Chapter II: Groping toward the Future

Whither Okinawa?

No Okinawan knew what the Japanese surrender would hold for his or her destiny. At the very least, one could assume that the prefecture would share the same fate as the rest of the country. Although their wartime experiences embittered many Okinawans toward both Tokyo and its often overbearing and sometimes tyrannical soldiers, this would not have prevented them from still believing that they were Japanese and would be treated as such by the Americans.

After all, though unknown to the Okinawan people at the time, President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill had pledged, in the Atlantic Charter issued on August 14, 1941, that their two countries would “seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other” as a result of the war. The charter also declared that they would “desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned” and would “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them . . . .”

These principles “for a better future for the world” were confirmed at the end of 1943, when Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek and Churchill conferred and issued the Cairo Declaration, which stated:

The three great allies are fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion.

It is their purpose that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she seized or occupied since the beginning of the first world war in 1914, and that all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores (Peng-hu Islands), shall be restored to the Republic of China.

Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed.

The Ryukyu Islands had belonged to Japan since well before World War I, and it was questionable whether they were among those territories that Japan had conquered “by violence and greed.” But President Roosevelt, in a meeting with Chiang at Cairo in December 1943, “enquired more than once whether China wanted the Ryukyus.”¹ Chiang was hesitant. Instead, he said that China “would be agreeable to joint occupation of the Ryukyus by China and the United States and, eventually, joint administration by the two countries under the trusteeship of an international organization.” The following month, Roosevelt told the representatives of China, Britain and several other countries participat-

¹Chinese Summary Record, Roosevelt-Chiang dinner meeting, 23 November 1943, at Roosevelt’s Villa. 324. Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Cairo and Teheren 1943 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), 324. Contrary to the common notion that the Ryukyus were not included among the territories previously acquired by Japan “by violence and greed,” Masahide Ota believes that they were. Ota, Okinawa-no Chosen (Tokyo: Kobun-sha, 1990), 174.
ing in the Pacific War Council that he believed that the islands rightly belonged to China as it had appointed a "king of Loo Choo" in the past. Once again, he favored "restoring" the civil administration of the Ryukyu Islands to China. Since the islands were militarily so valuable, however, he suggested the creation of a "policeman from the United Nations [watching] over these islands for purely military purposes."3

Japan's sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands, as noted earlier, was "suspended" on April 1, 1945, by Admiral Nimitz. The war severed Okinawa and the other islands in the Ryukyu chain politically from the rest of Japan and placed them under U.S. control. However, the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, 1945, which reiterated the terms for Japan's surrender, apparently included the Ryukyus among the "islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine," and not among "all other territories" which Japan had occupied by violence and greed since 1914.4

But the U.S. government, now under President Truman, would soon reverse its policy. In total disregard of the Okinawan people's expectations, the United States would control Okinawa for military purposes for the next twenty-seven years. Administratively, Okinawa was separated from Japan, and none of the occupation measures taken by General MacArthur's SCAP (Supreme Commander, Allied Powers) for a demilitarized and democratic Japan applied to the increasingly militarized islands. The United States referred to the Okinawans as "Ryukyuans" as if they were a people distinct from the Japanese. "Ryukyuans, now in Japan," who desire to return to their homes in the Ryukyu Islands," a SCAP memorandum of December 26, 1945, to the Japanese Government, stated for example, "... will be repatriated to their homes without delay."

In November 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff defined Japan, for the Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Far East, to include the four main islands and "about 1,000 smaller adjacent islands."5 The Ryukyus and South Korea, as well as these main and minor islands, were assigned to General MacArthur. Since the United States had already established a military government in the Ryukyus before Japan's surrender, however, the administration of these islands "remained separate from that of Japan."6

As a result, the Ryukyu Islands south of 30 degrees, including the Okinawa, Miyako and Yaeyama island groups were removed from Japan for administrative purposes.7

The U.S. decision on the administrative status of Okinawa was reached following bitter arguments between officials of the State Department and of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

2"Minutes of a Meeting of the Pacific War Council," 12 January 1944. Ibid., 869. Roosevelt's remarks at the meeting are paraphrased by Leighton McCarthy (Canadian Minister in Washington) in his report to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 14 January 1944, on the proceedings of the thirty-sixth meeting of the Pacific. W.L. Mackenzie King Papers (National Archives of Canada, MG26), J1, vol. 363, p.314660-63.

3Leighton McCarthy's report to Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Also see Masahide Ota, Okinawa-no Chosen, 168-196, for further discussion of the Chinese claim and eventual withdrawal of the claim.

4It should be noted that Article 12 of the declaration stated that the occupying forces "shall be withdrawn from Japan" as soon as the objectives such as de-militarization of the country had been accomplished.

5JCS 1380/15, 1 November 1945.


7"Government and Administrative Separation of Certain Outlying Areas from Japan," AG 091 (SCAPIN 677), 29 January 1946.
In the end, military priorities prevailed over legal and diplomatic considerations.

Some high officials in the State Department were, apparently, determined to abide by Roosevelt’s presidential pledge.8 A memorandum prepared in 1943 by John W. Marsland, in the Division of Special Research, for the Territorial Subcommittee of the Department’s Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy, for example, followed the Atlantic Charter principle of non-territorial expansion and recommended the return of a demilitarized Okinawa to Japan.9 Another official, Hugh Borton, followed suit in the fall of 1944 by pointing to Japan’s strong claims to the islands based on history, ethnic identity and geographic proximity.10

Military planners, however, had different thoughts. “As early as 1943,” Michael Schaller writes, “Army and Navy planners resolved to establish a defense in depth by taking permanent control of the mandated islands acquired by Japan after the First World War.”11 Although Okinawa had been an integral part of Japan for almost a century, they thought it necessary to retain the island as a major base because of its location. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Schaller states, “insisted on absolute control” or “outright annexation.” Admiral William Leahy, the chief of staff, declaring that “not a single island could be surrendered to ‘even partial control of another nation’ without jeopardizing national security.” Along with the Philippines and the former Japanese mandated islands, Okinawa was considered essential to form “the new strategic frontier” of the United States. In April, 1945, General Buckner told Nimitz that “Okinawa should be retained by us as a means of access to the China Sea, a flanking position against north and south movements along the China coast, a check against further aggression by Japan and as an outpost to prevent Russia from expansion into the Pacific from Chinese ports.” Buckner reported that he “made this suggestion with the proviso that we should control this island as a ‘protectorate,’ ‘mandate,’ or some other name that would have the Okinawans as aliens not permitted to enter our country as citizens and add to our already complex race problems.”12

In early August, 1945, President Truman made a significant departure from the Cairo Declaration, when he said in a broadcast: “... though the United States wants no territory or profit or selfish advantage out of this war, we are going to maintain the military bases necessary for the complete protection of our interests and world peace. Bases which

---


12Simon Bolivar Buckner diary, April 23, 1945 entry.
our military experts deem essential for our protection, and which are not now in our possession, we will acquire. We will acquire them by arrangements consistent with the United Nations Charter."13

Officials in the government appear to have begun studying in December 1945 whether the United States should assume trusteeship as an administering authority over the territories.14 On December 26, a memorandum asked: "Should this government extend trusteeship to the other [non-mandated] Japanese islands desired for security purposes: the Bonin-Volcano islands including Marcus Island, the Izu islands, and the Ryukyu islands? Should the U.S. insist that it be the sole administering authority over any of the captured Japanese mandates or islands concerned?"15

