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By: WJ
Date: 11/17/87

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Approved in S 10/2/67

DATE: September 16, 1967

SUBJECT: Ryukyu Islands (Part I of II)

PARTICIPANTS: Takeo Miki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan
Takeo Shimoda, Ambassador of Japan
Makoto Watanabe, interpreter

The Secretary
U. Alexis Johnson, Ambassador to Japan
James J. Wickel, interpreter

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The Secretary said that there seemed to be two levels on which the two governments may discuss the issue of Okinawa. The first is the level of realism, which must take into account the unhappy facts of life. The Prime Minister and the President must maintain close contact on this level. At present and in the future, the United States has a security commitment to Japan but Japan has no security commitment to the United States except in the defense of Japan. Under the Mutual Security Treaty we have pledged one hundred million lives in the first hour of war. "Wherever I go, a man with a radio always accompanies me". On this matter of the life or death of nations matters of public opinion and domestic politics are of no importance, for we are dealing with the question of the survival of the human race.

At the second level there are questions of public opinion and domestic politics in both countries. If Prime Minister

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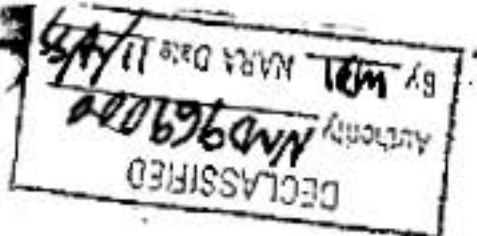
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Reviewed by: Raymond L. Perkins FSO-2

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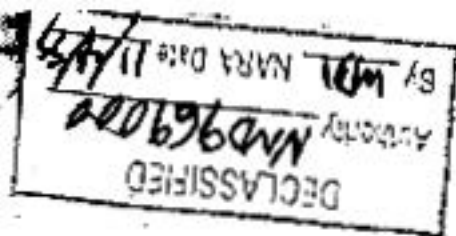
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Sato and President Johnson have a clear common view of the fundamental problems on the first level, they may discuss how best to deal with these questions of public opinion and domestic politics on the second level. But these two levels should not be confused. He hoped that consultations could continue until the Prime Minister's visit on how to deal with the problems of public opinion in both countries. What we cannot do is eliminate the ultimate question of security because of the transitory political complications which may occur this year or next year or the following year. Security is too important for that. He was not suggesting how the Japanese might deal with their own public opinion problem but said it was important for the Prime Minister and the President to look each other in the eye and discuss realistically the problems arising at the first and fundamental level: what is needed to continue the existence of Japan and to deal with the problems presented by mainland China. Perhaps we can deal with these in some way more acceptable to public opinion but we must be clear on the central issue.

The Secretary said that public opinion does raise specific problems and we should seek certain steps which can be taken to assist in dealing with these questions of public opinion and domestic political problems. He hoped that these discussions could be continued before the Prime Minister's visit so that some forward movement could be reflected. He said it was difficult for us to explain to the people and to the Congress that we have committed the life of our nation to the security of Japan but that Japan is reluctant to place us in a position to carry out our commitment. This is a difficult and fundamental problem which goes beyond public opinion and domestic political problems because it involves the existence of nations, the United States as well as Japan.

Miki said that Japan relies on the United States for security and deterrence under the Mutual Security Treaty. She is also undertaking the qualitative improvement of her own self-defense forces. He said that Japan is aware that security matters involve the survival of mankind, as the

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Secretary had noted, but that public opinion could not be ignored altogether under a democratic political system. The first level of awareness is most important but it must be balanced against the needs of public opinion. Therefore, he said, the United States and Japan must discuss this question clearly and wisely. The Japanese Government is aware of both levels noted by the Secretary but it is a matter for joint discussion and decision by both governments. As background for the Prime Minister's visit in November, great expectations for some progress on the matter of the return of Okinawa have been aroused among the people of Japan and the greatest difficulty would ensue if no step forward is taken; in fact, it would endanger the political life of the government.

The Secretary said that we would be ready to receive any suggestions with respect to partial steps that would make clear that we anticipate the return of these islands to Japan. However, in the United States there is a substantial public opinion problem resulting from the war in Asia and the fact that two hundred Americans a week are being killed in it. While it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to resolve these public opinion difficulties, the Secretary said that he was not completely pessimistic and that some arrangements may be possible.

