

ON MARCH 11, 1985, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Gorbachev's fresh, bold appearance on the scene after three old and fragile leaders such as Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko was welcomed not only by the Soviet people but by the whole world. As well as introducing a number of revolutionary reforms on the domestic scene under the catch-cry of *perestroika*, he lived up to expectations on the diplomatic front by striking out in brave innovative directions.<sup>1</sup> Discarding the old Marxist-Leninist ideology based on class struggle, he advocated a diplomatic doctrine designated "new political thinking" (*novoe politicheskoe myshlenie*), and he indicated a willingness to deal with those problems of common concern to all mankind.<sup>2</sup> In order to put this new doctrine into practice, Gorbachev appointed Eduard Shevardnadze as foreign minister in place of Andrei Gromyko,<sup>3</sup> whose twenty-eight years of experience in the post had earned him the sobriquets of "living witness to postwar diplomacy" and "Mr. Nyet."<sup>4</sup>

### *Changing Perceptions of Japan*

Gorbachev's reputation for being more skilled at external than internal affairs was the result of many achievements in the field of diplomacy. First of all, he withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan; then, through summit meetings with Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr., he concluded the INF Treaty, eliminating the class of missiles known as Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces, and succeeded in putting in place further agreements under the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) process, heralding an improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations. Also, partially by design and partially by chance, through the liberation of Eastern Europe and the unification of East and West Germany,

Gorbachev dramatically improved relations with Western Europe. Although his visit to China was overshadowed by the Tian'anmen Square Incident, it did help move Sino-Soviet relations from the realms of ideological conflict toward normality. Gorbachev completely changed Soviet policy toward the Korean Peninsula, effectively abandoning North Korea and normalizing relations with South Korea, which in economic power and other respects was playing a far more important role in the world. In recognition of his achievements, Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

If we are to find fault with Gorbachev's otherwise spectacular record in international relations, it would be with his diplomacy toward Japan. For all his diplomatic skills, this was one area of international relations where even he could not achieve success. This failure can be attributed almost entirely to the deep rift over the Northern Territories dispute. That said, the Gorbachev years (March 11, 1985, to December 25, 1991) did bring about some improvements. Although there was no major breakthrough, there were some other positive developments.

First, Gorbachev's administration valued Soviet-Japanese relations more highly than its predecessors, a result of Japan's increasing economic power, but simultaneously reflecting the new thinking that had brought about major changes in Soviet views of international politics. The Soviet Union had undergone a "conceptual revolution," replacing the old yardstick of judging a nation by its military might with one that assessed its economic, scientific, and technological strength.<sup>5</sup> According to Gorbachev, postwar West Germany and Japan were examples of nations that refuted a basic tenet of Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), by proving it possible to establish a thriving capitalist economy without taking extra steps to imperialism and militarism. Some Soviet academics and politicians even went so far as suggesting that late-comer Japan, by utilizing the power of science and technology, had, in a relatively short period, succeeded in transforming its economy into something capable not only of weathering shocks and crises but even of overtaking the most advanced capitalist nations. On this basis they advocated that the "Japanese miracle" (*iaponskoe chudo*) and the "Japanese phenomenon" (*iaponskii fenomen*) provided the best possible model for the kind of perestroika Gorbachev was promoting.<sup>6</sup>

However, perceptions are only *one of* the important factors involved in a nation's foreign policy decision-making process, and changed perceptions did not automatically bring changes in Soviet policy toward Japan, which was therefore a mixture of change and continuity during the Gorbachev years. The greatest change was in mutual perception of each nation by the other. Before Gorbachev's advent, two issues in particular had made the Soviet Union extremely unpopular with the Japanese. The first was, of course, the illegal occupation of the Northern Territories. The second was the disdainful

superpower arrogance manifested by Soviet behavior in the MiG 25 incident, the unilateral proclamation of an exclusive 200-nautical-mile fishing zone, and behavior after shooting down KAL 007. Apart from North Korea in some postwar years, and China during the Cultural Revolution, the Soviet Union was consistently the country most disliked in Japanese public opinion.