In April 1946, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes raised the question of the status of non-mandated Japanese islands such as Okinawa, asking what would happen if the U.S. proposal for a trusteeship agreement was rejected by the Security Council. John Foster Dulles,16 counselor, indicated that the islands could be disposed of in the peace treaty with Japan.17 By November, Truman had decided against annexation of any Japanese islands, for a trusteeship agreement on the Bonins and Volcano islands and against any "attempt at the present moment to make a decision with regard to the Ryukyu Islands."18

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, at first did not consider it necessary to include Okinawa among the network of military bases required by the United States. Their memorandum to the Secretary of State, circulated in early November 1945 in the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) and asking the State Department to acquire military bases and rights through diplomatic negotiations,19 listed Tarawa, Morotai, the Canary Islands, Guadalcanal and Taiwan, but none of the Ryukyu Islands. The JCS sent a revised memorandum to the Secretary of State in June 1946 listing thirty locations, but again made no mention of Okinawa.20 Iceland, Greenland, the Azores, Casablanca-Port Lyautey (or, alternatively, Canary Islands), the Galapagos and the Panama airfields were listed as "essential." The other twenty-four locations, such as Admiralty Islands, Guadalcanal and Tarawa, but not including Taiwan, would be "required if reasonably obtainable, but

---

14 Division of Dependent Areas Affairs, Office of Special Political Affairs, Department of State, "Briefing Book Paper: 8(a) Memorandum on United States Participation in Administration of Trust Territories," 20 December 1945. FRUS, 1946, vol. 1, 545-46.
16 Dulles was responsible for representing the American delegation to the first part of the first session of the U.N. General Assembly on fourth committee matters (trusteeship and non-self-governing territories).
17 Minutes of the 192nd Meeting of the Secretary's Staff Committee," 20 April 1946. FRUS, 1946, vol. 1, 572.
19 SWNCC 38/25, "Over-all Examinations of U.S. Requirements for Military Bases and Rights," FRUS, 1946, vol. 1, 1112-1117. This was originally based on a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of State of October 4, 1945 (SWNCC 38/20). His letter included Rabaul and Formosa, but not the Ryukyus. (ibid., 1115-16), and presumably were not included in his letter.
20 SWNCC 38/35, "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee," 5 June 1946. Ibid., 1174-77.
II: Groping Toward the Future

[were] not absolutely essential to the base system."

In February 1946, Nimitz, now the chief of naval operations, proposed a trusteeship for Okinawa.\(^{21}\) Apparently emboldened by the President's August statement, the Joint Staff planners and the Joint Strategic Survey Committee issued a report in May, 1946, which said: "vital U.S. security interests require retention by the United States of exclusive and unlimited strategic control" of the islands including, Okinawa, along with Japan's mandated islands. It called for "a trusteeship with the United States as administering authority, in which Okinawa and adjacent small islands and Iwo Jima are designated as strategic areas."\(^{22}\)

By September 9, 1946, the Ryukyu Islands, along with the Bonins, were included among "those locations for which suitable arrangements are desired."\(^{23}\) "The present strategic situation," the JCS told the SWNCC, "indicates that the need for stationing U.S. armed forces in Iceland, Greenland, Labrador, the Azores, the Ryukyu Islands . . . at the earliest practical date . . . will be acceptable, pending the ultimate obtaining of desired long-term rights." The Ryukyus were in the same "required" category as Iceland, Greenland, Goose Bay (Labrador) and Panama, and were classified as more important than the Galapagos islands, Marcus, Ascension Island and Casablanca. The JSC recognized that the status of the Ryukyus and the Bonins, unlike the former Japanese mandated islands, had not been settled and promised to inform the Secretary of their "desired status" upon further study.

The JCS followed it up with a decision which would remain the U.S. military's basic position on Okinawa and define the island's military status for years to come: "all Japanese mandated islands and central Pacific islands detached from Japan including the Bonins and the Ryukyus should be brought under exclusive United States strategic control."\(^{24}\) The Department of State disagreed. The Department's policy planning staff even prepared a statement from Truman setting forth the following "fundamentals" of U.S. foreign policy:

1. We seek no territorial expansion or selfish advantage. We have no plans for aggression against any other state, large or small . . . .
2. We believe in the eventual return of sovereign rights and self-government to all peoples who have been deprived of them by force.
3. We shall approve no territorial changes in any friendly part of the world unless they accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.
4. We believe that all peoples who are prepared for self-government should be permitted to choose their own form of government by their freely expressed choice, without interference from any foreign source.\(^{25}\)

In June 1946, the department's Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East suggested to the SWNCC that "the Ryukyu Islands should be regarded as minor islands to be


\(^{22}\) "Strategic Areas and Trusteeships in the Pacific," JCS 1619/1, 24 May 1946.


retained by Japan and demilitarized," noting:

The northernmost islands of the Ryukyu chain have been closely associated for many centuries with Japan and their population is culturally and racially Japanese. Japan’s retention of the central and southern islands of the chain is justified by the fact that the Okinawans who inhabit these islands are closely related to the Japanese in language and culture and that the islands have been administered as an integral part of Japan for more than six decades and have been politically subordinate to Japan for over three centuries.26

The memorandum offered other reasons for the U.S. not to keep Okinawa:

For the United States to take over any part of the Ryukyu Islands would be contrary to its policy of opposing territorial expansion whether for itself or for other countries. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, control of the Ryukus by the United States would in all probability require a considerable financial outlay by the United States for the support and development of the islands and would involve the United States in the thankless task of governing three-quarters of a million people of totally alien culture and outlook.

The establishment by the United States of a permanent base in Okinawa or elsewhere in the Ryukyu Islands would be likely to provoke serious international repercussions and would be politically objectionable. The existence of such a base, in addition to the other Pacific bases to be held by the United States and in such proximity to the China coast, might come to be resented by China and would probably be regarded by the Soviet Union as a provocative threat rather than as a proper defensive move by the United States. If the United States should acquire such a base, it would be considered by other states as stepping outside the zone of its legitimate political and regional interests.

Secretary of State Byrnes passed on to Truman his department’s conclusion that “political and diplomatic considerations” made it necessary to include the Ryukyus among “the minor islands which should be returned to Japan and demilitarized.”

The Joint Chiefs of Staff held to their position: the U.S. should retain exclusive strategic control over Okinawa and its outlying islands under U.N. trusteeships, with the United States as the “sole administering authority.”27 A letter from the Joint Chiefs to the SWNCC stated succinctly: “the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the conclusion classifying the Ryukus as unnecessary and minor is unsound. They strongly reiterate that exclusive strategic control of the Nansei Shoto...is, from the military point of view, vital to our future security interests.” The letter noted that the Chiefs “are not thinking solely in terms of the present but in terms of the future, the next twenty-five, fifty, one hundred years and beyond.”28

Finally, on November 6, 1946, Truman announced:

The United States is prepared to place under trusteeship with the United States as the administering authority, the Japanese mandated islands and any Japanese islands for which it assumes responsibilities as a result of the second World War.29

26SWNCC 59/1. "Policy Concerning Trusteeship and Other Methods of Disposition of the Mandated and Other Outlying and Minor Islands Formerly Controlled by Japan," 24 June 1946, 30
28William D. Leahy to Truman, 19 October 1946. Folder: Trusteeships, Pacific Islands. Box 138. President’s Secretary’s File—General File. Papers of Harry S. Truman, HSTL.
29Acting Secretary of State to Senator Austin, 6 November 1946. FRUS, 1946, vol. 1, 674-75.
Together with the former Japanese mandated islands, Okinawa would be included in a "strategic area trusteeship agreement" involving the members of the Security Council. Dulles, the U.S. representative on the fourth committee (trusteeship and non-self-governing territories) of the United Nations General Assembly, read Truman's statement to the committee.

