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Politics in Okinawa since the Reversion of Sovereignty from the US to Japan in 1972

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The location and the short history of Okinawa

The Okinawa Islands(the Ryukyu Islands) form an archipelago of 125 islands stretching southwesterly from Kyushu to Taiwan. The islands are generally subdivided into the Okinawa, Miyako, Yaeyama, and Senkaku groups. The total land area of the prefecture is approximately 2,245 square kilometers(866 square miles). The population of Okinawa Prefecture is about 1,250,000.

The largest island is Okinawa(453 square miles), the site of the United States military bases. US control of the Okinawa Islands followed the Battle of Okinawa(April to June 1945). The main island, Okinawa, is by far the largest both in terms of size and population, and is the prefecture's economic, administrative, and cultural center.

The relatively constant warm temperatures and abundant rainfall of the subtropical zone keep the islands green throughout the year. Typhoons with monsoon rains strike regularly in late summer and early fall. The Okinawan language is a major dialect of Japanese. Although the dialect is closely related to Japanese, it is not intelligible to speakers of standard Japanese or of any dialects in the main islands of Japan. Now that standard Japanese has spread throughout the islands; many young men and women in Okinawa do not speak the dialect. Okinawa is also Japan's poorest prefecture in per-capita income.

Okinawa is often called Ryukyu. In general terms, Ryukyu may be

regarded as the ancient name, and Okinawa as the modern name.

The people of Okinawa have developed outside the framework of the Japanese state for much of their history. By the 12th century, many small local rulers known as 'anji' or 'aji' had emerged, but their domains were gradually consolidated by conquest. In 1429, the Ryukyus developed into a united kingdom, whose ruler paid tribute to the Chinese emperor. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Ryukyu's advantageous location enabled the kingdom to carry on a lucrative entrepôt trade. Southeast Asian products such as spices, sappan wood, and turmeric were exchanged for Japanese swords, copper, Chinese and Korean silk textiles, and ceramics. At that time, the Ryukyu Kingdom prospered as a trading state.^①

However, at the end of the 16th century, the Portugese cut into Ryukyu's Southeast Asian trade.

In 1609, the kingdom was conquered by the Shimazu Family of the Satsuma domain (now Kagoshima Prefecture in Kyushu), which exploited its strategic location and freedom from shogunal supervision to profit from commerce with China. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Japanese government claimed formal sovereignty over the Ryukyus and incorporated them as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. At the same time, the Ryukyu Kingdom, which had extended over four and a half centuries, came to end. This was not recognized by the Chinese until the conclusion of Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Okinawa Prefecture continued in existence over 60 years from 1879 to 1945.

During the battle of Okinawa at the end of World War II, more than 100,000 soldiers of the U.S. and Japan were killed, and the islanders lost approximately 120,000 noncombatant lives. Subsequently, the US Army occupied the islands until their reversion to Japan in 1972.

Okinawa Reversion

1992, the year before last, was an anniversary year for the people of Okinawa, because just twenty years had passed since the Okinawa Reversion in 1972. The anniversary was celebrated splendidly, and many events and festivals took place. Among these celebrations, the greatest was the reconstruction ceremony of Shuri-Castle of the Ryukyu Dynasty era, a castle which had been destroyed in the Battle of Okinawa during World War II.

According to a public opinion poll in the same year, nearly 90 per cent of Okinawan respondents answered that it was a good thing that Okinawa returned to Japan, and only 4 per cent were negative about it. Compared with the result of an NHK opinion poll in 1977, five years after the reversion, which showed that nearly 50 per cent were negative to the reversion, it is clear that support had greatly increased.

According to the same opinion poll in 1992, however, 85 per cent of Okinawan respondents wanted removal or reduction of US military bases. In addition, 45 per cent agreed with the opinion that Okinawa had lost certain of its characteristics over the past twenty years. Among characteristics which Okinawa had lost, the first was "nature", and the second was "the Okinawan dialect".^②

It was the Sato Cabinet which brought about the Reversion of Okinawa. In 1965, Mr. Eisaku Sato visited Okinawa as a prime minister for the first time after the war, and promised to do his best for Okinawa Reversion, delivering an official statement at Naha Airport that the post-war era of Japan would not end without Okinawa Reversion.^③ Indeed, he staked his political reputation on it from that time on.

Heated controversies raged in the Diet, centering around the Agreement on Okinawa Reversion between Japan and The United States. November 1971, the Liberal Democratic Party(LDP) voted the agreement through the

Lower House, in the face of an opposition party boycott.