During the Gorbachev period, reflecting the changed Soviet perceptions of Japan, Soviet politicians and bureaucrats adopted more benign and less arrogant attitudes and behavior toward Japan. As though in response, Japanese perceptions of the Soviet Union also changed. In June 1985, shortly after Gorbachev came to power, a public opinion survey conducted for the Japanese prime minister's Office, showed 83.7 percent of respondents "not favorably disposed toward the Soviet Union," versus only 8.6 percent "favorably disposed." But another survey, in October 1991, gave figures of 69.5 percent and 25.4 percent, respectively, a significant change, though still indicating that only one-quarter of Japanese looked favorably on the Soviet Union, a mere two months before the USSR ceased to exist.<sup>7</sup>

### *Dialogue Commences*

These adjustments in perception and attitude were accompanied by some tangible changes. First, regular foreign ministerial consultations resumed. When Shevardnadze visited Japan, on January 15–19, 1986, it was eight years since Sonoda had been to Moscow and ten years since Gromyko had come to Tokyo. Shevardnadze did not go so far as acknowledging that a "territorial issue does exist," but he did listen carefully to Foreign Minister Shintarō Abe's three-hour explanation of Japan's position on the disputed islands. Just five months later, at the end of May, Abe went to Moscow. As a result of these reciprocal visits, former Japanese residents were again permitted to visit graves on the islands, and agreements were reached on issues such as taxation, trade and payments, cultural exchanges, and reactivation of the Japan–Soviet Commission on Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

The failure of the U.S. and Soviet leaders to achieve a tangible outcome at the Reykjavik Summit in October 1986 saw Soviet–American relations become somewhat strained for a period.<sup>8</sup> A visit by Gorbachev to Japan had appeared possible, but was postponed. A series of events and incidents with national security implications, which took place in April–May 1987, helped render any improvement in the bilateral relationship impossible. The Toshiba Machine Company was accused of selling to the Soviet Union sensitive, high-technology equipment that could be used to make quieter propellers for Soviet submarines, in violation of the regulations of the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Control (COCOM). Soviet–Japanese relations were further eroded by a series of "spy" incidents. Two former offi-

cials of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) were arrested on charges of selling to Soviet agents intelligence information on fighter aircraft based at Yokota U.S. Air Force Base. Mutual expulsion of diplomats and officials from the Japanese and Soviet embassies followed. These events and incidents created an atmosphere that dashed the last hope of reviving the idea of Gorbachev's visit to Japan. However, from winter 1987 onward, the two countries' efforts to maintain a positive momentum began to bear fruit. In December 1988 Shevardnadze made his second visit to Japan, followed four months later by Japanese Foreign Minister Sōsuke Uno's visit to Moscow. Shevardnadze came again in September 1990, and in January 1991 Foreign Minister Tarō Nakayama went to Moscow.

In addition to these regular consultations, the foreign ministers also met annually at September sessions of the United Nations General Assembly. Regular meetings of deputy-ministers led in December 1988 to formation of a permanent working group at that level, to further promote negotiations about a peace treaty.

All this promoted dialogue between the two countries, in a less rigid and limited, more unconstrained and generous spirit, than previous discussions, on which the Soviets had imposed unilateral limits. Former Foreign Minister Gromyko, for example, had excluded the territorial problem from talks by stating, "If territorial issues are raised, we will not be able to continue discussions with Japan." During the Brezhnev–Gromyko years the Soviet Union had completely ignored the principle of equality and reciprocity in talks, while top Soviet leaders never, and their foreign ministers rarely, visited Japan. But in the Gorbachev years, while not displaying any intent to relinquish territory to Japan, they did concede that they could not prevent it raising the territorial issue. Also, toward the end of Gorbachev's tenure, the Soviet government conceded that if Japan insisted there was a territorial issue, then they must recognize its existence.

The next change worth mentioning is that the Gorbachev administration realistically accepted as a *fait accompli* the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America. This was a huge change, if we consider that in 1960, when the treaty was revised, Khrushchev was so incensed that he unilaterally added to Article 9 of the 1956 Soviet–Japanese Joint Declaration on transfer of Habomai and Shikotan the new condition, "on withdrawal of all foreign troops from Japanese territory." Even before Gorbachev's advent, some Soviet Japan specialists had already begun to argue that excessive emphasis on the existence of the Japanese–American security treaty was unproductive, it was unrealistic to press Japan to abrogate the cornerstone of its alliance with the United States and nonsensical to formulate policy toward Japan based on such an unfeasible expectation. That is to say, if the security treaty continued to be the focus of

Soviet attention, then there was no room to improve Soviet-Japanese relations; it would be more realistic to acknowledge the treaty's existence and work toward improving relations within that context.