This development apparently disappointed officials of the Japanese government who had hoped that the United States and its allies would recognize the Ryukyu Islands as a historically integral part of Japan. A 1946 study within the Foreign Ministry concerning a peace treaty noted that Japan should seek to retain the "minor islands" referred to in the Cairo and Potsdam declarations, on "geographical, economic, racial and economic" grounds. If that was not possible, it added, the government should then ask that the inhabitants be allowed to acquire the nationality of a country exercising administrative rights over them, with the option of choosing the Japanese nationality.

In the same year, Professor Yasaka Takagi, an authority on the American constitution and foreign policy, called on the government to "firmly assert" that the Ryukyu Islands be held by Japan "for racial, historical and cultural reasons." Another foreign ministry study pointed out that the Okinawa, Miyako and Yaeyama islands were "inseparably bound with Japan from the linguistic, cultural and other points of view." "It is . . . the wish of the people and the government of Japan that the islands may be left as Japanese territory because of the long-standing relationships with them," it argued. Should the allied powers require the islands for strategic purposes, it added, "it would be fully possible to make such arrangements with the Japanese government as would adequately meet their requirements. The desire on the part of Japan is only to see a modus operandi so devised that she is entrusted with the common affairs of administration of the inhabitants such as education, economy and culture . . . ."

An English-language pamphlet prepared in March 1947 by the Foreign Office and purposely entitled Minor Islands Adjacent to Japan Proper, noted that the Ryukyu group of islands "constitutes the main part of Okinawa Prefecture," and emphasized the close historical, racial and political ties between it and the mainland. When Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida met Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson in 1947, he is believed to have asked that, in the determination of the territorial status of the "minor islands" adjacent to mainland Japan, the United States give "full consideration . . . to the historical, racial, economic, cultural and other relations" between these islands and the mainland.

On March 3, 1947, the Japanese government adopted its new constitution, promising to ensure peaceful cooperation with all nations and enshrining fundamental democratic rights and freedoms for its people. It gave all eligible voters over the age of twenty the right to elect their representatives to the bi-cameral national Diet. The Supreme Court was to act as a watchdog for the people's rights against any infringements by the government. Article 9 renounced war as a "sovereign right of the nation" and pledged never
to maintain "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential." However, not only were the "rights and freedoms" of the Okinawans not protected by this constitution, they were also left outside the guarantee of Article 9. More ironically, the peace clause would make Okinawa one of the principal pillars supporting the security treaty when the United States and Japan signed it later. The constitution would not be applied to Okinawa until twenty-five years later.

Although some Okinawan leaders—such as Ryoko Nakayoshi, mayor of Shuri—petitioned the Ryukyu Command for *sokoku fukki*[^34] or administrative reversion to the motherland as early as August 1945 and repeated that request to General MacArthur in October. The mayor established The Association for Promoting the Reversion of Okinawa (*Okinawa Shoto Nihon Fukki Kisei-kai*) the following year, but most people were too preoccupied to think about their political future. Many were resentful of Japan, the country that had led them into so many hardships, but they were not embracing their new rulers either, although they were thankful to them for providing shelter, food and clothing.

In a message to the National Convention of Okinawan People's Leagues held in Tokyo in February 1946, the Japanese Communist Party congratulated the Okinawans for "embarking on the road to acquiring their long-cherished independence and liberty" away from the past "exploitation and oppression" by imperial Japan.[^35] Kyuichi Tokuda, the famed Okinawan-born Communist leader, who had just been freed from a Tokyo prison, said Okinawa should become a self-governing republic.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff still considered Japan a potential danger and had no intention of either returning Okinawa or making it an independent republic, at least in the immediate future. For example, in March 1947, Dwight Eisenhower, Army Chief-of-Staff, said: "It will be necessary, when the occupation of Japan has been terminated, to retain Okinawan bases for the purpose of assisting in our surveillance of Japan, in order to complete our Pacific peripheral base system, and in order to provide in case of need for the projection of U.S. power against the Asiatic mainland."[^36] Porter Patterson, the Secretary of War, nevertheless had such "great misgivings" about the economic cost of keeping Okinawa as a permanent military base that he suggested Washington occupy Okinawa only until the American occupation of Japan ended.[^37] Eisenhower agreed. "...[T]he U.S. would be put to [a great cost], economically, politically and socially, by an assumption of permanent administration over the affairs of some three quarters of a million Orientals whose economy has, at best, been one of deficit." The future President had a solution: "What we need is the use of naval and air installations which would probably be located, for the most part, only in the southern third of Okinawa." Since these military installations

[^34]: Ryoko Nakayoshi, *Okinawa Sokoku Fukki Undo-ki: Watashi-no Kaiso-kara* (Naha: Okinawa Times, 1964), 16-17. Nakayoshi had just read articles in American newspapers reporting that Washington would seek no territorial changes and that it would respect the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.

[^35]: The *Akahata*, 6 March 1946.

[^36]: Eisenhower to Secretary of War Patterson, 15 March 1947, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 8, 1602-04, fn. 1, 4, 5. Eisenhower had said in June 1946 that if "[certain specified military objectives] can be obtained within the framework of a United Nations trusteeship, then such a trusteeship would seem to be acceptable," but that "if these military objectives cannot be secured through trusteeship, then we would have to insist upon annexation."(Eisenhower to Joint Chiefs of Staff, 4 June 1946, *ibid.* vol. 7, 1099).

[^37]: Patterson to Eisenhower, 10 March 1947, paraphrased in *ibid.*, vol. 8, 1603, ff. 1.
would be "an asset," while "any other U.S. commitments in the Ryukyus would constitute a liability," he proposed that the United States leave the islands under Japanese administration while retaining "necessary U.S. base rights" there for twenty-five years after the signing of the peace treaty with Japan.\(^{38}\) Truman, however, had no clear answer yet regarding the future disposition of Okinawa.

In the meantime, peace with the United States and other allied powers began to be negotiated. A draft treaty which the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the U.S. State Department handed to Secretary of State George Marshall on August 5, 1947, recognized "all minor islands including the Ryukyus" as part of Japan.

This perplexed and infuriated the military authorities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed to the price paid for Okinawa and the fact that the conquest had given the U.S. "strategic control of the Pacific" which "can be relinquished, weakened, or in any way, jeopardized only at the expense of our security."\(^{39}\) On September 1, 1947, MacArthur sent a message to the Department of State, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pointing to the absolute necessity of the islands for defending the western Pacific frontier of the United States.\(^{40}\) "The policy of the United States, as interpreted by General MacArthur to me, and as confirmed by many other evidences during our visit, seems quite clear." noted a foreign observer who met the general in early August 1947. "It is to tie Japan politically and economically to the United States, and thus to bring the western strategic frontier of the United States face to face with Russia along the latter's boundaries on the Pacific Ocean."\(^{41}\) Military requirements of the policy "involved the maintenance, and improvement, of the U.S. bases of Guam, Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa."

"Message from the Emperor"

It was at about this time that an interesting message from the Japanese Emperor arrived in Washington via MacArthur. On September 20, 1947, William J. Sebald, counselor in the Diplomatic Section of the General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, sent a "top secret" memorandum to MacArthur. It related to the Japanese Emperor's "ideas concerning the future of Okinawa" as conveyed to Sebald by Hidenori Terasaki, an advisor to the Emperor.\(^{42}\) The memorandum declared:

Mr. Terasaki stated that the Emperor hopes that the United States will continue the

---

\(^{38}\) Eisenhower to Patterson, 15 March 1947, ibid., vol. 8, 1603.

