

Feast

FORWARD

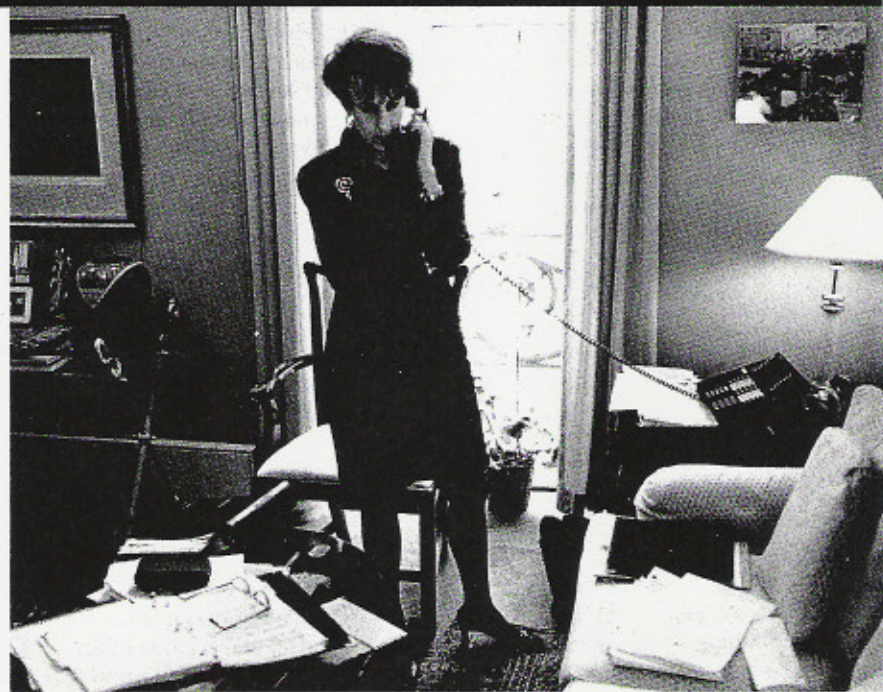
EDITED BY JILL HAMBURG COPLAN

Trade Warrior

Increasing exports is an uphill battle.

CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY, U.S. Trade Representative, won't let anyone push her around. The Japanese nicknamed her Madame Stonewall after she laughed out loud at one offer during a negotiating session. Recently, she stunned Europeans by backing punitive 100 percent tariffs against Italian ham and Scottish cashmere during a trade dispute; when they speak of the Iron Lady, it's likely Barshefsky, not Margaret Thatcher, they're talking about. "At times, one must be tough, bullheaded, and stubborn. But catching a fly with honey works, too," the 48-year-old trade lawyer told us, after a grilling in Congress and just before embarking on a trip to Asia. "You have to be viewed as able to withstand intense confrontation."

It will take all of Barshefsky's smarts to dent the U.S.'s \$168.8 billion trade deficit, the biggest in history and one that labor leaders predict may kill off 100,000 American jobs. "This is an extremely intense environment," she says. Amid rising pressure from corporations, unions, and Congress for protectionist quotas at home, Barshefsky is trying to boost U.S. exports by fighting protectionism overseas. It's a Herculean undertaking. Much of Asia and Latin America have been trying to export their way out of recession by selling cheap raw materials and manufactured goods to the United



U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky on call.

States. Her priorities now are promoting services, the fastest-growing sector of U.S. exports, and pushing for copyright protection for CDs and other intellectual property.

Washington insiders say Barshefsky is brilliant, patient, and tireless, able to talk for four hours without pause and sustain 12-hour workdays. She's negotiated several hundred trade deals during her three years as USTR and three years as deputy. Those skills are being tested now, with 40 percent of the global economy in recession. To recharge, she's been known to turn to Bob Dylan's music. "I remember being astonished that a such a young person was so serious and thoughtful, so expressive and opinionated. He spoke his mind in an indelible way." An apt description of Barshefsky, come to think of it, as she seeks compromise in an uncompromising world. —MARY D'AMBROSIO

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