On the anniversary day, 15 May 1972, the Okinawan people expressed mixed feelings, because as a result of the Agreement, huge US military bases still continued to exist on the Okinawa islands. This stern fact reduced by half their pleasure at returning to Japan. Commemoration festivals and protest meetings were held simultaneously on this day in Okinawa.

For Prime Minister Sato, who had stayed in power for almost eight years, the day was the last page of his career. The Japanese government issued an official statement, that "we should do our best in order to make the Okinawa islands peaceful, where economic and cultural exchanges will prosper between the islands and the Asian Continent, Southeast Asia and Pacific countries. This is just our way to commemorate the great number of people who were killed in the Battle of Okinawa, and to celebrate Okinawa returning to our country".^④

At that time, however, contrary to the content of this statement, many fighterplanes and tankerplanes continually took off from US military bases in Okinawa, because the US Army had just moved to the offensive in the Vietnam War on 9 May 1972, just before the anniversary.

The slogan of protest marches, "we should recreate a peaceful Okinawa without US military bases under Japanese pacifist constitution", sounded in vain in these circumstances.

Chief Executive Chobyo Yara expressed the deep satisfaction of his constituents, but he also noted that their full desire had yet to be fulfilled; that would have to wait until both Japan and the United States had agreed that the presence of American Forces on Okinawa was no longer necessary for peace in Asia.^⑤

US military bases and the reversion movement in the postwar Okinawa

After the disastrous Battle of Okinawa, the Okinawa islands were

separated from Japan, and controlled by the US military for 27 years.

The Okinawa Assembly and a judicial system were established in 1946. The Okinawa Gunto(Archipelago) Government and the Government of the Ryukyu Islands were established in 1950 and 1953 respectively, but their competence and function were restricted under the US military. In practice, the civil administrator could not effect changes contrary to the will of the commanding general. The United States Army decided to replace the island's temporary facilities with permanent installations, thereby manifesting an intention to 'hold on to Okinawa' for a long time to come. This decision was prompted largely by the increasing division of the world into two hostile camps and the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949. American policy began to be predicted on an indefinite control of the island. This policy was strengthened after the outbreak of Korean War in June 1950 for Okinawa rose in strategic importance, especially as an airbase.^⑥ After that time, the US military started constructing huge military bases in order to realise the plan of converting Okinawa into an armed fortress.

This caused the people of Okinawa much trouble. The US military demanded more and more agricultural land to expand airfields, roads and other base facilities. By 1955 the US forces occupied about 40,000 acres, or 12.7 per cent of the total land area, and about 40,000 landowners were dispossessed. An estimated 44 per cent of the area included in the military reservation was farmland; this is equivalent to 17 per cent of the total Okinawan farm area, which was estimated to consist of 61,873 acres - an average of only 0.85 of an acre per farm family.

By the very nature of its economy and due to the lack of natural resources, Okinawa was predominantly agricultural. To most of the Okinawans, land was the sole means of livelihood. Their attachment to land was very strong, and it was difficult for a dispossessed farmer to obtain substitute land or change his occupation.^⑦ In 1952, USCAR(the

United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands) was authorised to acquire the land of Okinawan farmers through lease contracts. However, the lease terms and rental payments were opposed by the vast majority of the landowners. Instead of negotiating the issue, USCAR employed armed troops to remove occupants from their lands and used bulldozers to raze homes and prepare the lands for constructing military facilities. Farmers put up a determined stand, but they were no match for the military. Those who resisted were arrested. From 1954 to 1958, the military land problem became the most controversial issue between American authorities and Okinawans. The climax was the all-out 'islandwide struggle' against the Price Report in 1956, and this problem was not resolved until late in 1958.

Since this struggle, the problem of US military base has been the first item on the agenda in Okinawan politics. In addition, the suppression of fundamental human rights and various damages suffered from the US military occurred in rapid succession. Accumulated dissatisfaction, frustration and anger against the US military gradually changed into popular energy claiming self-government and return to Japan.

Lt.Gen., Paul W. Caraway, high commissioner from Feb. 1961 to Aug. 1964, ignored the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI), vetoed the bills of the GRI Legislature (Rippoin), and purged candidates of the communist party (Jinmin-To), saying "Okinawan self-government is nothing but a legend".^⑥ Strongly resisting his stubborn attitude, liberal groups campaigned to defend the daily life of the Okinawan people from the US military and to enlarge their right of self-government, including the election of their Chief Executive by popular vote. In the end, the Caraway "Typhoon" resulted in strengthening and accelerating the reversion movement in Okinawa.