\(^{39}\) JCS 1619/7, quoted in JCS 1619/24, 26 August 1947. Folder: JCS Files, Box 7-3, MHI.


\(^{42}\) On 17 April 1979, soon after the memorandum was discovered at the U.S. National Archives, the Japanese government denied that a document supporting the memorandum existed in Japan. When questioned about the constitutionality of the Emperor's reported action (the constitution prohibits his interference with national affairs), a cabinet minister withheld his comments in the absence of factual evidence. But the subsequently published diaries of Terasaki and Sukemasa Irie, grand chamberlain to Emperor Hirohito, have confirmed that the "Emperor's message" on Okinawa did exist. See Irie Sukemasa Nikki (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1991) and Showa Tenno Dokuhaku-roku: Terasaki Hidenari Goyogakari Nikki (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju-sha, 1991).
military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus. In the Emperor’s opinion, such occupation would benefit the United States and also provide protection for Japan. The Emperor feels that such a move would meet with widespread approval among the Japanese people who fear not only the menace of Russia, but after the Occupation has ended, the growth of rightist and leftist groups which might give rise to an ‘incident’ which Russia could use as a basis for interfering internally in Japan.

The Emperor further feels that United States military occupation of Okinawa (and such other islands as may be required) should be based upon the fiction of a long-term lease—25 to 50 years or more—with sovereignty retained in Japan. According to the Emperor, this method of occupation would convince the Japanese people that the United States has no permanent designs on the Ryukyu Islands, and other nations, particularly Soviet Russia and China, would thereby be stopped from demanding similar rights.

As to procedure, Mr. Terasaki felt that the acquisition of ‘military base rights’ of (Okinawa and other islands in the Ryukyus) should be by bilateral treaty between the United States and Japan rather than form part of the Allied peace treaty with Japan. The latter method, according to Mr. Terasaki, would savor too much of a dictated peace and might in the future endanger the sympathetic understanding of the Japanese people. 43

As Sebald said in his dispatch two days later to the Secretary of State, enclosing the secret memorandum, it was “self-explanatory.” The Emperor, he reiterated, “hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus” and “also envisages a continuation of United States military occupation of these islands through the medium of a long-term lease.” The offer was in exchange for the peace settlement. The U.S. was not interested in the proposal at the time; “the Joint Chiefs demanded military facilities within Japan and the State Department planners considered it too early to end the Occupation [of Japan].” 44

In the meantime, there was a shift of wind in the State Department. Its chief instigator was George F. Kennan, director of the policy planning staff in the department, who had come back from meetings with MacArthur in Tokyo at the end of March, 1948. It was his view that, “when the time came for its negotiation, the [peace] treaty [with Japan] should be . . . largely non-punitive” and that, pending its conclusion, “we should retain tactical forces in Japan, but their numbers, their cost to the Japanese, and their adverse impact on Japanese life and economy should be reduced to a minimum.” Whether the United States should continue to maintain military forces and bases in Japan after the conclusion should be a matter of future discussions. 45 He apparently did not consider it “punitive” to separate Okinawa from Japan and use it as an American military base. “The United States Government,” he asserted in his report to the State Department, “should make up its mind at this point that it intends to retain permanently the facilities at Okinawa, and the base there should be developed accordingly.” 46 Not only was Okinawa naturally suited to become an advance base for the United States, but the U.S. could take advantage of the ambiguous political status of the islands which had fallen under its control: “Okinawa and other islands of the Central and Southern Ryukyu chain,” he maintained, “are not ‘minor’

islands" recognized by the Potsdam Declaration as belonging to Japan and, therefore, they "were no longer to be considered a part of Japan."

Still, differences of opinion persisted in Washington, causing further delays in settling the future of the Ryukyus. It would take several more years before the emerging cold-war situation in Asia and the world would force the United States to decide to turn the island into "the keystone of the Pacific."

Cat and Mouse

The Okinawan people, meanwhile, were struggling to survive the postwar confusion and their life of hardship under American military administration. Political, economic and social rehabilitation was achieved only slowly and unsteadily.

Economic recovery was seriously hindered by the wartime months of neglect and destruction, loss of many able-bodied men, scarcity of resources, damage to the infrastructure, disruption of the monetary and distribution systems, and the occupation of former village and farm areas by the American forces extending into the postwar period. Severe typhoons, like the stone of Sisyphus, caused additional exasperation for the people as they tried to overcome their misery.

As we have seen, the military government had initially been ordered by Admiral Nimitz to "develop maximum use of existing resources and productive facilities . . . to support the military occupation and military operations" and "assure food and other essential supplies for the civilian population to the degree necessary to prevent disease and unrest prejudicial to your (military) objectives."

The situation improved little during the garrison phase, although the military government did try to meet the basic needs of the civilian population for food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Those who were "hired" by the military government received their wages in kind: K-rations, cigarettes, clothes, and other consumer goods.

In March 1946, just a year after Nimitz's directive was issued, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognizing the strategic importance of Okinawa, directed military commanders to restore its standard of living to the prewar level. With the help of the American civilian government, the military government did its best to feed, clothe and house these people, and gradually resettle or returned them to their home villages. Some of the supplies came from cargo-carrying "Liberty" ships anchored off the coast. "We would get orders from OBASCOM [U.S. Army Okinawa Base Command]47 to requisition food for the civilians," a former quartermaster sergeant remembers. "I would board a duck [an amphibious vehicle] that was going out to a food ship . . . . The captain of the ship would meet us . . . and I would look up his ship manifest and see what was on the list that we thought would be good for the civilians. . . . Foods like beans and Vienna sausage were their favorites. We would requisition that, I would sign an order, and we would get the food to the civilians. The civilian Okinawans were issued army trucks which they were allowed to drive to come to pick up the food and take it back to their villages."48

Humanitarian relief aid from outside helped sustain life at least at the subsistence level. The Okinawan community and various church groups in Hawaii organized a clothing drive and sent 150 tons of used clothing in late 1945 and subsequently books, school

47 OBASCOM was redesignated Ryukyu Command (RYCOM) in July 1946 as a subordinate command under the U.S. Army Forces, Western Pacific (AFWESPAC), which itself became the Philippines-Ryukyu Command (PHILRYCOM) in January 1947.
48 Lostroh, p.8.
supplies, sewing machines, fishing nets, barber supplies, eyeglasses, shoes, toys, medical supplies, vegetable and cotton seeds, hogs, chicken, and milk goats. In 1947, the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation was established in Honolulu to assist Okinawa’s economic, social and educational rehabilitation, by donating cash and books, sponsoring student scholarships, and raising funds to establish a university.

Similar campaigns were undertaken throughout the United States by the Okinawa Relief League of America,49 and in Canada, Brazil, Peru, Mexico and other parts of the Americas. They collected used clothing and shoes and $175,000 worth of pencils, chalk, notebooks, vitamins, powdered milk, mosquito nets, clothing, medical supplies, baseball equipment and other goods which were shipped to Okinawa in 1947 through the Church World Service Committee, one of the Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (LARA). Navy vessels were deployed to transport them. Organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee, the Okinawa Committee of the Foreign Missions and the Friends of Okinawa joined the relief efforts, as did CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe and Cooperative for American Remittances Everywhere, later Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere), a non-government umbrella organization for a number of American and Canadian international aid and development groups, and the American Red Cross.

