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The Reversion of Okinawa to Japan

June 3, 1969

1. Today Asia's balance of power is precariously maintained through the strong support of the United States of America of the independence and resistance to external intervention of the free governments of the three divided Asian states. The other free nations of Asia including Japan have to maintain their security and prosperity in such surroundings, and thus the Asian policy of the United States is intimately related to the security of these countries, even though that is primarily their own responsibility.

2. Post-war Japan has been enabled to establish its position today on the basis of the protection accorded by the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America. Indisputable facts have proved beyond doubt that the Security Treaty has kept playing a vital role for the security of the Far East, including Japan, throughout the vicissitudes of the changing post-war Asian situation. The Japanese Government will firmly adhere to this Treaty, which enjoys the support of the vast majority of the Japanese people, well beyond

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1970, and it hopes that the American Government shares its views.

On the other hand in Japan there is still a latent feeling of "being imposed on" by the United States as a superpower, and side by side with this a frame of mind exists which takes for granted American help in international matters. The current duty of the Japanese Government is to correct such views on the American relationship and to aim at a rational approach to bilateral economic issues as well, and in keeping with the increase in Japan's national strength, to fulfill international obligations commensurate with Japan's status as the leading Asian developed country. Since Japan's circumstances preclude direct military contributions for Asian security and prosperity, her role should be to progressively assume international political responsibilities, and to contribute actively in the field of economic development. Japan has already started to make her position clear on these points.

3. The Japanese Government desires to cooperate closely with the United States Government on the basis of its fundamental policy outlined above. However, the problem of the reversion of administrative rights of Okinawa still exists between the two countries a quarter century after the end of the war. This issue is the only and last great

residue

residue of the war in the Pacific. The Japanese Government strongly believes in the urgent necessity of an early and complete reversion of the administrative rights, and to that end wishes to reach a durable solution mutually satisfactory to both Japan and the United States.

The reversion of Okinawa is not only a bilateral political problem between the two countries, but also a matter relating to the security of the entire Far East including Japan. Thus the solution of this problem requires full examination based on a long-term view of the Asian situation and aimed at contributing towards peace and prosperity in Asia. The two sides must conduct this examination within the framework of friendship and trust existing between them.

4. The Okinawa problem has been discussed for a long time between the Governments of Japan and America. To the Japanese people, the fact that a part of the national territory is placed under the sustained administration of a foreign country, whatever the reasons therefore and whatever the circumstances, is no longer supportable. In the interests of strengthening the cooperative relations between the two countries, it is absolutely imperative to correct this abnormal situation as soon as possible and thereby remove a factor working against Japan-U.S. friendship.

Happily

Happily, it was agreed at the meeting between Prime Minister Sato and President Johnson in November, 1967, that "the two Governments should keep under joint and continuous review the status of the Ryukyu Islands, guided by the aim of returning administrative rights over these islands to Japan....". This agreement is, in the Japanese Government's view, a product of American wisdom and courage: the United States, with profound understanding of the essentials of the Okinawa problem, had decided to place the relations between the two countries on unshakable foundations, and thus make possible long-range stability in Asia from the 1970's on, through the fulfilment of the quarter-century old aspirations of the people of Japan including the Okinawan inhabitants for a restored national unity.

The Japanese Government is fully aware that, as the conflict in Vietnam is still raging today, circumstances might exist making it difficult for the United States, which is bearing the brunt, at great sacrifice, of this struggle, to accelerate the solution of the Okinawa problem. However, two years have almost passed since the above-mentioned agreement between the two leaders, and both in the Japanese mainland and Okinawa, the demand for making reversion a fact is growing more intense from day to day. The Japanese Prime Minister is expected to

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meet the President of the United States late this year. The Government believes strongly that at that meeting, firm and detailed decisions must be made to put Okinawa's reversion on a practicable timetable, and that such decisions will contribute greatly to bringing about stable political conditions in Japan under conservative party rule, as well as ensuring the future of Japan-U.S. relations.