The 3rd of May 1965 became the first Constitutional Day for the Okinawan people, because the GRI Legislature had decided the day to be

one of legal holidays also in Okinawa. Needless to say, the Constitution of Japan did not apply in Okinawa, separated from Japan. However, the representatives set the Constitution as their goal since it provides for pacifism, local government, respect for fundamental human rights, and so on. In other words, these constitutional principles were set as aims for them to achieve through the struggle against US military rule. The Japanese flag, Hinomaru, became the symbol of resistance to the US Army.^⑥

In November 1968, the Chief Executive was elected by popular vote for the first time as a result of a lengthy popular movement demanding it. In the election, Mr. C. Yara, a reformist candidate, defeated his conservative Liberal Democratic opponent, Mr. Junji Nishime, who favoured American retention of military bases. Mr. Yara was a leader of the Teacher's Association and a strong advocate of reversion.

Broadly speaking, there were three conditions under which the Okinawan Reversion might be attained. The first way was presupposing that US military bases would be totally free from any restrictions, especially on nuclear arms. The second way was presupposing "hondo nami", that is to say, once the islands had reverted to Japan, the extensive American bases there would fall under the same restrictions that were applied to the bases in the mainland. This meant nuclear-free. The third way was presupposing removal of all US military bases, accompanied by denunciation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

The first way was, at first, supported largely by the conservative party, the LDP, and the Foreign Ministry(Gaimusho). On the other hand, the third way was strongly advocated by the Chief Executive Yara, who knew very well the Okinawan people's expectations. Considering the tense Asian situation of those days, the third set of conditions looked almost impossible. However, it might be said that the continual and powerful campaign for reversion against the US Army contributed to the second [nuclear-free]

reversion, with the first set of conditions ruled out entirely.

Japanese government explained that being able to quote Clause 8 of the 1969 Japanese-American Joint Communiqué --a document which did not compromise Japan's policy against "manufacturing, possessing and introducing nuclear weapons"--represented not only a diplomatic breakthrough but also a great concession from the United States. However, most of Okinawan people showed no sympathy with this argument, because Clause 8 of the joint communiqué appeared useless since it contained no clear promise of a withdrawal of nuclear weapons. The US bases in Okinawa were shrouded in a thick veil of secrecy.

In any case, the agreement was the product of governmental negotiations between the U.S. and Japan. As a result of the reversion agreement, Okinawa was placed in the uncertain position of being a 'keystone' of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty; a treaty which has been described as a means of guaranteeing the peace and safety of Japan and the Far East.[®] But the content was far less advantageous than the majority of Okinawan people had expected. They began to wave red flags instead of Hinomaru.

Dr. Mikio Higa analysed Okinawan political culture as follows. Historical records show that Okinawa has often been regarded as a *quid pro quo* in international politics. In 1880, for example, Japan made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain most-favored-nation treatment in China by ceding to her the islands of Miyako and Yaeyama. In 1964, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was reported to have suggested to a group of Japanese Diet members visiting Moscow that the Soviet Union would consider the return of the southern Kurile islands to Japan in exchange for the return of Okinawa by the United States to Japan. And soon thereafter, Assistant Secretary William P. Bundy reportedly commented that this suggestion was like trading a horse with a rabbit.

However, most repugnant to Okinawans was what they considered

examples in which their islands were used as a tool for the greater interests of Japan proper.

To many Okinawans, for instance, Japan regained her independence and enjoyed economic prosperity at the expense of Okinawa. Thus they would not reject a thesis advanced by George H. Kerr that Japan "does not hold Okinawa to be a vital part of the nation's body; it is expendable, under duress, if thereby the interests of the home islands can be served advantageously."^⑩