The United States also provided economic assistance to the Okinawan people from the Government and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA) fund established by Congress to assist in rehabilitating the economy and livelihood of civilians of the Ryukyus, Japan, Germany and elsewhere.

Local industry was slow to recover and develop. While the fighting continued in the south, the most the military government could do was to send out refugees collected in camps in central and northern Okinawa to salvage nearby crops (mainly sweet potatoes), lumber, thatching and other items, and subsequently to replant the fields where possible. In Ishikawa, a sprawling settlement in central Okinawa, plans to establish the manufacture of clogs and mats were under way by May 1945. A neighboring district, by September, enjoyed the goods and services of blacksmith shops, barbers, sewing projects, clock repair shops and rope making and mat-weaving enterprises.

Production of sweet potatoes, rice, soybeans, vegetables, and sugar cane resumed after hostilities had ended, but, as in more normal times, never reached self-sufficiency. To augment the depleted livestock herds, the military government imported hogs, cattle and chickens from the United States, some of them for breeding purposes, with the funds raised by charitable organizations such as the Association in Hawaii for United Assistance to Okinawa. The livestock population increased quickly, but as of 1948 it still fell far below prewar levels. The fact that “the Ryukyus Command [former Island Command] gave priority to transportation, utility construction, and base development over farming” was the main hindrance to increased output.50

Base development had taken over so much land, particularly in the relatively flat, hospitable and convenient southern and central regions of the island, that one military

50Fisch, 126. Fisch (p.127) quotes an American agricultural inspection mission which visited Okinawa in September 1949 under the auspices of Undersecretary of the Army Tracy S. Voorhees, as reporting that, with about one-fifth of its arable land being occupied by the military, Okinawan agriculture was in a “particularly deplorable state.”
government official observed that "practically no space remained for the natives." As the deputy commander for military government noted in mid-August, the Americans had removed "large areas of the island from agricultural production" and relocated "large numbers of civilians in areas which have hitherto been only lightly populated, which are not extensive or fertile enough to support the population, and which do not have sufficient housing to provide shelter for the newcomers." In fact, most of the land used by the United States for airfields, storage facilities, munitions dumps, and other military installations had formerly been villages and farmlands.

While other industries—fishing, salt production, mat-making, food-processing, sake manufacture, ceramics, weaving, and so on—were gradually reactivated and new industries, like Panama-hat making, came into being, it was, ironically, parting gifts of the war that helped many Okinawans to survive the early postwar years: employment related to military bases, senka (booty plundered from American installations; adapted from Japanese military jargon, meaning "cutting one's way into the enemy position with a drawn sword") and, later, scrap metals. These trades even produced some millionaires.

Many worked as domestics, guards, construction workers, stevedores, mechanics, clerks, interpreters, and concessionaires (subcontractors of American companies such as AJ—Atkinson & Jones Construction Co., which contracted with the Army Corps of Engineers for major projects) in jobs related to military housing and base construction. Roughly 42,000 out of 127,000 employable workers had base-related jobs, or one person per two households in central Okinawa and one per 2.5 households in southern Okinawa. Many lived in military compounds. When dependents are included, more than 100,000 people relied directly or indirectly on military bases for their living. In northern Okinawa, where the fighting had not been so destructive as in the other regions and not many such jobs were available, most people lived off the land and the inshore waters.

The military government reintroduced a wage and price economy in the two villages on Zamami (population: 900) as early as June 1945, to see how it might work on the main island of Okinawa. It continued to ration all food and distributed it free, except for beans, sugar and salt, paid one yen per day to all those employed by the U.S. military, and permitted them to supplement their food ration with purchases of foodstuffs and essential items such as soap and salvaged American clothing from a central store. The United States had brought in ¥75,000,000 in series "B" military yen as a supplemental currency and declared it legal tender exchangeable on a one-for-one basis with the regular yen notes in circulation.

When the cash payment system was introduced in May 1946 on the main island of Okinawa, laborers were paid in military B-yen. At the same time, free distribution of rations was cancelled, giving way to cash purchases at village stores. A gainfully employed civilian laborer received roughly 120 B-yen a month, or less than one-third the starting salary of a schoolteacher. The wages depreciated as a result of a serious inflation caused by the rapid inflow of cash brought in by Okinawans moving back from mainland Japan and the short supply of goods available at authorized stores. A black market flourished, forcing the people to purchase essential daily necessities at exorbitant prices.

53 For military purposes, the exchange rate was provisionally set at 20 yen to one dollar. There was a prohibition on the circulation of U.S. dollars.
The consequent resentment resulted in the first "labor strike" against the U.S. authorities on the island. When military government asked villages and towns to provide a certain number of laborers to work at Naha harbor—to make up for the demobilization of American troops—many failed to report to work. The Okinawa Mayors’ Association explained that low wages had made family life extremely difficult in the face of crop failures from drought and insects and the severe inflation. The villages and towns tried to fill the labor quota by subsidizing the conscripts’ wages with contributions from each family, but there were still so many absenteeees that, in August 1948, the military government closed the stores and warehouses as punishment. The startled association petitioned for reopening of the stores. At the same time, it requested substantial improvements in wages and other labor conditions. When the towns and villages pledged to provide labor as requested, the military government reopened the stores and warehouses.

Still, employment opportunities were scarce, and people craved for the jobs made available by the military government. Workers could expect side benefits in the way of senka. Much of the senka goods were pathetically petty: a carton of cigarettes, a pair of fatigue trousers, miniature bulbs and batteries. But a carton of cigarettes, on the black market, was the equivalent of half a month’s salary for a schoolteacher; five cartons matched the salary of the governor of Okinawa.

A number of teachers quit their respectable but poorly paid teaching jobs to work for the U.S. military. Some nevertheless later left their jobs at military bases because they suffered discrimination. A former high school teacher would recall many years later: “Americans were at the top of the pay scale, of course. Next were Filipinos, then the Japanese from the mainland. We Okinawans were placed at the bottom, yet we did the hardest work.” Others resented the attitude of some servicemen who “bossed them around,” treating them like slaves. But most took these disadvantages in their stride. Lucky ones, like those hired at mess halls, would bring home cooking oil and slices of meat.

Others benefited from the generous American giveaways such as cigarettes, chewing gum, matches, lighters, used blankets, and tents. What was garbage to Americans, such as outdated canned food, worn-out shoes, and waste pieces from cut lumber, was a windfall to Okinawans. A variety of goods ranging from pencils and erasers to trucks and bulldozers, piled up on the beaches after having been unloaded from transport ships or were stored in warehouses in civilian or military camps, where they became targets for looting. Sometimes, Filipino and Okinawan guards became willing co-conspirators; they could be “bought” to close their eyes when a local worker came by at night to pick up what he had hidden immediately outside the barbed or meshed wire during the day.

Truck drivers, hired to transport goods from the beaches to the warehouses, had the most envied jobs. They would often load a box or two extra of non-invoiced candy, chocolate or canned food, and then on the way drop off the extra boxes for waiting family members or friends. Some partitioned the loading bays of their trucks to hide certain goods, or piffered gasoline from the tank to sell it at a premium price or to exchange it for

---


something more valuable. There were cases, rumors had it, of a truck, with its cargo and driver, simply “evaporating.” Because truck drivers could use their empty vehicles to carry logs and other available building material, they were often the first Okinawans to build their own houses.