He said that the Government of the United States much appreciates the quiet cooperation of the Government of Japan in the Vietnam affair, particularly in making available Japanese facilities which is not publicly known. He said we appreciate the understanding of the Government of Japan not only with respect to the use of such facilities on Okinawa but also in Japan proper. Miki asked whether a nuclear base on Okinawa was an absolute requirement. The Secretary said that the option of a nuclear base is an absolute requirement. As the situation continues to develop it is difficult to say precisely what may be required, but he said he believed that this should be determined by security requirements and ^{not} by public opinion. Miki said that the United States may ^{not} fully understand Japanese national sentiments with respect to nuclear matters under the present situation. The Secretary said that we understand that there

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is great sensitivity to that matter but this points in the direction of allowing responsibility for such matters to rest with the United States and not with the Government of Japan. As long as the Government of Japan can say that this is a United States action it is spared the responsibility for such action. However, if the Government of Japan had responsibility in nuclear affairs it would face a different problem in terms of Japanese public opinion. Miki said that the long-time taboo on discussion of nuclear matters in Japan had at last been broken by the frank debates on nuclear proliferation and that this had been helpful. The Secretary said that there is a certain sensitivity in the United States on one point: that is, that the United States is expected to accept responsibility for security without being provided the means to carry this out. The United States does not wish to become in the position of a mercenary for foreign countries, being allowed to fight only on conditions specified by her allies. Either we have a common joint purpose and responsibility or we cannot guarantee security, because we have pledged the life of our nation.

Miki said that Japan will take up this problem with determination. The Government of Japan also bears a heavy responsibility in finding the limits to which it can lead the people. This determination should be made in terms of the major requirements posed by the security problem but it would also be limited by popular opinion.

The Secretary said that it is of great importance that we make maximum use of the element of deterrence. If Peking is certain that we would respond and that we have the capability to respond should they take action, then they may be cautious. But if they are confused and miscalculate that the United States would take no action and if this miscalculation would lead them to attack Japan then Japan is in danger and the United States is in danger. It must be made absolutely clear to Peking that the United States will respond and has the capability to respond.

Miki asked what decisions the Prime Minister should make in his heart before his November visit. The Secretary said that before the Prime Minister's visit, both countries

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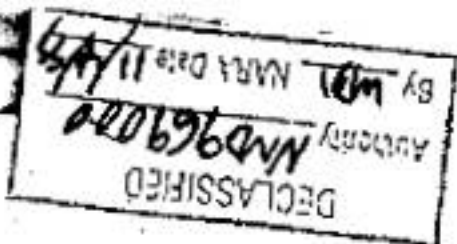
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should discuss the alternatives available to us which would help in the area of public opinion but would not interfere with security matters. The United States would be unable to give an answer on Okinawa before 1969 at the earliest because of the forthcoming Presidential election and the attitude of Congress during the Vietnam situation. There is no possibility of reversion in the immediate future. This leaves the question of how to deal with national opinion in Japan and the Ryukyus. Miki said that previous joint communiques have looked to reversion on the condition that the situation in the Far East becomes stable; but he asked whether the United States could agree to say in a joint communique that studies by both governments on reversion would be continued on the premise of eventual reversion but in view of the significance of Okinawa in terms of security these studies would not impair the maintenance of a base nor would they prevent the active use of the base, but would be directed at the form reversion would take. With the political calendar in both countries, however, it is essential to demonstrate some progress such as the return of the Bonin Islands at this time. The Secretary said we would be pleased to discuss a formulation which would make clear that we anticipate reversion to Japan, provided this would not interfere with the security role of Okinawa under the present circumstances.

With respect to the Bonins he said he was concerned on two points: should action be taken to return the Bonins, would this not make the Ryukyu situation more difficult, since it would impel the Ryukyans to ask "Why not us, too"? Second, Iwo Jima poses a special case. It is more possible to consider reversion of the other Bonin Islands in the near future but it would not be easy to do anything about Iwo Jima while there is a war in progress. He asked if Iwo Jima could be separated from the other Bonin Islands. Japan cannot guarantee the United States, nor can the United States guarantee Japan that we will not be in a war with China in three months or six months; since there are special aspects about Iwo Jima he said that it would have to be placed in a special category. He said he was frank in stating our purpose.