Dr. M. Higa suggested that there were three phases of the reversion movement. The first phase until 1964 was nationalistic in character. Relying on such factors as a common language, a shared history, geographical proximity, and ethnic similarity, the Okinawans justified their desire for reversion to Japan. For about two years beginning in 1965 the reversion movement was in its second phase. In this phase, which was obviously a product of vigorous campaigns for autonomy and against military bases, the main objective was the fulfillment of basic principles of the Japanese Constitution, i.e., popular sovereignty, peace, and fundamental human rights. The second phase may be called "ideological" or "constitutional". As reversion became more imminent thanks to the Sato-Johnson communiqué of November 1967, the movement entered into the third phase. Now the Okinawan leaders felt that they had to fight against the Japanese government, if it would permit the existing unrestricted US military bases to remain intact at the time of reversion. The reversion movement in this third phase assumed the character of an anti-discrimination movement. The Okinawan leaders began to attack not only the *tabura rasa* position of the Japanese government on the problem of military bases but also all of its past, present, and future discriminatory acts against the Okinawans. For example, during the 1968 Chief Executive election campaign, Mr. Yara argued that reversion to Japan should be a turning point in the process of liberation from a series of

discriminatory acts against the Okinawans. As concrete examples of such acts, he cited alien rule, restricted autonomy, the stationing of B-52 strategic bombers, etc.^⑧

Thus it can be said that the Okinawan reversion movement was directed not only against American rule but also against the Japanese government and people that had discriminated against Okinawans. In short, huge US military bases in Okinawa are still now the symbol of the discrimination. I think that their feeling of being discriminated by Japan has also contributed so much to its separate identity and to its insistence on local autonomy in addition to its cultural, historical, and geographical factors.

Seven national representatives(Lower House 5, Upper House 2) were elected on 15 November 1970. The allocation of the seats was reformist 3 vs. conservative 2 in the Lower House, and reformist 1 vs. conservative 1 in the Upper House.

This allocation did not change until 1992. The structure of confrontation between reformists and conservatives became firmly fixed, and the former predominance over the latter continued for a while since the reformist groups took the initiative in the reversion movement in Okinawa. On the other side, this election accelerated the Okinawan local parties' unification with national parties.

Reformist governors' period (June 1972 ~ December 1978)

The first elections of the Okinawan Prefectural Governor and the Prefectural Assembly, accompanied by the reversion, were held simultaneously in June 1972. The political debates throughout the campaign, were concentrated on the Reversion Agreement. As a result, criticising the Agreement bitterly, reformists defeated conservatives in both of the elections.

The reformist candidate Yara won an overwhelming victory over the

conservative candidate in the election of the Prefectural Governor, and the reformist political parties, including The Okinawa Socialist Masses Party(Okinawa Shakai Taishu-To), the Okinawa Communist Party(Okinawa Jinmin-To),and the Japan Socialist Party, obtained a majority in the election of the Prefectural Assembly. Particularly, the Okinawa Shakai Taishu-To (we usually call it Shadai-To), a local Okinawan party, which had been the main force of reversion movement, increased its seats from 7 to 11.

Through the election campaign, the reformists put great emphasis on pacifism (anti-US military bases) and Okinawan identity (local autonomy). On the other hand, the conservatives emphasised rapid economic development depending on the national government policy. In the end, the people of Okinawa supported the reformist opinion. It meant they charged the Yara Prefectural Government with the duty of retrieving the peaceful islands without military bases. It might be said,too, that the result showed the strong dissatisfaction of the Okinawan people with Okinawa Reversion on 15 May under the agreement between Japan and the United States. Furthermore, the reformists won in the mayoral election of Naha city, the prefectural capital, in November 1972.

* The Era of Yara as the Prefectural Governor

At the first conference of the prefectural council, the Prefectural Governor Yara spoke on his administrative policies. In the speech, he stressed the resolution of US military base problems, autonomous prefectural government, and economic development policies, including such big projects as the Okinawa National Athletic Meet(Okinawa Kokutai) and the Okinawa Oceanic Exposition (Okinawa Kaiyohaku).

The projects could not be said to have been very successful, because they caused a steep rise in land prices, a spate of company bankruptcies, and a

campaign against participation of the self-defense officials team in the National Athletic Meet. Strong Okinawan antipathy against the Self-Defence Forces was derived from the horrifying experience in the Battle of Okinawa. In short, Japanese soldiers did not only protect them, but also killed some of them in the battle, they said. In the end, the Self-Defence Forces were stationed in Okinawa in spite of the strong campaign against them. On the other hand, many military employees were discharged, and accidents and troubles occurred frequently over US military bases.

The conservatives criticised Governor Yara for pursuing unrealistic policies. In fact, prefectural finances were so limited that his policies depended heavily on finance from the national government. The Okinawa Development Agency, established by the national government in 1972 under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office, developed a program for economic development of Okinawa over ten years. This program aimed at a rapid increase of the prefectural income by constructing reliable infrastructure. However, The highest priority of economic development, largely dependent on national finance, steadily undermined fundamental policies of reformist prefectural government, such as pacifism(hansen-heiwa) and self-government (jishu-kensei).