Slowly but surely, proponents of this line of thinking started to make their way into the upper levels of the Soviet policy decision-making process, and during the Gorbachev years his government began claiming that it "did not want Japan in any way to sacrifice its relationship with any other country as a result of improved Soviet-Japanese relations."<sup>9</sup> At the 9th Foreign Ministerial Consultation, in Moscow in May 1989, Shevardnadze said, "The Soviet Union considers it possible to start negotiations on a Soviet-Japanese peace treaty and conclude the treaty, *even under such circumstances that the Japanese-American security treaty exists*" (italics added).<sup>10</sup> That was the first official acknowledgment of the treaty by a top-ranking Soviet foreign policy decision-maker, "indirectly suggesting that the Soviet Union was thereby canceling Khrushchev's 1960 'memorandum.'"<sup>11</sup>

Some Soviet commentators were bold enough to suggest that, compared to a scenario whereby Japan was released from the bounds of the U.S.-Japanese security framework, emerged as an independent force and possibly developed into a militarily strong regional power, it was for the Soviet Union a lesser evil if Japan stayed passively within her security arrangement with the United States. Some even suggested that the Japanese-American security treaty was a factor for stability in the Asia-Pacific Region.<sup>12</sup>

In permitting resumption of gravesite visits by former Japanese inhabitants of the disputed islands, Gorbachev's administration assumed a humanitarian perspective and waived visa requirements, allowing the visits to be divorced from the sovereignty issue, and thus reversing a ban Brezhnev had suddenly imposed in the 1970s. Brezhnev had promised to reconsider this issue in the joint communiqué issued at the end of Tanaka's 1973 visit, but the former CPSU general secretary never did so.<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev gave the green light for such visits beginning in the summer of 1986.

The Soviet government under Gorbachev also looked to apply glasnost to the issue of the prolonged detention of more than six hundred thousand Japanese prisoners of war in Siberia, where about 10 percent of them died. For the first time ever the Soviet authorities indicated willingness to cooperate regarding information on names of POWs, location of graves, and return of ashes. On Gorbachev's way to visit Japan in 1991, he stopped at Khabarovsk, where he paid his respects at graves outside the city of Japanese who had died there. In his speech at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, he expressed *soboleznovanie* (sympathy or condolence) for the deaths and agreed to a brief meeting with representatives of three groups of former POWs.

During the Gorbachev years, mutual exchanges became more and more frequent, due to initiatives such as the Agreement on Cultural Exchange.

Initiatives such as the humanitarian medical aid offered by Japan in 1990 to Konstantin Skoropyshnyi, a three-year-old burn victim from Sakhalin, produced a friendly mood between the Soviet Union and Japan unimaginable just a few years before. According to a public opinion survey carried out in 1989 by Moscow's All-Soviet Center for Public Opinion Studies (VTsIOM), headed by Tatiana Zaslavskaiia, Japan was the most popular foreign country for the respondents. There were twenty-four applicants for every place among students seeking to major in Japanese at Moscow State University (MGU).<sup>14</sup>

There was also a resurgence in Soviet-Japanese economic exchanges, which took Japan to positions as a trading partner of the Soviet Union varying from year to year between third and fifth among advanced industrial countries (along with West Germany, Finland, Italy, and France) and by a long way its top trading partner in Asia (between five and six billion U.S. dollars a year, compared to \$800 million-worth of Soviet trade in 1990 with second-placed South Korea).

In short, in a range of fields, other than the territorial issue, Gorbachev took some very progressive measures to improve relations with Japan, and as a result the Japanese view of the Soviet Union improved dramatically. Nevertheless, Japan was never as caught up by "Gorbymania" as were the United States and West European countries. Most public opinion surveys indicated that Japan's level of enthusiasm toward Gorbachev and perestroika was the lowest among advanced nations, and that this somehow manifested an element of disillusionment.

