

On Attending the 2nd JEF-Aspen U.S.-Japan Council

By Akira Kojima

During an ancient period of internal strife, Chinese feudal lords protected their domains by making the wheel widths of their vehicles different from those in other areas. In olden days, vehicles traveled in the rutted tracks of those that had preceded. Vehicles from other areas could not easily enter because their wheels were of a different width. It is said that wheel widths were intentionally altered to prevent an invasion by enemy vehicles. When the wheel tracks of different areas were the same width, it meant that the various countries were united in a state of peace. The Chinese characters meaning "identical wheel tracks," pronounced as "doki" in Japanese, embodies this meaning.

The present world is quite removed from what we might call a World State. Rigid boundaries exist, and independent states assert their individual views. However, with the trend toward internationalization and mutual dependence, the meaning of boundaries is fast disappearing in the economic sphere; thus, economic internationalism and political nationalism are brought face to face.

Present Japan-U.S. relations suggest such economic and political confrontation. We cannot, however, turn our backs to the future. How should we close this gap between economic internationalism and political nationalism, and how can Japan and the United States proceed together on the same track in a state of *doki*? A Japan-U.S. dialogue was conducted at the Wye Plantation in Maryland to discuss these major problems.

Last autumn's dialogue was the second U.S.-Japan Council meeting; the first was held in 1984. They were sponsored jointly by the Japan Economic Foundation (JEF) and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, owner of the sprawling Wye Plantation.

Both sides had nine members. The U.S. side included Thornton F. Bradshaw, chairman of RCA Corporation and vice chairman of the Aspen Institute, who



The 2nd JEF-Aspen U.S.-Japan Council: economic experts from the two countries earnestly discuss issues confronting the world today.

was a co-chairman of the meeting; John E. Endicott, acting director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University; Kent H. Hughes, a member of Congress' Joint Economic Committee; and Professor Hugh T. Patrick of Columbia University.

Among Japan's nine participants were Naohiro Amaya, JEF president and co-chairman of the meeting; Shunpei Kumon, Tokyo University professor; Ariyoshi Okumura, director of the Industrial Bank of Japan, Ltd.; and Hiroshi Muroga, director of NEC Corporation.

The dialogue began on October 6 with a dinner party attended by Congressman Stephen J. Solarz as guest speaker and lasted until October 10. A wide range of topics was covered. At that time, over 300 protectionist bills had been tabled in the U.S. Congress. A heated debate was going on over the Jenkins bill. Responding to this emotional atmosphere, as soon as the discussion got under way, one of the U.S. participants declared that, "It is great to engage in a dialogue but it is meaningless since it will not change anything." However, far from throwing cold water on the discussion, his remark served to ignite a more energetic exchange of views.

After five days of discussion, we all agreed that: the world economy is being swept by a new industrial revolution,

brought about by technological innovations, and this situation produces a climate ripe for friction between countries; in this age of change, the United States and Japan are leading the way, and the stability of Japan-U.S. relations is important for the world economy as a whole; within such a huge framework, a global perspective is necessary to solve problems; and as its part in facilitating the worldwide changes, the United States should display political will in reducing its financial deficit and depreciating the dollar's overvalued exchange rate, and Japan, on the other hand, should perceive its central role and make greater efforts to open up its markets.

Our program included a visit to Baltimore. The city warmly greeted the dialogue participants and named them all honorary citizens. Also a moving experience was the discovery that Baltimore had been reborn as a new, developing city. I had heard from many people that Baltimore was pulling itself out of its slump and rebuilding itself, and now I was able to confirm it firsthand. The rule of history is that once a city starts to decline, there is no way of saving it. This rule, however, is being broken by many U.S. cities, a development which truly shows the dynamism of U.S. society. That was the overall impression of the Japanese participants. ●