Some of the senka commodities found their way onto the black market or were smuggled out to Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland Japan. Fishing boats and coal carriers would ship canned food, chocolate, quinine and other medical supplies, blankets, HBTs (green fatigues), soaps, cosmetics, engine oil and gasoline, tires, motors, and cartridge cases from Okinawa to a port on the island of Yonaguni in the southernmost Ryukyus; there they were bartered for rice, sugar and saccharine from Taiwan and Hong Kong, seaweed from Hokkaido and lumber from Kobe and Kagoshima.\textsuperscript{56} Young pigs and chickens from Yonaguni and rice and sugar from Taiwan would be carried to ports in Okinawa in exchange for clothing. One such voyage brought in between ¥200,000 and ¥300,000 in B-yen, or several thousand dollars. In one instance, 50,000 planks of rectangular lumber, discarded by the military government, were transshipped in Okinawa from a military landing craft to a large number of small boats and bartered for 5,000 sacks of sugar in Yonaguni; the sugar was smuggled to mainland Japan and sold for a huge profit.

While thousands of shattered tanks, planes, jeeps, trucks, cannon, used and unused mortar shells, large caliber shot, projectiles and cartridges, and other munitions represented a potentially lucrative major resource, exporting ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal from Okinawa was prohibited for the first few years after the war. These metals were used only domestically for a time, to make pots and pans, farm tools, trays, and small pieces of hardware. An oil drum became a water tank, a water sprinkler or, cut in half, a bath tub; a seaplane float a boat; the bottom of a Coca Cola bottle a drinking glass. Some people were killed while trying to remove powder from bombs to make dynamite, or while poaching with such dynamite, or when farmers’ plows accidentally hit unexploded bombs.

The devastating forces of nature occasionally frustrated rehabilitation programs. In 1945, 1948 and 1949, severe typhoons—nicknamed “Louise,” “Libby,” “Della,” and “Gloria”—struck Okinawa, destroying or seriously damaging crops, tents and grass-thatched wood frame houses, imported food supplies, fishing boats, and Quonset-hut type buildings used on bases as barracks, post exchanges, and aircraft hangars. These typhoons dealt a demoralizing blow to an economy struggling to rehabilitate itself from the ravages of the wartime “typhoon of steel.”

Thousands of Okinawans repatriating from overseas further burdened the economy. Some 20,000 Okinawans, mostly fishermen, farmers and their families, had lived in the Marianas alone and another several thousand others in Mindanao in the Philippines. In addition, an estimated 100,000 people—women, children, students and elderly persons—had been evacuated to the home islands prior to the American invasion of Okinawa and some 50,000 young men and women had been conscripted to serve in the military outside their home islands or to work in munitions factories in major Japanese cities. Another several hundred Okinawans were repatriated after the war from Davao (Mindanao) and elsewhere to mainland Japan and detained there as though they were stateless refugees.

The timing for these people to be repatriated to their Okinawan homeland presented a problem to the American commanders controlling the former Japanese mandated islands, Okinawa and mainland Japan. Each was concerned about food and shelter, administrative manpower, and security in his area of occupation.

\textsuperscript{56}Some cartridge cases reportedly ended up in China and fell into Communist hands.
Some repatriates began arriving in Okinawa from the mandated islands in February 1946 and from mainland Japan in August. By the end of 1946, nearly 140,000 Okinawans had returned from the Japanese home islands alone, and more than 173,000 by the end of 1947. The repatriation of so many displaced people, most of them without any material goods to speak of, further strained already scarce stocks of food, clothing, housing, and medical supplies. They were temporarily housed at two camps specifically built for them but eventually were allowed to return to their former villages and towns or to resettle elsewhere.

To regulate the money flow and finance nascent business opportunities, the military government created the Bank of the Ryukyus in May 1948. The military government owned 51 percent of its capital stock; the four Ryukyu gunto (island-group) governments shared the remaining 49 percent. The military government prohibited any other business enterprise from using the word “Ryukyu” in its name without permission.

In the political arena, a semblance of local administration was emerging as early as May 1945. In Ishikawa, then a seat of the military government, a meeting of all the hanchos (group leaders) was held to try to “determine the most satisfactory type of local management, the idea being to adopt some of the elements of their past local organization and supplement it [them] with ideas of American democracy and municipal management.”\(^5\) They decided on a twelve-man executive committee to consist of a chairman, vice-chairman, and directors responsible for local administration, sanitary, economic, and other affairs. A local police force was established to keep pedestrians off the main roads and the military bivouac areas, and to confirm that all able-bodied men were registered and livestock removed from living quarters.

On August 15, 1945—the day the Japanese Emperor announced the country’s defeat on national radio—the military government assembled 124 Okinawans representing various refugee camps across the island. The purpose was to select fifteen men who would form the Okinawa Advisory Council to “consult with the Military Government relative to the revival and rehabilitation of Okinawa.”\(^5\)

The inauguration of such a council, Colonel Charles I. Murray, deputy commander of the U.S. military government declared, was in line with the military government’s policy of establishing “an Okinawan social, economic and political system in which the Okinawan people can resume their normal peace-time occupations and way of life, and can assume more and more control over their own affairs.”\(^5\) The military government, he said, “will continue to offer advice and material assistance, but responsibility and control should increasingly be transferred to the Okinawan people.” The immediate task of the council, obviously, would be to deal with the emergency situation in cooperation with the military government.

The military government also asked that “persons with special knowledge and ability” in areas such as industry, agriculture, public health, law and government be elected, and made it clear that those “closely connected with the Japanese military or imperialists” would not be welcome. The assembly, meeting again several days later, elected Koshin

---


II: Groping Toward the Future

Shikiya, a well-known educator, as chairman of the council, and set up various committees. A month later, Okinawa and its peripheral islands were divided into sixteen districts and, in each, an election was held in which all adults twenty-five years of age and over, including women for the first time in Okinawa, voted for mayors and assemblymen. Structures for civilian government were now in place.

While the assembly asked for a body representing the Okinawan people on the basis of popular election, the military government instead elevated the council itself in April 1946 into an Okinawan Central Administration (called by Okinawans the Civilian Government), comprising administrative departments, a court system, town and village administrations, and an advisory body. Shikiya was appointed Chiiji (Governor) to head the central administration of the Ryukyus in accordance with military government policies and directives.” The advisory body, now called the Okinawa Assembly and made up of surviving members of the former Prefectural Assembly—minus those from Miyako and Yaeyama—and new members appointed by the military government to fill vacancies, would perform “the limited function of [giving] advice” to the governor.

This political evolution suited the Okinawans. For, as reported by the New York Times, the Okinawan people’s greatest desire was “the speediest possible restoration of pre-war living conditions and the end of military government.” It quoted “the head of the military government” as describing the sentiment of the islanders toward the Americans as follows: “Thanks very much for all you’ve done for us, but please go away as soon as we are able to stand on our own feet economically. We want to live our own lives, but since we’ve got used to Japanese ways we prefer them.”

In The Teahouse of the August Moon, a 1951 novel by Vern J. Sneider which John Patrick adapted into a play the next year, Captain Fisby (Glenn Ford in the movie), an American officer, is charged with bringing "civilization" to a small village. The captain is instructed by the military government to start a women's club, build a schoolhouse and establish democracy. With Sakini (Marlon Brando) as his local interpreter, he ends up instead building a teahouse housing a number of geisha girls in compliance with the wishes of the villagers.

