

PRIME MINISTER NOBORU TAKESHITA AND JAPANESE POLITICS:

by The Editor

1. Introduction

Mr. Noboru Takeshita was named as new Japanese Prime Minister, succeeding Mr. Yasuhiro Nakasone, on November 6, 1987, as expected by many Japanese politics watchers. However, the road to the highest position of Japanese politicians is not so smooth, Mr. Takeshita has to wait until the last minute of the negotiation amongs 5 major factions in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which was finally reached the conclusion that the new Japanese Prime Minister be selection by the decision of Mr. Nakasone, Prime Minister of Japan at that time.

Although Mr. Takeshita is the leader of the largest faction in LDP, he has to get support from others major factions in order to gain the absolute majority in the party. Thus, when the others candidates, namely Mr. Miyazawa and Mr. Abe who are also the leaders of relatively large factions in the party did not compromise with him, Mr. Takeshita had no other choices than relying upon Mr. Nakasone's decision.

However, it was the best tactic of Mr. Takeshita. While giving some hopes to the other candidates, he was assured of the support from Mr. Nakasone because he had supported Mr. Nakasone to the position of Prime Minister in the past selection and because of Nakasone's faction lacking of prominent candidate at that time.

In this short paper, Prime Minister Takeshita's profile will be introduced and the present situations of Japanese politics as well as Japanese policy towards ASEAN will be analysed.

It is expected that as new Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Takeshita will demonstrate his outstanding abilities in leading Japan and actually contributing to the peace and prosperity of the international community.

2. From youth group to politics.

Born on February 26, 1924, as the eldest son of an old sake brewing family in a quiet farm village in Shimane prefecture in western Japan, Mr. Takeshita was influenced at an early age to think in terms of a career in politics, since



his father served as a member of the Shimane prefectural assembly and his mother was a woman with progressive ideas.

In addition to his studies, he built up his body and spirit with judo, in which he currently holds the fifth rank black belt.

Toward the end of World War II, he was conscripted into the army as a trainee pilot, but he returned to Waseda university after the war to complete his studies and graduating from Waseda's school of Commerce in 1947.

After graduation, he returned to his home town to teach at a local secondary school. He devoted his free time to the youth group movement then sweeping Japan and soon become a leader of these idealistic young men seeking to rebuild the nation. In 1951, at the age of 27, he took his first step into politics by winning a seat in the Shimane Prefectural Assembly. After serving in the Prefectural Assembly for seven years, Takeshita ran for and won his first election to the House of Representative in 1958, gaining the largest vote among the candidates elected in his constituency. Because of his enormous popularity, he has continued serving in the House of Representative for 11 consecutive terms.

In 1971, at the age of 47, Mr. Takeshita entered the Cabinet for the first time as Chief Cabinet Secretary under Prime Minister Eisaku Sato. He was again appointed as Chief Cabinet Secretary in 1974 in the Tanaka Cabinet and later served as Construction Minister in the Miki Cabinet.

He has served for a total of 5 terms, or 1,586 days, in the post of Minister of Finance for the first time in 1979, in the Ohira Cabinet, and then keeping the post from November 1982 to July 1986 under Prime Minister Nakasone.

From July 1986 to October 1987, Mr. Takeshita served as Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party. And in July 1987 he became the leader of the Keiseikai which was

separated from the old Tanaka's group and became the largest faction in the LDP with 114 members in the upper and lower house of the Diet.

As the leader of Keiseikai, Mr. Takeshita became the most powerful leader in the world of Japanese politics (Quoted from The Nation Review, 18 December 1987 and Japan Information Service, Press Service (Japan Brief) 6 November 1987).

3. Domestic Reforms

"Trust and Harmony" is said to be Takeshita's political creed. Takeshita always lends an ear to conflicting opinions and then devoted himself to coordinating views and building a consensus. He has an extraordinary talent for finding the greatest common measure.

Takeshita also advocates building a country with a "FURUSATO (hometown) Environment". In his policy speech to the extraordinary session of the National Diet in November 27, 1987, Takeshita said that it is necessary to promote throughout the country the creation of happy communities, communities that are rich both culturally and economically, and communities where people can take pride in doing rewarding work. For this purpose, it is also necessary to adopt bold and innovative approaches as well as determined implementation.

Takeshita will have to tackle various domestic issues which including the major issues such as housing, land, the tax system and education.

4. Contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world

Takeshita intends to continue to deploy Japanese foreign policy along the basic lines that Japan's existence and development are premised on world peace and prosperity, and now that Japan has become a main stay of the international order. Thus, Japan must be more active in con-

tributing to world peace and promoting cooperation for prosperity.

It is essential that Prime Minister Takeshita should clearly establish Japan as a country that contributes to the international community, and as an Asian-Pacific country, Japan should contribute to the stability and development of this region as well.

In this speech to the ASEAN summit in Manila in December 15, 1987, Japanese Prime Minister Takeshita reassured that Japan will be unswerving in its adherence to the fundamental principle of its foreign policy with which calls for doing its utmost for world peace and prosperity and rejects the path to a military power. Prime Minister Takeshita also announced during that meeting the Japanese offer a fund of 2 billion

U.S. dollars for industrial development in ASEAN countries (the offer is officially called the ASEAN-Japan Development Fund or AJDF)

From his perspective in international exchanges, Prime Minister Takeshita also wanted to promote not only government-to-government diplomatic relations but also grassroots diplomacy which including direct international exchanges at the local level in a wide range of fields.

5. Conclusion

It is quite clear that times are hard both domestically and internationally for Prime Minister Takeshita, but it is expected that he will try his best to implement policies that will meet popular expectations and earn the people's trust.

Appendix

TAKASHITA's Cabinet line-up

The full cabinet line-up:

Prime Minister-Noboru Takeshita;
Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister-Kiichi Miyazawa;
Justice Minister-Yukio Hayashida;
Foreign Minister-Sosuke Uno;
Education Minister-Gentaro Naka JIMA;
Health and Welfare Minister-Takao Fujimoto;
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister-Takashi Sato;
International Trade and Industry Minister-Hajime Tamura;
Transport Minister-Shintaro Ishihara;
Posts and Telecommunications Minister-Masaaki Nakayama;
Labor Minister-Taro Nakamura;
Construction Minister-Ihei Ochi;
Home Affairs Minister-Seiroku Kajiyama.

State Ministers are:

Chief Cabinet Secretary-Keizo Obuchi;
Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency-Osamu Takatori;
Director General of the Hokkaido Development Agency and Director General of the Okinawa Development Agency-Shigeru Kasuya;
Director General of the Defence Agency-Tsutomu Kawara;
Director General of the Economic Planning Agency-Eiichi Nakao
Director General of the Science and Technology Agency-Soichiro Ito;
Director General of the Environment Agency-Toshio Horiuchi;
Director General of the National Land Agency-Hideo Utsumi