



Yasuhiro Nakasone

Yasuhiro Nakasone (born May 27, 1918) is a Japanese politician who served as Prime Minister of Japan from November 27, 1982 to November 6, 1987. A contemporary of Ronald Reagan, Helmut Kohl, François Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher, and Mikhail Gorbachev, he is best known for pushing through the privatization of state-owned companies, and for helping to revitalize Japanese nationalism during and after his term as prime minister.

Early life

He was born in Takasaki, Gunma and attended Tokyo Imperial University. During World War II, he was a commissioned officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy. In 1946, he entered the Diet of Japan as a member of the House of Representatives. He gained brief notoriety in 1952 for blaming Emperor Hirohito for Japan's defeat in the war. Nakasone rose through the LDP's ranks, becoming Minister of Science in 1959 under the government of Nobusuke Kishi, then Minister of Transport in 1967, head of the Agency of Defense in 1970, Minister of International Trade and Industry in 1972 and Minister of Administration in 1981.

Prime Minister

In 1982, Nakasone became Prime Minister. Along with Minister of Foreign Affairs Shintaro Abe, Nakasone improved Japan's relations with the USSR and the People's Republic of China. Nakasone was best known for his close relationship with U.S. President Ronald Reagan, popularly called the "Ron-Yasu" friendship. In domestic policy, Nakasone's most notable policy was his privatization initiative, which led to the breakup of Japan National Railways into the modern Japan Railways Group. Nakasone also became known for having a nationalist attitude. He visited twice Yasukuni Shrine, after the controversial decision to enshrine fourteen Class A war criminals was made in 1978. During his last term in office, he also gained notoriety among the various non-Japanese ethnic groups in Japan (particularly the sizeable Korean minority) for proclaiming that Japan's success was because it did not have ethnic minorities, like the US. He then clarified his comments, stating that he meant to congratulate the US on its economic success despite the presence of "problematic" minorities. Due to this issue, Masayuki Fujio, the Minister of Education, had to resign in 1986.

Later political life

Nakasone was replaced by Noboru Takeshita in 1987, and was implicated, along with other LDP lawmakers, in the Recruit scandal that broke the following year. Although he remained in the Diet for another decade and a half, his influence gradually waned. In 2003, Nakasone was not given a place on the LDP's electoral list, thereby ending his career as a member of the Diet. The move was widely seen as a blunt and effective attack by Junichiro Koizumi on the old guard LDP leadership. Nakasone's son, Hirofumi Nakasone, is also a member of the Diet, and served in the cabinet of Keizo Obuchi as Minister of Education.