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Both the United States and the Soviet Union as well as Japan, are concerned with the possibility of irrational acts by Peking under its present leadership. It is important not to give those in Peking any impression that the United States is withdrawing from its position and its commitments in the Pacific during this period. Otherwise they may miscalculate and this would present a danger to Japan and the United States. Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Republic of Korea are all related to this security question. He said that we understand that the Soviet Union intends to press the United States in the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly to withdraw from Korea. We cannot do this without creating a misunderstanding of our intentions in Peking. Miki asked if such a resolution would be adopted by the General Assembly. The Secretary said that we do not think it would receive a two-thirds vote. Miki said that he sees the Soviets in a special relationship with North Korea. Although Soviet athletes were reported to have already arrived in Tokyo to participate in the recent Fifth Universiade they did not appear at the games, no doubt as a gesture of support to the North Koreans, who had withdrawn in a dispute over the name under which they were to participate. The Secretary said it seems that the Soviets are attempting to consolidate their position in Pyongyang against Peking. The United States understands their attitudes although we do not agree with them.

Ambassador Shimoda said that he is a high-level official and not a politician; therefore his views may differ somewhat from Miki's. As an official he does not assume that the Liberal Democratic Party will always be in the majority in the Diet. Recently Japan has seen the election of a number of Socialist governors. Socialist gains may be increased as the different thinking of younger people makes itself felt politically. In particular, the Chinese Communists could make skillful use of such unresolved problems as Okinawa in their propaganda approach to Japanese youth.

Some Americans may think that the Japanese desire reversion only for sentiment's sake, even though they recognize that Japan needs a nuclear umbrella. But perhaps Americans may think they can maintain their bases even in

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the face of Japanese and Okinawan hostility because they continue to maintain Guantanamo in Cuba even now. The Secretary said that if Japan and Okinawa became hostile the United States must ask to be relieved of its security responsibilities. Shimoda said that the Japanese Government should be given credit for having done its best to educate the public in these matters. Miki said that he has been telling a joke in Japan -- to wit -- that whereas progressive elements had looked to 1970 as a crisis year of struggle on the Mutual Security Treaty (ANPO) he, Miki, is telling people that it will simply be the year of the Exposition (EXPO). The radicals are now focusing their attention on Okinawa, but even within the LDP there are voices calling at least for partial reversion of educational rights, for example.

Miki said that the Secretary has called attention to American responsibilities for security but the Government of Japan also has responsibilities. However, the Government of Japan desires to solve these problems without damage to friendly relations between the United States and Japan. Public opinion at present, which is critical of the failure to achieve reversion, cannot be disregarded for it is a major factor in the situation. While the Government of Japan agrees with the Government of the United States on problems at the first level, nevertheless it would be wise to take steps to satisfy public opinion on the second level. Otherwise Okinawa could become a substantial core problem for Japan. The Secretary said that the United States has no desire to retain control of the Ryukyus simply to possess additional territory or to maintain American rule of another people; in fact, as he had once told the Prime Minister, he had, when Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in 1949, recommended the return of the Ryukyus to Japan, but without success. There is no question of prestige involved in reversion but there is a question of peace in the Pacific and American responsibility to Japan and to other nations to maintain peace. He said that we could continue to discuss alternatives which Japan might develop that would be helpful with public opinion. The United States could study these in terms of security and public opinion

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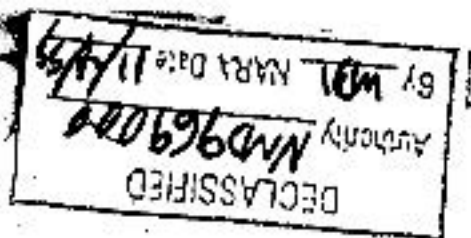
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especially as it relates to the Vietnam war in order to see how some forward progress might be registered without impairing American capability for security. These consultations should be thoughtful and frank and conducted in a friendly spirit. The United States wishes to be helpful to the Government of Japan in its public opinion problem without damaging our own public opinion position.

Ambassador Johnson said that Miki had earlier told him that interim measures should be considered in order to buy time; such measures could be taken without a commitment on when, how, or under what circumstances reversion should be accomplished. He had suggested to Miki a Joint United States-Japan Economic Advisory Committee for Okinawa but perhaps there are other alternatives. Miki asked if it would be possible to go so far as to state that the United States and Japan would examine when and how reversion might be accomplished on the premise that Okinawa would be returned eventually and that the return would be accomplished when the two nations agreed to it, taking into full account the role played by Okinawa in security in the Far East. The Secretary said that the United States is prepared to consider such a formulation but the exact wording must be undertaken with great care. Since the President has issued no instructions he could not say whether the United States would go as far as Miki proposed. He said there was no doubt about the United States agreement to the principle of reversion to Japan. Without using the same wording of previous joint communique, he said that it may be possible to say that both governments will study the conditions for reversion on the basis of the premise of the Japanese desire for reversion. The United States anticipates and expects reversion but the President of the United States cannot make a decision on either the timing or the circumstances prior to 1968 because there is a Constitutional problem on our side. Miki said that the return of the Bonin Islands would not adversely affect American security capabilities but would be an expression of goodwill and would demonstrate progress in this area. The Secretary said that further study is needed on the Bonins. Preliminary discussions with Congressional leaders has disclosed, however, a severe negative reaction