In real life, democratization and self-government under military occupation were not so simple. Lieutenant Commander James T. Watkins explained the situation by likening the military government to the cat and Okinawa to the mouse. The mouse, he said, could only play within the confines permitted by the cat. The cat and the mouse were friends at the moment, but when the cat changed his mind, there would be trouble. For, he said, the few civil affairs political officers sensitive to local conditions would soon be demobilized and replaced by professional military personnel who, he said, did not trust Okinawans nor understand the meaning of democracy. The military government, therefore, would remain

---

60 With the Japanese surrender, the islands south of 30 degrees north latitude, including the Amami island chain which had not been part of Okinawa Prefecture before the war, were detached from the administrative authority of SCAP in Tokyo and placed under the military government in Okinawa.

61 HQ USN MG Ryukyu Islands, Directive No. 156 (“Central Government Administration, Creation of”), 22 April 1946.

62 The New York Times, 1 April 1946.

supreme and would not recognize the Okinawans' voices until the peace treaty with Japan was concluded. The military government, having suspended all the powers of the Japanese government over the Okinawan people, ruled them by proclamations, directives and ordinances.

"Democratization," nonetheless, did make further progress in February 1948 when elections for mayors and assemblymen were held under a new military government directive, with 88 percent of the eligible men and 81 percent of the eligible women casting their votes. Several political parties, including the leftist Okinawa People's Party, participated in the campaigns although most candidates ran as independents. Candidates' platforms varied. One of them went so far as to call for the establishment of an independent Ryukyu Republic under a U.S. trusteeship. Nevertheless, they uniformly supported the promotion of democratic government.

These parties became increasingly critical of the Civilian Administration and of the military government behind it, which made all the decisions affecting the life of the people, and largely ignored the Okinawa Assembly. When the military government ordered the closure of stores, as described above, the parties demanded the resignation of the appointed officials of the Civil Administration. The military put off the closure. When the military government then raised the prices of imported foodstuffs, six-fold for rice, the twenty-three members of the assembly collectively turned in letters of resignation in protest against the Civilian Administration. When the then deputy governor for military government refused to accept the letters, they boycotted the first meeting. The members were persuaded to withdraw their resignations, but the assembly itself was abolished later that year and replaced by the Provisional Government Assembly.

Interestingly enough, children's education was one of the military government's first priorities. Since most of the school buildings had been destroyed or badly damaged along with their desks and other facilities, many of the teachers killed, injured or demoralized, and textbooks burned or outdated, the educational system had to be built up completely from scratch.

A playground was built in Ishikawa as early as May 4, 1945. Under an Okinawan director and twenty instructors, children between four and eight came daily from their respective compounds in the town to play games, sing songs, dance, do exercises, and listen to stories. The military government also conducted Sunday school classes, using a Japanese-language New Testament. An elementary school was soon opened, with the students learning to recite a table of the Japanese kana syllabary, the multiplication table, and the English alphabet. Playgrounds and schools sprang up thereafter in other refugee camps and towns.

Books, notebooks and pencils were often scarce. Some children cut the brown paper of cement bags into small sheets and bound them into notebooks. School supplies—gifts from church groups and Okinawan compatriots in the United States and elsewhere—soon began arriving in trucks along with sports equipment, clothing and candy. Classrooms moved from the open air to tents, and then to thatched or Quonset-hut schoolhouses, equipped with desks and blackboards.

In August 1945, Island Command established a Military Government Education Section under Colonel Willard Hanna, which created its counterpart, the first Okinawan administrative department, within the civilian advisory council. Under the section's supervision, mimeographed textbooks were published, teachers hired (initially paid in kind with items such as flour and soybeans), and school supplies distributed. By October, a total of seventy-two elementary schools, running up to the eighth grade, had been established with 1300 teachers and 40,000 pupils, many of them operating on a rotational basis
to make up for the serious shortage of schoolhouses. The military government then established schools to train teachers, interpreters, drivers, mechanics, and a number of four-year high schools. The school population throughout the Ryukyus reached 210,000 by December 1948.

Mimeographed textbooks recounted stories based on Okinawan history, such as the tales of Sokan Noguni, who had introduced sweet potatoes from China to Okinawa 300 years before, and about encounters between Portuguese and Okinawan seamen in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century. Although all instruction was conducted in Japanese, English was one of the most emphasized among the subjects taught at the elementary school—which included citizenship, reading, history, geography, arithmetic, sciences, physical education, music, drawing and manual arts and agriculture.

In spite of the lack of bilingual Japanese-English instructors and teaching materials, efforts were made to teach the alphabet and conversational English using simple English-Japanese language manuals brought in by the troops. Qualified English-speaking people were offered a language bonus: 5 to 10 percent higher wages. The teacher-training school established by the military government had two programs, one for twelve months and one for six, to train English language teachers; this would later become the Foreign Language School and subsequently evolve into the first university in Okinawan history.

"[T]he Ryukyuans did not exhibit much enthusiasm for English instruction so long as the future political status of Okinawa remained unclear," Fisch, the author of *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, writes. "The English-language school never had more than 200 trainees enrolled at any one time, and most of these were enrolled in short courses to become qualified as interpreters, rather than teachers."\(^6\) The truth was probably that most young people could not afford the time to attend the school away from their routine work in the villages and that, when they could get such work, they found interpreters earned more money than teachers. As for the people's "enthusiasm," many—young and old—soon picked up English words such as *furendo* (friend), *tenkyu* (thank you), *gu'morning* (good morning), *gubbai* (good-bye), *bosu* (boss), *wattime* (what time), *hahnie* (honey = a mistress), *goddem* (goddamn), *pahma* (permanent wave), *kahkih* (khaki), *jiipu* (jeep), *dahji* (Dodge), *jehmushi* (GMC = General Motors Corporation), *hanannah* (hammer), *konsetto* (Quonset), *kampan* (compound), and so on.

In the evenings, people found comfort in playing the *sanshin* or listening to traditional music played on the three-stringed instrument, often homemade, the body produced from the top half of an empty milk can, the neck from the wooden leg of a folding cot and the strings from parachute suspension threads. Dancing troupes were organized in some areas and toured refugee camps and villages. A makeshift open-air theater, named after the war correspondent Ernie Pyle, was built in Naha in September 1947 with materials provided by U.S. forces and became a popular entertainment spot that put on live performances of Ryukyuan dances and dramas, and also screened American movies.

The military government even established "official Okinawan holidays." In addition to the *Bon* (Lantern) Festival on the lunar calendar and New Year's Day, government offices and schools now closed on such American holidays as Memorial Day (May 30), Independence Day (July 4) and Christmas. The anniversary of the establishment of the Okinawan Civil Administration (April 24) was made a special holiday for OCA employ-

---

\(^6\)Before the war, Okinawa was the only prefecture in Japan that did not have a college or a university; a normal school was its highest educational institution.

\(^6\)Fisch, 101.
A Decisive Year

Despite the American efforts, Okinawa remained in a deplorable condition three years after the American invasion. George Kennan observed:

The life of the islanders was seriously shattered by military events. Except for preventing disease and unrest, we have done little to improve their situation; and what we have been able to give them has been taken, for the most part, from the odds and ends of surplus remaining in the islands. Meanwhile, the islanders continue to be subject to a series of restrictions which are becoming increasingly less justifiable as the period of hostilities recedes into the past. Foreign trade is still cut off entirely. Economic activity is still reduced between the population and the military establishment. There is no real economy among the islanders themselves . . . While local elections have been held, there is no central legislative body and not even any provincial legislatures have been elected. Foreign travel by the islanders, or the entrance of foreigners into the islands, remains completely forbidden. There is no university in the islands . . . Thus the training of doctors, nurses, teachers, etc., is practically non-existent, and the population is becoming increasingly dependent on us in these respects . . . . The conditions are becoming clearly burdensome and unjust to the inhabitants and disgraceful to us . . . .