* The Era of Taira as the Prefectural Governor

Mr. Koichi Taira was elected as the reformist Prefectural Governor in June 1976. Mr. K. Taira was the chairman of the Shadai-To, that is, the Okinawa Socialist Masses Party, and succeeded to Mr. Yara's fundamental policies.

Throughout the electoral campaign, he emphasized the strengthening of local autonomy, criticizing central control. He tried to seek a new solution breaking the deadlock on US military bases, because frequent military maneuvers still caused natural destruction and whipped up anxiety among

the Okinawan people. Then, he began the work of preparing a special law, the Gunten-Ho. The Gunten-Ho was an abbreviation for "Gunyochi-Tenyo-Tokubetsu-Sochi-Ho" (a special law for promoting the restoration and conversion of lands occupied by the US military). The aim of Gunten-Ho was that the national government should have general responsibilities regarding the administration of converted US military lands. It included systematic reduction of the military lands and their effective utilization. He was, however, suddenly struck down with serious illness just as he was about to negotiate with the national government about a draft of the Gunten-Ho.

The Okinawan economy did not turn for the better even then. It was depressed by the oil crisis and high unemployment. In order to find some way out of the economic difficulty, Governor Taira tried to realize several plans, for example, holding an Industrial Festival, introduction of a mono-rail system, and the reestablishment of Okinawan culture. However, his period in office of two years and five months was too short to bring these plans to fulfillment.

Conservative governor's period (December 1978 ~ November 1990)

Following the Governor Taira's resignation, the election of the Prefectural Governor was held on December 1978. This election was a turning point in Okinawan politics since the reversion. After this election, the conservatives continued to exert stronger influence in Okinawan politics.

Mr. Junji Nishime, a former conservative MP, defeated the reformist candidate, Mr. T. Chibana, overwhelmingly. Throughout the campaign, Mr. J. Nishime insisted that the reformist governors' ideological policies had caused Okinawan depression and high unemployment, and instead, he emphasised economic development policies, directly connected to the

national government and Tokyo big business.

As a result, Okinawan voters charged the conservative politician with the duty of solving Okinawan economic problems, ahead of the problems of US military bases. Generally speaking, from that time, the fundamental policies of the Okinawan prefectural administration changed clearly from anti-war, anti-US military base, and anti-national government, to pro-US military base, pro-self-defence forces, and pro-national government.

The Prefectural Governor Nishime, immediately started many big projects for regional development, such as the Nakagusuku harbor development, the Okinawan Motorway running through the main island, new construction of the prefectural main office building, the Kaiho National Athletic Meet, and the Okinawa Prefectural College for the Fine Arts. At the same time, the administration started preparatory work for the Second Program of Okinawan Economic Development, cooperating with the Okinawa Development Agency.

On the other hand, the Nishime Administration tended to neglect policy against US military bases. Its attitude was bitterly criticised by the members of reformist parties, which still maintained a majority in the Prefectural Assembly. Needless to say, Governor Nishime gave up the negotiation on the Gunten-Ho, because the national government obviously did not like it. In the election of the Prefectural Assembly in June 1980, the conservatives gained the majority, which facilitated the execution of the policies of the Nishime Administration. In this election, the Okinawa Socialist Masses Party(Shadai-To), the pivotal party of the reformist groups, lost two seats. After all, Okinawan voters preferred the reality(economic improvement) to the ideology(removal of US military base).

Governor Nishime strongly promoted international exchange policy by establishing an International Exchange Division in the prefectural office and the Okinawa International Foundation. Judging from the official

statements, the national government expected Okinawa to become the base of international exchange for Southeast Asian countries.

In October 1979, following the guidelines of national policy, the Nishime Administration released the framework for international exchange projects, including three main pillars, a center of international exchange between Japan and Southeast Asia, an international training center, and an Okinawa convention hall, as well as an Okinawa Free Trade Zone.^⑧

Referring to the problem of general consumption tax, Governor Nishime asserted, 'Okinawa must be the first to follow the national policy, because Okinawa depends so much on finance from the national government.' He insisted repeatedly on 'direct linkage with national government', 'cooperation with national government', and 'precedence of national policy'.^⑨ Why did he take this view? The answer is that he wanted to promote the regional development administration vigorously by introducing as much money as possible from the national government.