Why was this? The reason was that most Japanese judged Gorbachev's "new political thinking" as totally oriented toward the West and did not apply in any clear form toward Japan. To be even more frank, we could say it was because Gorbachev basically maintained his predecessors' stance toward the main reason for Soviet unpopularity with the Japanese people, the Northern Territories issue. To what extent, if at all, had the Soviet attitude toward the disputed islands actually changed? In considering this question, let us focus on Gorbachev's visit to Japan in April 1991.

### *Gorbachev's Visit to Japan*

Mikhail Gorbachev visited Japan on April 16–19, 1991. A visit by the top Soviet political leader was unprecedented in the history of Japanese-Soviet relations, and, coincidentally, this visit by Gorbachev, who eight months later found himself the last president of the Soviet Union, took place almost exactly one hundred years after the attack at Otsu, on May 11, 1891, on Crown Prince Nikolay Alexandrovich, who became the last tsar of Russia.

During his three-day visit Gorbachev had six (according to Soviet records, eight) meetings, totaling twelve hours, with Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu,

signed the Japan-Soviet Joint Communiqué (see the Joint Compendium, Item 34), and went sightseeing in Kyoto and Nagasaki.<sup>15</sup>

The joint communiqué included this vague sentence:

As well as emphasizing the primary importance of accelerating work to conclude the preparations for a peace treaty, the prime minister and the president expressed their firm resolve to make constructive and vigorous efforts to this end, taking advantage of all **positive elements** that have been built up in bilateral negotiations in the years since *Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics jointly proclaimed an end to the state of war and the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1956.* (bold type and italics added)

First of all, the italicized reference to events of 1956 did not specifically mention the joint declaration, nor did it refer to its undertaking to conclude a peace treaty that would result in the return of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan. Next, the expression “positive elements” (*pozitiv*) highlighted in bold type is ambiguous.<sup>16</sup> Since the Soviet and Japanese positions on the Northern Territories issue were diametrically opposed, any element the Japanese considered positive the Soviets would consider negative, and vice versa.

As expected, Gorbachev indicated that he did not see Article 9 of the 1956 Joint Declaration, that promised Habomai and Shikotan would be handed over to Japan, as a “positive element.” At the press conference following signing of the joint statement, Gorbachev, unasked, said, “Let me say straightaway, so that you do not ask the question and I do not wait for it: Why is there no mention of the [1956] Declaration?” He replied to his own question saying, “We took from this document those elements that have not only become part of history but also acquired legal force and had consequences in international law. But, as for those things that did not take place—because chances were missed and history took a different course—we were unable to revive the second part of the document more than thirty years later.”<sup>17</sup>

Gorbachev also mentioned this issue in his postvisit report to the Supreme Soviet. It pertains to an extremely important point.

Prime Minister Kaifu pressed persistently to have the 1956 Joint Declaration referred to in the joint statement. We did not agree to this proposal. The reason for this is that his insistence was not because the joint declaration refers to the termination of the state of war or the restoration of diplomatic relations, but that it promises the hand-over of two islands to Japan when a peace treaty is concluded. . . . We consider that we should depend only on those parts of the joint statement that are in keeping with the consequences of the international, legal, and physical realities of history. What did not take place and what subsequent history has, as it were, “erased” cannot thirty years later *simply* be revived in this way. The chance has gone. A new reality has been born, and we must press forward on that basis.<sup>18</sup> (italics added)

Gorbachev’s addition of “simply” (*prosto tak*) to the expression, “cannot thirty years later be revived” he used at the Tokyo press conference on April 19

invites the interpretation that there is still a chance to realize “the handover of two islands.”<sup>19</sup>