5. The Japanese Government desires the following to result from coming discussions with the United States:

(a) Timing of reversion

The principle of the return of administrative rights has been firmly recognized at the Japan-U.S. talks of 1967 and reversion should, as already stated, occur as soon as possible. However, a great many practical problems must be solved before reversion is attained. Therefore, the Japanese Government desires that after discussion of these problems, the United States will relinquish its rights with regard to Okinawa under Article 3 of the Peace Treaty, thus bringing about reversion to Japan not later than 1972.

(b) Conditions for reversion

The Japanese Government recognizes that the American forces on Okinawa are filling a vital role in preserving

peace

peace and security for the free nations in the Far East including Japan, and accordingly wishes that American bases remain on Okinawa after reversion. Since reversion of administrative rights will place Okinawa on the same footing as the Japanese mainland under Japanese sovereignty, the Security Treaty and related agreements should be applied without change, from the moment of reversion, to American bases continuing to exist on Okinawa.

6. It is clear that, after reversion, the Japanese Government should assume responsibility for the local defense of Okinawa. The Japanese Government is currently devising new thoughts for the defense of the whole of Japan including Okinawa, whereby the Japanese Self Defense Forces would fulfill, under close cooperation with the U.S. forces, their local defense role in post-reversion Okinawa. The Government is fully engaged in preparatory studies to this end.

7. The Government of Japan will assume the political responsibility that the facilities and areas to be provided in Okinawa after reversion to the U.S. forces will be able to function effectively in accordance with the purposes of the Security Treaty. The Government places special importance on the use of such facilities and areas by American forces for

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the security of the Korean peninsula and other territories adjacent to Japan. Therefore, the Government firmly feels that, in the interest of the free nations of the Far East including Japan, the deterrent functions of the U.S. forces should not be allowed to deteriorate unduly after the Security Treaty and related agreements are applied to American military bases on Okinawa after reversion.

8. At the same time, in order that the Japanese Government be able to carry out its above-mentioned political responsibility, it is vitally important to obtain the understanding and support of Japanese public opinion, particularly that of the Okinawan inhabitants. From this point of view, the Japanese Government is of the opinion that any arrangement in connection with Okinawan reversion entailing the amendment of the Security Treaty and related agreements must be avoided. The Japanese Government is fully aware of the existence in Japan, with regard to the issue of reversion, of (a) the strong and unique national feeling against nuclear weapons, (b) the awareness that a sovereign state must require prior consultation when combat operations are to be carried out from its territory, and (c) the feeling that Okinawa after reversion should not be treated differently from the mainland. The Government realizes that without respect for these political realities in mainland Japan and on Okinawa, it would fail to obtain

obtain popular support and understanding, and consequently fears that it would not be able to secure its objective, viz. the effective functioning of facilities and areas on Okinawa.

9. Thus, the solution of the Okinawa reversion problem needs as its premise a harmonization of military requirements and the realities of the existing situation in Japan as well as in Okinawa. From this point of view, the Japanese Government wishes to discuss the following points with the American Government:

(a) The Japanese Government cannot but conclude that it is extremely difficult to accept permanent stationing of nuclear weapons in post-reversion Okinawa. Therefore, if nuclear weapons are currently stationed there, the removal of such weapons will be required before the time of reversion, and the introduction of nuclear weapons should be subject to prior consultation after reversion.

(b) After reversion, the use for combat operations of facilities and areas provided to American forces on Okinawa will be subject to prior consultation. To that end, the two Governments will jointly review foreseeable cases of use for combat operations.

10. In addition to the foregoing, there remains the problem of bringing about a smooth and orderly transition after 25 years

years of American administration. It is necessary, in all fields of government, legislative, judiciary and executive, to minimize adverse effects of reversion on the livelihood of the inhabitants of Okinawa, and to actively promote their welfare. It is also necessary to solve a multitude of practical problems in connection with providing facilities and areas under the Status of Forces Agreement, such as their delineation, the assumption of responsibilities for public utilities now under military control, administration of roads and the like. Therefore, the Governments of both Japan and the United States must consult and prepare together well in advance of reversion. To this end, the existing Japan-U.S. consultative and advisory bodies, with appropriate improvements and amendments to their terms of reference, might provide useful forums for such collaborative work. The broad outlines of these preparatory activities should be made known in order to reassure the Okinawan public and thus ensure the smooth execution of reversion.