The allocation of the Diet seats in Okinawa constituency did not change. Reformists continued to win in the mayoral elections of Naha. However, conservatives won other mayoral elections, namely Ginowan, Urasoe, Nago, and Itoman. Furthermore, in the election of the Prefectural Assembly 1984, conservatives won more seats than in the previous election. The result contributed so much to consolidating the Nishime Administration. Meanwhile, the Okinawa Socialist Masses Party(Shadai-To) continued to decline. In the election of 1986, Mr. Nishime was elected the Governor for the third time.

In spite of the opposition from reformists, Governor Nishime introduced conservative policies one after another such as hoisting the national flag and singing the national anthem at public schools, as well as compulsory use of US military lands.

Besides, he worked eagerly to invite many manufacturing companies to

set up their plants in Okinawa for the purpose of stimulating the Okinawan economy, but it was unsuccessful, mainly because of insufficient water.

How about many projects dependent on national finances ? As a result of this dependence, Governor Nishime could not effect these projects satisfactorily because of the reduced budget of the national government at that time. Among three main pillars of his international exchange policy, the international training center(Okinawa Kokusai Center), and the Okinawa convention hall(Okinawa Convention Center) were built, but the center of international exchange between Japan and Southeast Asia has not been created yet. The Okinawa Free Trade Zone, which was expected as the base of international trade, was established, but it has not worked successfully because of the limited land area and many regulations of the national government.^⑥

Generally speaking, however, the Okinawan infrastructure has improved steadily. Besides, the number of tourists visiting Okinawa has rapidly increased. Being favored with a beautiful natural environment including transparent seawater and the unique flora and fauna of the southern islands, and with unique traditions and culture, Okinawa has become very famous as a resort zone and has been attracting more than three million tourists every year. Service industries including the tourist business are taking a leading role in the Okinawan economy. By contrast, the income from US military bases has been decreasing rapidly.

On the other hand, protests and conflicts concerning the military bases occurred frequently even under Governor Nishime. Soil improvement works continually washed away much red clay to the sea through streams, damaging many coral reefs, and the construction rush of resort hotels induced a sudden rise of land prices and destruction of the natural environment.

The Okinawan people began to fear that too much developement might

wipe out much of the beautiful Okinawan natural environment. It is said today that most of the coral reefs surrounding the main island, have disappeared. A bitter dispute broke out concerning the building site of the new Ishigaki airport. The opposition groups insisted that the construction would surely destroy very valuable coral reefs surrounding Ishigaki island. The support group insisted that the construction of a new airport was indispensable to the development of the island. The dispute, between local development and protection of the natural environment, extended even to international opinion.

Resurgence of a reformist governor (November 1990 ~)

In the end, the influence of the conservatives began to wane, and the influence of the reformist groups grew stronger again. In the election of the Prefectural Assembly in 1988, reformists increased their seats, and in the mayoral election of Naha, the reformist candidate K. Oyadomari was re-elected by an overwhelming majority. Besides, in the election of Okinawa city(the second largest city in Okinawa), reformist candidate S. Arakawa defeated the incumbent conservative mayor. The Shadai-To, the only local party, regained its pivotal position among the reformist groups, and decided promptly on Professor Masahide Ota at the University of the Ryukyus as its candidate for next prefectural governor's election. He was one of the most popular scholars in Okinawa, studying the Battle of Okinawa and the pacifist movement, and himself fought in the battle as a student soldier.

The election of the Prefectural Governor was held in the turmoil of the Gulf Crisis in November 1990. Governor Nishime once mentioned that he might support the U.N.Peace Cooperation Bill, proposed by the national government. The words immediately induced animated disputes once more about US military bases in Okinawa. Appealing to the anti-war, pacifist sentiment of the people of Okinawa, the reformist candidate Prof. Ota

defeated Governor Nishime in the election. The reformists regained the post from the conservatives after twelve years.

From the beginning, however, Governor Ota confronted many problems in attempting to fulfill his campaign pledges, because the conservatives retained a majority in the Prefectural Assembly. He emphasised the promotion of fundamental policies for building up a peaceful Okinawa Prefecture, which should be based on the lessons from the Battle of Okinawa, and on the constitutional principles. By contrast with the former governor Nishime, he called for overall removal of US military bases and took up the Gunten-Ho again, which the former reformist governor Taira had pursued vigorously. He asserted that he would try hard to negotiate with the national government in order to enact such a law.

On the other hand, he visited the U.S. government twice to promote a better understanding of Okinawan problems derived from US military bases. Besides, he resisted the compulsory expropriation of uncovenanted lands for US military bases. However, it looks very difficult for him to break through the hardened attitudes of both governments under the US-Japan Security Treaty.