Be that as it may, these statements indicate that Gorbachev adopted a similar position to that of Khrushchev’s 1960 memorandum, a selective approach, acknowledging the parts of the 1956 Joint Declaration that were advantageous to the Soviet Union, but claiming those parts that were not advantageous to be invalidated. As I have said many times before, this violates international law. I could only conclude that the same Gorbachev who was telling the world that perestroika aimed to make the Soviet state a *Rechtsstaat* (a state ruled by law) was as guilty as Khrushchev of treating an international agreement selectively. Unfortunately, my interpretation was proved correct. Kazuhiko Tōgō, who was busy behind the scenes during Gorbachev’s visit, also frankly acknowledged this point. He wrote of Gorbachev’s statement, “We could not confirm whether the expression ‘positive element’ was meant to include the 1956 Joint Declaration in its *entirety* or more specifically, its Article 9 was included” (*italics added*).<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, at least in regard to policy toward Japan, we have no choice but to judge that Gorbachev backed away from his “new political thinking.” Many Japanese had noted, even before Gorbachev’s visit, that he had already shown signs of assuming a slightly more conservative stance in domestic politics, but had seen this as the unavoidable result of pressure from conservative factions. No Japanese had ever expected that he would bring to Japan an approach effectively the same as the “old political thinking” of Khrushchev’s days. So in the end, Gorbachev applied more or less the same tactics as Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gromyko. The Japanese people may have been far too naive in their assumptions about him.

### *The 1991 Japan-Soviet Joint Communiqué*

I began my explanation of this communiqué by focusing on the points that were not to Japan’s advantage, but of course not all of its content can be so described. Had there been no advantageous points, Japan of course would not have signed it. Let us now turn our attention to those points.

First, the Soviet Union acknowledged that a territorial dispute existed. We can interpret the use in Article 4 of the communiqué of expression such as “the issue of territorial demarcation” and “territorial issue” as the Soviet government finally *officially* acknowledging the existence of a territorial dispute. Gorbachev, as top political leader, officially abandoned the stance of the Brezhnev-Gromyko years that “the territorial issue has been resolved once and for all and no longer exists.” Before the Japanese-Soviet Summit in April 1991, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze had all but recognized that the territorial problem did exist, but because he subsequently resigned, it would have



been problematic to rely on him. In Gorbachev's report to the Supreme Soviet, he said:

For a long time we pretended that no such (territorial) problem exists. However, the problem did not go away. This has become clearer and clearer as long as we became objectively familiar with the problem, studying the problem's history, its legal, political, psychological aspects. Through recent contacts with Japanese representatives we cannot help but feel, how deeply this problem has been rooted in national conscience. It is impossible to resolve this problem in a unilateral way.<sup>21</sup>

This remark was therefore seen as particularly important as acknowledging, even if in a roundabout way, that a territorial issue clearly existed.

The second reason for Japan's signing of a joint communiqué, and a considerable plus for Japan, was that it clearly mentioned negotiations as concerning the *four* islands, allowing Japan to reassert its position that the "territorial issue" concerned all four.

Third, it was also agreeable to Japan that the Soviet Union undertook to take measures in the near future to establish a simplified visa-free framework for visits by Japanese to the four disputed islands. This framework for exchange greatly contributed to improving the atmosphere between the two countries.

Fourth, Gorbachev's proposal in the joint communiqué to take steps in the near future to reduce Soviet military forces on the disputed islands was a welcome development for Japan. In 1978–79, around the time the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed, the Soviet deployment of one division (about ten thousand troops) to these islands that Japan considered to be her own territory had rankled with many Japanese, and it encouraged those who adhered to the "Soviet Threat Theory." From a strategic point of view, the return of the islands to Japan, or for that matter, reductions in military forces stationed there, was not something that came easily for the Soviet Union because since 1978 it had employed a "bastion strategy" of transforming the Sea of Okhotsk into a "sanctuary" for ballistic-missile firing nuclear submarines (SSBNs) of the Soviet Pacific Fleet.<sup>22</sup> At that time, Soviet submarine-launched missiles could reach targets in North America west of the Great Lakes only from launch points in the Sea of Okhotsk. To protect the submarines against U.S. naval attack, maintain the Sea of Okhotsk as a sanctuary, and turn its enclosed nature from disadvantage to asset, the Kurile Islands were militarized after 1978, with a sonar barrier, radars, ships, aircraft, and stocks of mines and depth charges. The Northern Territories thus became strategically important, and military demands for their retention decisive.

