

Japan to remilitarize?

Kissinger's Washington-Tokyo-Peking Axis becoming reality

A series of dangerous developments relating to U.S. defense posture in Asia occurred last week, all of which show that Henry Kissinger's dream of forming a "Washington-Tokyo-Peking Axis" against the Soviet Union has virtually become a reality.

Topping the list was the announcement by Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira that Japan is committed to a fundamental upgrading of its military forces and a joint effort with the United States to confront the much-talked-about Soviet military build-up in Northeast Asia. "I believe we must improve the quality of our defense," the Premier told several American newspapers, adding that Japan "must give thought to what posture the U.S., our ally, may take and how Japan can cooperate with the United States."

Ohira's statements raised many eyebrows, as Japan has been so far reluctant to become entangled in controversial debates between the United States and the Soviet Union. With memories of World War II still fresh, most Japanese business and political leaders have preferred to present Japan as a peace-loving nation friendly to all countries. Moreover, Japan's constitution forbids it from maintaining any offensive military capability, and many sectors of the Japanese public still regard this as a mandate against any major military build-up and involvement.

Months of pressure from Washington for Tokyo to align with China against Moscow have begun to pay off however, as these same leaders have apparently decided that their fears of a future war must be put aside in deference to Henry Kissinger's desires.

Significantly, Ohira dropped all pretences in his interview on "equidistant" Japanese policy between China and the Soviet Union. "When China says they are against hegemony, it is their clear expression of opposition against Soviet offensive posture," he said.

Ohira's statements are remarkably similar to those of his personal friend Kissinger, currently in Tokyo as part of a tour of the Far East to promote his "Axis" plan. In an exclusive interview with the Japanese daily *Yomiuri*, released several days before Ohira's remarks, Kissinger told the Japanese that they must step up their defense role in Asia, especially naval patrols with the United States in the Sea of Japan and the China Sea.

"I favor the strengthening of the American defense posture in the western Pacific together with strengthening the Japanese defense posture," he said, adding, "the Sea of Japan must not become a Soviet Sea."

The similarity between the statements of Kissinger and Ohira, while perhaps surprising to some, certainly came as no surprise to the New York Council on Foreign Relations and other elite Anglo-American policy centers. At the CFR, Ohira is spoken of as the "best" Japanese politician, owing to his labile personal character and his close relationship with Kissinger of many years.

Dr. Kissinger was aided in his pressure on Japan by fellow CFR member, Senator Frank Church, who is in Japan as chief of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee delegation. Church told his Japanese hosts that he favors the beefing up of the U.S.'s Seventh Fleet (which is deployed in the Pacific), and said he expected Japan to do its part to curb the "Soviet build-up" in the region.

Earlier last week, Church helped the Kissinger "Axis" plan by leading discussions with China's leader Deng Xiaoping about various forms of military cooperation between the United States and the PRC. Deng told his guests in Peking that China is ready to accept American equipment to monitor Soviet compliance with a new arms limitation treaty, and would "share the information" with Washington—provided Chinese technicians run the monitoring stations. China "has the courage to buy arms" from the United States, Deng said, if "the U.S. has the courage to sell them."

Following a meeting of the Trilateral Commission in Tokyo, Kissinger will continue his tour of the region, under the auspices of the Aspen Institute and the New York investment bank Goldman, Sachs, for which he works. Kissinger has scheduled a full 10 days in China, and no doubt the subjects raised by Vice Premier Deng will be discussed. He will also stop in South Korea, where the government of President Park Chung-hee is under heavy pressure to join the "Axis" against the Soviet Union.

Carter reverses U.S. policy

To the casual observer it might appear as if Kissinger's

headline-grabbing tour through Asia, while significant, is basically the work of a prominent "opposition" spokesman to the policies of the Carter Administration. Such an understanding would miss the important point that in recent months a major revision has taken place in the Carter Administration's Asian defense policy, such that there is now apparently complete agreement between Kissinger and the Administration. A clue to this agreement is Kissinger's emphasis on the need to bolster the U.S. Pacific fleet and to create a new American fleet to "patrol" the Indian Ocean.

Signs of revisions in the Carter policy for Asia have been evident for some time, with the announced slowdown in the controversial plan to withdraw American troops from South Korea being the most prominent example. However, recent congressional testimony by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, as well as selected official "leaks" to the press indicate that a comprehensive policy revision has been made.

New York Times correspondent Richard Burt, a popular channel for leaks from the National Security Council, has taken the lead in reporting the changed American policy in Asia. In a March 15 article, citing "senior officials," Burt described the new U.S. policy to be a "quarantine strategy" toward the increasing Sino-Soviet tension in the Pacific. While defacto allying with the Chinese side, the Administration intends to expand American military and economic presence in Southeast Asia, among the non-Communist states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN: Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines), and in Northeast Asia with Japan and South Korea.

Such an active profile by the United States in Asia is a direct reversal of Carter's previous policy of strictly limiting American presence in the Pacific. The stated purpose of this shift is that, according to Burt, "an American retreat from Asia would quickly result in a political division of the region in which pro-Western nations would come under intense pressure to align themselves with Peking or Moscow." In short, the "all-important" (but ambiguous) "equilibrium" in the region must be maintained.

According to Holbrooke and Burt, the most important features of this new policy are as follows: increased military aid to Thailand and the other ASEAN states, as well as the promotion of a build-up in the Japanese air and naval forces; maintenance of the U.S. ground forces in Asia, particularly halting the withdrawal of troops from South Korea and the cancellation of plans to reduce the strength of the Seventh Fleet; and joint efforts with Japan to strengthen ASEAN economically.

—Peter Ennis

Korea: a wild card in

A new round of "ping-pong diplomacy" has begun as part of the stepped up effort by Henry Kissinger and the Carter Administration to bring about the formation of a "second front" in Asia against the Soviet Union. While the game was used in 1971 as the first step toward a new relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China, the focus of attention has now become the Korean peninsula.

The diplomacy surrounds the international table tennis championships now being held in Pyongyang, North Korea. Last year the North Koreans were successful in convincing the International Table Tennis Federation to hold the championship matches in their country, an event they saw as providing an opportunity to improve the international stature of North Korea. At that time, Pyongyang agreed to allow all members of the ITTF to participate in the games, including arch-enemies, the United States and South Korea.

As has often been the case with the North Koreans however, the country's erratic leader Kim Il-sung suddenly changed his mind on this agreement, and decided to exclude the South Korean table tennis team from the matches. Instead Pyongyang proposed the formation of a "single Korean team" to jointly represent the divided nation, a proposal which was unacceptable to the South Korean government.

With the South Koreans thus barred from the competition, the question turned to whether the United States would legitimize the North Korean decision by participating in the games, or stand by its South Korean ally and boycott the games. After days of contradictory reports and apparent uncertainty, the final decision emerged this week: participate in the games.

State Department spokesmen have gone to great pains to emphasize that the Carter Administration had no role in this "nonpolitical" decision. However, the Administration will be hard pressed to convince anyone of this claim, especially those with fresh memories of the extensive negotiating carried on between Henry Kissinger and the late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai over a ping-pong table just eight years ago.

Spokesmen for North Korea have made clear in recent days that Pyongyang sees the American decision as highly political. Just days before the formal announcement of American participation in the championship games, North Korean sources in Japan issued an unusual invitation to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee delegation touring the region, to visit Pyongyang. As part of the invitation, issued via the