Recently, Governor Ota said, " if the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty is so important for Japan, why is the burden too heavy only for Okinawa ? Should not the burden be shared equally within Japan ?"⁶ For example, still now, the US military often practices firing with live bullets and shells over the prefectural road. The road is closed in the exercise, but it is very dangerous for the people of Okinawa. Many, many bullets and shells are fired into the mountain, Onnadake, which has been loved so much by the people since early times. The sound, however, does not reach the ears of the people in mainland Japan.

During the Battle of Okinawa, a huge number of unexploded shells were fired into the ground. After the battle, the Okinawa administration has continued to remove them, because they have threatened the daily life of

the people. Lives were lost often as the result of sudden explosions on construction sites. It is said that it will take fifty more years to do away with all of the unexploded shells. In spite of this desperate fact, many, many bullets and shells are even now being fired into the ground.

Governor Ota insists that Okinawa should share some of the peace dividend from the ending of the Cold War. I think his words imply that Okinawa has been used as a shield for the defense of the mainland, particularly since the Battle of Okinawa over half a century ago.

Another big problem for Governor Ota is the selection of a construction site for the new Ishigaki airport. He proposed a new site, Miyara, as an alternative to Karadake-Higashi, which encountered bitter criticism during the period of Governor Nishime. However, it will take much time to find a consensus among the islanders.

The third big problem concerns the Okinawan economy. According to the report of the Okinawa Development Council, the prefectural government and Okinawa Development Agency decided the Third Program of Okinawa Economic Development 1992-2002, mainly because Okinawan prefectural income per capita is even now a little more than 70 per cent of the national average.

Firstly, this program aimed at narrowing the income gap, and secondly, it aimed at building up conditions for self-reliant development. Meanwhile, Governor Ota wanted to incorporate his plan to remove all US military bases into the program, but this was rejected by central government because it contradicted Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.^⑥

The Gulf War and Okinawa

The slogan of the reversion movement was to recreate a peaceful Okinawa without military bases which would return to Japan under the pacifist constitution. The expectation of the Okinawan people that US

military bases would be removed some day once Okinawa returned to Japan, has been betrayed for twenty years since reversion.

75 per cent of US military bases in Japan, are to be found in Okinawa, which occupies only 0.6 per cent of Japanese land space. This presence of military bases has put a heavy pressure on Okinawan daily life. It may be said that the pressure has served to maintain the severe confrontation between conservatives and reformists in Okinawan politics.

A coalition of reformist political parties, which had taken the initiative in the reversion movement, controlled the Prefectural Government for six years after the reversion, advocating the removal of US military bases. However, among these parties, the Shadai-To, the pivotal local party, fell into decline. After the Prefectural Governor's election in 1978, conservatives controlled the Prefectural Government and gave priority to economic development policies.

Since the reversion, Okinawan people have expected the same level of livelihood as the mainlanders ("hondo nami"). In fact, the Okinawan economy was far inferior to the Japanese economy before the reversion. In 1971, for example, the Okinawan income per capita was less than 55 per cent of the national income per capita. In order to narrow the gap, the Okinawan prefectural administrations and the national government have had many projects for boosting the Okinawan economy. Especially, conservative governor Nishime promoted various development projects by leading financial investments from the national government.

The Okinawa Development Agency and the Okinawa Development Finance Corporation supported such projects. Huge financial investments from the national government (approximately 35 billion dollars in total for 20 years after reversion) improved the Okinawan social infrastructure rapidly. Many resort hotels were constructed, and Okinawa has become a mecca for tourists. However, the prefectural income per capita is a little more than 70 per cent of the national average as mentioned before. In

short, the Okinawan economy now depends on financial investments from the national government, instead of depending on US military base spendings. It is far from self-reliant economy. Furthermore, hasty execution of many development works caused the same destruction of the natural environment as happened in the mainland at the high growth period.

The base of the conservative government seemed as firm as a rock, in spite of the increasing criticism of the destruction of the natural environment and suspicion about political corruption. Two major factors, however, namely the end of the Cold War and improvement of Okinawan living standards, began to change the attitude of the Okinawan people to US military bases. It deserves more attention that in Okinawa, approximately 30,000 landowners lease their lands for US military bases. National lands occupy only 34 per cent.^⑨ The Japanese government has continued paying rents to these landowners. But, recent steep rises in Okinawan land prices caused their dissatisfaction with the low valuation of their lands adhered to by the government.