However, by the start of the 1990s submarine-launched missiles, able to reach any target in North America from the Barents Sea, off Russia's north

coast, were coming into service, reducing the need for a Far East "sanctuary," and hence of its protective barrier in the Kuriles.<sup>23</sup> The official announcement, during Gorbachev's visit to Japan in April 1991, of a partial withdrawal of Soviet military forces from the islands signified their reduced strategic value. This was indeed a positive development in terms of Japan's demand for return of the islands.

Next, if we expand discussion to include issues other than the disputed islands, we note that the joint communiqué also acknowledges, "Cooperation should take place in trade-economic, scientific-technological, and political spheres."<sup>24</sup> Gorbachev was most insistent on having this sentence included in the joint communiqué. However, they would mean little unless Japan decided to act positively on them. Japan could tighten or loosen her purse strings in response to Soviet moves, and at a time when turmoil in the Soviet economy was holding Japanese private corporations back from doing business with it, there was effectively no chance of expanding economic ties, unless the Japanese government decided to invest public funds. If Gorbachev couldn't even go so far as acknowledging a previous promise to return two of the four islands, the Japanese government could hardly say anything other than "without taxpayers' agreement the Export-Import Bank of Japan cannot make large loans available on a long-term, low-interest basis to a high-risk country such as the Soviet Union."

In short, at the time of his visit to Japan in April 1991, Gorbachev was successful on the negative point of not giving up the islands to Japan, but on the positive side was unable to secure any economic cooperation or aid from Japan. This is one reason why Gorbachev himself used the words "drawn fight" (*boevaia nich'ia*) in his report to the Supreme Soviet.<sup>25</sup> Maybe he should have put his political career on the line during his time in Japan and afterward persuaded the Soviet people of the logic behind his decisions. Perhaps he should have said, "Relations with Japan are extremely important for the Soviet Union. Without an improvement in relations between our two countries the Soviet Union cannot be a nation of the Asia-Pacific region. Not only is the Soviet economy in decline, every aspect of our society is in crisis. I will return the four islands to Japan, and in return secure long-term, large-scale, low-interest loans to revive the faltering process of perestroika." Had Gorbachev approached the Soviet people boldly and earnestly with this line of logic, he just might have been able to win them over. At least, this was the kind of innovative leadership the Japanese expected of him. However, by April 1991 the nature of his leadership had already changed from "innovative" to "representative," and he made it clear to all that his prime concern was his own political survival.

Granted this view may be based on hindsight; it might have been better had Gorbachev visited Japan before the shift in political priorities changed

his approach to leadership. As it was, the procrastination over his visit served to heighten Japanese expectations of the outcome of the summit meeting and had the effect of focusing world attention on the territorial issue. I would say Gorbachev squandered at least six chances to visit Japan. (1) If he had come soon after taking office, he could have paid a protocol visit to Tokyo and got away with taking a relatively small “souvenir” with him. (2) Gorbachev lost another opportunity, due to hesitancy, before the Toshiba Machine Tool incident of April 1987 caused Soviet-Japanese relations to deteriorate. (3) Another missed opportunity was the funeral of the Showa emperor in 1989, when he could have come without bringing any gifts. (4) As an executive member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party privately commented to me, Gorbachev should have visited Japan during the Nakasone years when the administration was both strong and stable. (5) In the meantime, “All sorts of ethnic issues and domestic problems emerged, so dealing with matters such as the territorial dispute with Japan was out of the question” (Georgii Arbatov, director of the Institute of the USA and Canada, Soviet Academy of Sciences).<sup>26</sup> (6) Gorbachev should have visited Japan before May 29, 1990, when his arch-rival, Boris Yeltsin, was elected chairman of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic) Supreme Soviet. That day signaled the end of Gorbachev’s domination of Soviet politics and the start of what was effectively a dual power structure, meaning that it became difficult for Gorbachev to decide policy toward Japan without considering a possible “Nyet” from Yeltsin.

Gorbachev had let it be known that he wanted to visit Japan in spring, when the cherry blossoms were in bloom, but by the time he arrived in Tokyo, on April 16, 1991, the cherry blossom season was over. This was indeed symbolic of the fact that Gorbachev’s visit to Japan did not involve the best timing.<sup>27</sup> He would have been well-advised to pay greater attention to Lenin’s famous saying, “All things come to those who use time wisely.”<sup>28</sup>