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to the consideration of early reversion which is heavily influenced by the Vietnam war. However, this matter will be the objective of continuing studies before the Prime Minister's visit. Ambassador Johnson said that the problem of the President is that he cannot be charged with giving something away. The Secretary said that there is one point in which perhaps Japanese Government leaders could assist in gaining a better understanding by public opinion. By way of illustration, some Europeans think that they are innocent bystanders in a struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union and by simply removing themselves from association with us they can change their national situations. But the fact is that Western Europe and its security is the principal issue between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States is not fighting the Soviet Union over polar bears in the Arctic but rather over European security. In the Far East, we are not interested in a war with the Chinese simply because they are Chinese and we are Americans. We have security treaties with the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Republic of China, the Philippines and several nations in Southeast Asia because what happens to them also concerns us. These nations are not innocent bystanders in the struggle; they are the cause of it. If all these nations could live in safety we would have no quarrel with Peking. Japan is not simply a bystander. The safety of Japan is an issue between the United States and China and perhaps Moscow.

Miki said the world is governed by the logic of deterrence. It is inconceivable that Communist China could soon match the United States, even though they may produce an ICBM as reported. Vigilant caution must be maintained against Peking, but he doubted that they would undertake any foreign adventures under the present circumstances. The Secretary said that Chinese actions are more cautious than their statements and he hoped this situation would continue. However, we cannot rely on that because there are desperate conditions in China and the very lives of the leaders may be at stake in the power struggle.

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In the Prime Minister's discussion with the President, he hoped that some means could be found to take the heat out of the problem so that it could be solved in a manner more acceptable to Japanese opinion as well as American opinion and in conformity with strategic requirements. If the situation in Vietnam and Peking should change, then another look can be taken. Miki said that we should keep in mind that Okinawa is the principal political issue involved in the Prime Minister's visit and the Government of Japan cannot put out the fire. The Prime Minister's political future as well as that of the Government of Japan depends on making some progress toward solution of this problem. The Secretary said that there are other factors which could favorably affect public opinion in the United States. An increased Japanese defense capability would no doubt inspire a more favorable view on these islands, just as increased leadership of the free nations of Asia and contributions to regional programs by Japan can be helpful to the United States Government in dealing with American public opinion in such problem areas as the balance of payments. He said he hoped that Japan was not seeking the early return of the Ryukyus simply to gain foreign exchange, since if American military expenditures in the Ryukyus were added to those in Japan our balance of payments with Japan would become even worse. Miki said that the third Five-Year Defense Plan begun by Japan this year to provide for a qualitative improvement of the self-defense forces would raise Japan's defense capabilities beyond those of Italy. It is difficult to calculate precisely, but Miki said that Japan now ranks between seventh and eleventh in the world in defense capabilities. The Secretary said that it had been a mistake originally for the United States not to insist that balance of payment advantages under mutual defense arrangements with Western Europe and Japan be neutralized. At the time these commitments were made there was a worldwide dollar shortage and the United States tried to supply dollars to make up the deficit. But now the opposite is true and the United States finds itself short of foreign exchange. He asked Miki to be sure to report to the Prime Minister and Cabinet the counterpart discussions between Secretary Fowler and Finance Minister Mizuta. Miki said that Minister Mizuta prior to his departure for Japan had agreed in a private meeting that the Government of Japan should give these talks full study.

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Miki asked what American soundings were with respect to the willingness of the Security Council to take up the war in Vietnam. The Secretary said that there is little enthusiasm in the Security Council to take up the question of Vietnam. Ambassador Dobrynin had called on him yesterday to register Soviet resistance to this proposal, as have others. Miki said that the question of increasing the autonomy of the Ryukyus and the public election of the Chief Executive would be welcome in Japan. He said that Japan wishes to cooperate in the long-range studies of the economic future of Okinawa being conducted by the United States High Commission. He asked what success is being met with by efforts of the Administration on the Price Law.

Ambassador Johnson said that the problems of Okinawa would be worsened if the wrong Chief Executive were elected. Miki said that the LDP is actively helping the Government, particularly in Okinawa and does not wish to see it lose. The Secretary said that the United States Government will continue to study these matters closely and hopes to maintain close contact on them with the Government of Japan.

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