In addition, those who try to improve the quality of life in Okinawa, have begun to demand the removing of US military bases. Certainly, Okinawan living standards have been reasonably satisfactory for the past 20 years, including roads, water-supply, drainage, schools, hospitals, etc. From now on, the people of Okinawa would like to pursue the same quality of life as the mainlanders, including social and cultural amenities without further accompanying destruction of the natural environment. But huge US military bases cut their lands to pieces, so that they are now demanding the removal of the military bases in order to enhance the quality of their lives. In fact, several municipalities(Kadena, Ginowan, Yomitan etc) started to make their regional plans by incorporating the part of their cities which lay within US military bases. In short, US military bases now obstruct new regional planning in Okinawa.

In order to advance this planning, Governor Ota advocates the

enactment of a Gunten-Ho, which aims at systematic reduction of the US military lands and their effective utilisation, as I mentioned before.

Certainly, the end of the Cold War raised again Okinawan expectations of removal of US military bases. The expectation is easily understandable, if we look at their many sacrifices under the bases over half a century. However, it was soon discouraged by the Gulf War.

The frustration of the Okinawan people was clearly reflected in the results of two elections. Firstly, as mentioned before, in the election 1990, Mr. Nishime, the former governor, who indicated his support for the UN Peace Cooperation Bill, was defeated by the present governor Ota, a pacifist scholar. Secondly, in the election for the Upper House in 1992, Mr. Soko Shimabukuro, the leader of Shadai-To, who supported an anti-PKO Bill, defeated Mr. Shinjun Oshiro, a conservative MP. It was said that the result of this election reflected the impact of the statement by Mr. Y. Akashi, the head of UNTAC, on the people of Okinawa. Just before the election, Mr. Akashi said that he wanted a PKO Training Center and Dump to be constructed in Okinawa. As soon as they heard his words, most of Okinawan people said to each other, " No more military bases in Okinawa! "

Okinawa has been in a sense moving around mainland Japan, exerting a centripetal force as well as a centrifugal force, just like a satellite moving around a planet. The centripetal force consists mainly of unification and systematization into Japan in many aspects, as well as economic development policy financed by the national government. On the other hand, the centrifugal force consists mainly of emphasis on Okinawan history, culture, and identity, and of demand for self-reliance or independence.

Besides, as I mentioned before about the reversion movement, Okinawan pacifism, which developed as part of the long struggle against US military bases, was once one element of the centripetal force, because almost all Okinawan people thought US military bases in Okinawa would be removed

if Okinawa could be returned to Japan under the pacifist constitution. However, as you know well, now that the pacifism of the Japanese constitution is assaulted from inside and outside, Okinawan pacifism is turning into an element of the centrifugal force. Okinawan people began to discuss US military bases and their identity again.

Conclusion

Firstly, the Japanese government should listen to the opinions of the Okinawan people more carefully, and make the effort to remove or sharply reduce the US military bases in Okinawa. It seems that the U.S. government now wants to withdraw its many soldiers from the Asian region because of financial difficulties in the post Cold War era. In fact, many soldiers have been pulled out from South Korea, the Philippines, and so on. Therefore, now is the chance for the Japanese government and the U.S. government to talk about Okinawan US military bases. Most of the Okinawan people hope so indeed.

Secondly, decentralization and deregulation are necessary for Okinawan self-reliant development. The present global trend toward a borderless world has helped to refresh their memory of the golden age of the Ryukyu Kingdom, when it flourished as a result of entrepôt trade. In fact, apart from the Okinawa Free Trade Zone, Yonaguni Island and Ishigaki Island recently started trade with Taiwan. However, the national government's tight regulation of the trade system and its customs duties, obstruct rapid progress of international trade from Okinawa. The people of Okinawa expected new policies of ex-Prime Minister M. Hosokawa, who had advocated decentralization and deregulation for long.

Thirdly, from now on, Okinawa will be looking out for its own way in the relation to neighboring Asian countries, including Taiwan and China. This is not only because it is said that Asian countries will lead the world in the 21st century, but because in the past, Okinawa had a close

relationship with Asian countries herself, while broadly speaking, Okinawan culture is originally a mixture of influences from Japan, China, Korea, and Southeast Asian countries. Asian people are so often attracted by Okinawa, which shares their culture, food, and experience. The people of Okinawa will persevere in their efforts in order that Okinawa could be a peaceful bridge between Japan and Asian countries some day.

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Notes

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