



## White House Hope For a Strong Mien Founders at Summit

Leaders Laud Japan for Plan  
On Its Economy, But Fail  
To Back Reagan's Goals

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VENICE, Italy—White House officials had high hopes that President Reagan would be seen at the economic summit as a formidable world leader, proving by word and deed that he hasn't been weakened by the Iran-Contra scandal.

But when the summit ended here yesterday, there was little evidence they had succeeded. The leaders' joint communique and private comments failed to offer clear support for Mr. Reagan's specific policy goals on foreign and economic fronts.

As they arrived here for the summit last week, Mr. Reagan's advisers believed that he brought two trump cards with him, issues on which the other leaders would express their solidarity or at least their appreciation: arms control and the Persian Gulf. But he never had a real opportunity to play either card. When the final communique was read yesterday, the country singled out for praise wasn't the U.S.—it was Japan, which staged a preemptive political strike before the summit, with its bigger-than-expected stimulus package.

And instead of winning accolades, Mr. Reagan heard an earful about the U.S. budget deficit and what some felt was a belligerent U.S. stance in the Persian Gulf.

Even before the summit began Monday, U.S. officials had determined that the allies wouldn't agree to a detailed joint plan for protecting the Persian Gulf. Mr. Reagan had expected to raise the issue at the Monday dinner, but was sidetracked by the allies' animated speculation about Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and their concerns about arms control. Instead of boosting Mr. Reagan by praising his leadership on arms control, the leaders debated with him past midnight about whether a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense policy must be developed.

As the leaders discussed Third World debt yesterday, Mr. Reagan was hardly more effective in leading the debate.

A French official claimed with some astonishment that Mr. Reagan "did not open his mouth" at the two-hour session. He said that instead, the U.S. case was presented by Secretary of State George Shultz during a contentious two-hour debate over how to measure nations' foreign aid contributions. Allan Wallis, undersecretary of state for economic affairs, disputed this account. "In any case," he concluded, "the three (Mr. Reagan, Mr. Shultz and Treasury Secretary James Baker) were conferring throughout."

The president wasn't confronted about the Iran-Contra scandal directly, according to his aides. But he didn't escape it entirely either. The congressional hearings were piped into many hotel rooms and the working quarters of the press here via Cable News Network. The scandal and Mr. Reagan's diminished influence at home, including his loss of GOP control of the Senate, clearly affected the allies' expectations for his effectiveness, particularly on trade measures at home.

But White House officials insisted vigorously last night that this wasn't the case. "The president is still strong . . . We're still looked to for leadership. And, if I may say so, the president has provided that leadership here at the summit," Treasury Secretary Baker said in an interview on Cable News Network.