable to the U.S. Congress and Commerce Department. As of this writing, the FSX deal, which was to be signed in February, remains in the hands of the White House.

It would appear, however, that this U.S. policy, too, is "Made in Britain," not in the U.S. Congress. On April 26, two days after Takeshita's resignation, *Jane's Military Communications* annual review published an hysterical warning of the prospects of Japan's taking over the world's defense electronics markets. Japan could soon be challenging the share of the world arms market now held by U.S. and European defense electronics industries, *Jane's* editor John Williamson charged. "By 1990, Japan will be the third-largest military spender in the world after the United States and the Soviet Union." *Jane's* then quotes Dick Evans, director of Defense Enterprises at British Aerospace as saying that Japan could have a similar success in defense electronics and aerospace that it had in the 1960s conquering motorcycle markets once dominated by the British: "We don't want our aircraft to go the same way as the motorcycle industry."

Fallout in Japan

The resignation of Takeshita is not expected to end the rule of the LDP, despite *Asahi Shimbun's* calls for an opposition coalition to come to power centered around the Japanese Socialist Party and the Buddhist Komeito Party. Takeshita's resignation, say Japanese sources, was executed in order to save the LDP's rule. However, the scandal has touched all top LDP leaders, including party general secretary Shintaro Abe, the former foreign minister who was des-

ignated to become the next prime minister.

The primary victim of the scandal, aside from Takeshita himself, is former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who has refused to testify before the Diet on his ties to Recruit, thus prompting an opposition boycott of parliamentary deliberations. Japanese sources now expect that Nakasone will be indicted, or at least hauled in for questioning by the prosecution. Nakasone is known in Japan for his "right-wing" nationalism, but is also considered the linchpin of the U.S.-Japan alliance who negotiated Japan's cooperation with the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.

All major factional leaders of the LDP have been touched by the scandal; therefore, as reports from Tokyo now indicate, the LDP will attempt to find a new prime minister who has not been touched by the scandal, likely an elder-statesman, while it searches for a younger leader to lead the party in a national resurgence. Meanwhile, the party machinery and the government-industrial bureaucracy will maintain a policy-continuity.

The dangerous implications

Yet, in the medium term, the power that might emerge the most damaged from the bringing down of the Takeshita government is the United States.

- The attacks on the LDP have weakened the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S. refusal to negotiate honorably on the FSX gives impetus to those in Japan who believe that Japan "must go it alone." On April 22, for instance, Japan announced that it may develop its own anti-aircraft missile, rather than depend on U.S. technology for the \$7.58 billion project, the *Japan Economic Journal* reported. Secondly, the Commerce Department is now looking to place Japan under the Super 301 "enemy watch list" for its "unfair trading practices." Japan's concern is that under the current conditions of "Gorbymania," the United States will begin to paint its strategic ally, Japan, with the brush of the "enemy image." Does the Bush administration believe that Japan will simply take its abuse without response?

- Second, the United States is playing with the danger that Japan will no longer continue to prop up the U.S. dollar, and with it, the U.S. government. The forced ouster of Takeshita is a victory for those British-linked forces around the Mitsui *zaibatsu*, who have argued that the Bank of Japan should raise its interest rates—the first steps in withdrawing Japanese support for the dollar. The shenanigans around the FSX have, conversely, hit Mitsui's primary opponent, the Mitsubishi Corporation, which is the primary contracting partner in both the FSX and the SDI.

It would appear, therefore, that the British have succeeded in repeating the pre-World Wars I and II manipulations whereby Japan was pitted against the United States and vice versa. The results of those manipulations are as dangerous to the world's precarious strategic balance today, as they were then.

Purge of 'dead souls' sweeps Soviet plenum

by Konstantin George

The April 25 Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee plenum saw the purge of 110 people from the party's three highest bodies, out of a total membership of 301. The sweeping purge of over one-third of the Central Committee, during a time of deepening social and economic crisis throughout the Soviet empire, marks a new phase of consolidation of the power of the "Andropov Kindergarten," the Communist Party and KGB protégés of the late Yuri Andropov, including Mikhail Gorbachov and Viktor Chebrikov, the man in charge of the U.S.S.R.'s internal security apparatus.

The purge also marks a strengthening of Moscow Center at the expense of the outlying provinces of the empire. The plenum followed by two weeks the Moscow-ordered massacre of civilian demonstrators in Tbilisi, Georgia. The corpses of 120 butchered civilians, mostly women, show the future of the crisis-wracked Soviet empire under Muscovite rule.

Most of those purged were what Politburo member Vadim Medvedev branded the "dead souls," after the famous 19th-century novel of that title by Nikolai Gogol—those who had already been retired or stripped of the posts they held in party, government, and military, and were thus no longer really entitled to membership on the Central Committee. However, there were extremely important exceptions to this.

For example, the plenum also promoted 24 Central Committee candidate members to full membership.

Ten of the 22 military figures on the Central Committee were expelled. Nine of them, Marshals and Generals of the Army, were "dead souls," who had retired or had been retired from active service. One of the 10, however, Marshal of the Soviet Union Nikolai Ogarkov, was not only still active, but in the vital function of commander-in-chief of the Western Theater of War (TVD).

The facts surrounding the 71-year-old Ogarkov's removal are far from clear. What can be said with certainty, however, is that Ogarkov's school of military leadership remains. His "disciples" are in control. No other active military leader was removed, and the one military figure promoted to full membership, Gen. Col. V. V. Osipov, has been commander-in-chief of the Southwest TVD since Feb. 15, 1989, a war-time command created by Ogarkov in September 1984.

Settling accounts

What occurred on April 25 was the purge of a major component of a rapidly growing opposition to Gorbachov. The existence of such an opposition was admitted by Gor-