These conditions had apparently resulted from the practice of the U.S. Department of the Army to charge costs on labor and materials used for the benefit of an occupied area "against the indigenous economy." The Department, its undersecretary, William H. Draper, said in August 1948, "consider[ed] that the Ryukyu Islands, as a prefecture of Japan, remain a legal [and financial] responsibility of the Japanese Government, and hence [the Department] has assumed . . . that appropriated funds could not be used to pay for indigenous Japanese materials and labor utilized for the benefit of the Ryukyu Islands." But, the islands remained administratively separate from Japan and the islanders could hardly support themselves.

The United States government set out to undertake reforms and to correct the situation. In October 1948, several months after Kennan’s report, the U.S. National Security Council followed the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and recommended to Truman that the United States retain the military bases on Okinawa and "promptly formulate and carry out a program on a long-term basis for the economic and social well-being [of the Okinawan people]." It stopped short of suggesting administrative control of the islands although officials of the Department of State had agreed in April 1948 that the President state that "the armed services should proceed on the assumption that the United States will remain in Okinawa for an indefinite period." On November 5, 1948, Truman ap-

68Undersecretary of the Army (Draper) to Assistant Secretary of State (Saltzman), 18 August 1948.
69NSC 13/1, “Recommendations with Respect to U.S. Policy toward Japan,” enclosed in the Acting Secretary of State (Lovett) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Sowers), 26 October 1948, ibid., 877-78.
70Memorandum by William I. Cargo, of the Division of Dependent Area Affairs, to the Chief of the Division,” 5 April 1948. FRUS, 1949, Vol. 6, 723.
proved the recommendation. The wording of the original sentence, "the base there should be developed accordingly," was changed to "the base on Okinawa should be immediately developed," and then back to read "should be developed accordingly."71

By early 1949, the Department of State had also come to attach great importance to the rapid development of Okinawa as a strong military base. The United States placed the Ryukyus on a "pay-as-you-go basis" on April 1, 1949. As a result, the "development of Okinawa as a naval and air base has been negligible, due mainly . . . to lack of funds [and] Air forces [personnel] in the Ryukyus have been reduced for this coming year," an internal State Department memorandum of May 2 stated. "No action of consequence has been taken . . . to 'formulate and carry out' the program" as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.72

As it happened, May 1949 would turn out to be a crucial turning point in the history of postwar Okinawa, witnessing a chain of highly significant events. First, President Truman, in preparing for the Japanese peace treaty, approved a revised NSC proposal regarding United States policy toward Japan. With regard to mainland Japan, it stated, "every effort . . . should be made [for now] to reduce to a minimum the psychological impact of the presence of occupational forces on the Japanese population. The numbers of tactical, and especially non-tactical, forces should be minimized."73 The United States, it added, should formulate a final position concerning the post-treaty arrangements for a Japanese military only after the peace negotiations began and in light of the prevailing domestic and international situations.

Okinawa, however, was an exception. By May 1949, Washington decided to occupy the island indefinitely in accordance with the wishes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, develop military bases there, and be responsible for the welfare of its people:

- The United States intends to retain on a long term basis the facilities at Okinawa and other facilities as are deemed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be necessary in the Ryukyu Islands south of 29 degrees N . . . . The military bases at or near Okinawa should be developed accordingly.

- The United States agencies should promptly formulate and carry out a program on a long-term basis for the economic and social well-being . . . of the natives.

- The United States has determined that it is now in the United States' national interest to alleviate the burden now borne by those of the Ryukyu Islands . . . incident to their contribution to occupation costs . . . to establish political and economic security . . . . The United States national policy toward the Ryukyu Islands . . . requires that the United States Armed Forces and other government agencies stationed therein pay their way to the extent necessary and practical to carry out the above-mentioned program for the [Okinawan people's] economic and social well-being . . . and that these Islands must then no longer be financially dependent upon or obligated to any other occupied area.

- At the proper time, international sanction should be obtained . . . for United States long-

---

71 FRUS, 1948, vol. 6, 877, fn. 2 to "NSC 13/1: Recommendations with Respect to U.S. Policy toward Japan, Revised Paragraph 5," enclosed in the Acting Secretary of State (Lovett) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Souers), 26 October 1948, ibid., 876-78. Recommendations on the future status of the Ryukyu Islands had been left out from NSC 13/2 dated 7 October 1948.

72 Robert A. Fearey, of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, State Department, to John P. Davies of the Policy Planning Staff, 2 May 1949. FRUS, 1949, Vol. 7, 725.

term strategic control of the Ryukyus south of latitude 29 degrees N. . . . . . . .74

Secondly, the State Department sent Douglas L. Oliver in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs to Okinawa (and Japan) to survey the situation there. So critical was his detailed report, that W. Walton Butterworth, director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, drafted a new Joint Chiefs of Staff directive to MacArthur, the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, for Military Government of the Ryukyu Islands, setting forth U.S. policies for the Ryukyus based on Oliver’s recommendations, and sent it to the Department of the Army for consideration. It prompted Assistant Army Secretary Tracy Voorhees to visit Okinawa in September after a briefing by Oliver. Voorhees, too, came back “extremely dissatisfied with the situation as he found it,” and personally directed measures to be taken.

The decaying situation of Okinawa apparently owed much to Washington’s declining interest in the islands and their administrative matters in the postwar years, as demonstrated by a drastic cutback in the number of U.S. military personnel, particularly able civil affairs officers, stationed there. Morale among the troops and military government personnel deteriorated. American personnel assigned to Okinawa were described as “human cast-offs” exiled from the Far East Command.

Upon return, Voorhees immediately dispatched a number of military construction experts to Okinawa. One group, headed by Army Brigadier General George J. Nold, Assistant Chief of Engineers for Military Construction, made a detailed survey of military construction requirements in October 1949. The master plan suggested by the Nold mission and approved by the Fast East commander in November was significant on two scores: it called for the construction of typhoon-resistant, reinforced structures and for the development of roads, bridges, utilities and harbors that could be used jointly for military and civilian purposes. As Arnold Fisch writes, “for the first time, military construction efforts on the island were to focus on facilities that would not only clearly serve the military mission, but at the same time would actively stimulate local civilian economic activity by providing jobs, water, power, and improved transport for native laborers and products.”75

To follow up on the Nold mission’s recommendations, Voorhees sent a team of economic planners and budget expediters to Okinawa in November. The team, headed by Robert A. Martino and Lieutenant Colonel F. C. Norvell, came up with plans for a number of joint-use projects which would build roads, bridges, public utilities and harbors; this would provide hundreds of jobs and give a tremendous boost to the Okinawan economy. Martino and Norvell also devised a plan whereby the vehicles and equipment dumped on Okinawa by the Fast East Command would be shipped to the United States or recycled in local industries, which would also benefit the Okinawan economy.

To implement the new measures, Army Chief of Staff J. Lawton Collins replaced the first and incumbent Commanding General, Ryukyu Islands (RYCOM), Major General William W. Eagles, with General Josef R. Sheetz, as of October 1, 1949. Sheetz had commanded 24th Corps Artillery in the Battle of Okinawa, and until just recently had served as chief military government officer in Korea.

By 1949, the world had long since entered the grip of the Cold War. In March 1946, Winston Churchill had declared in the United States: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." During 1948 the U.S. announced the Marshall Plan and the the USSR announced formation of the Cominform. In 1947 the “Truman Doctrine” pledged to resist Communist aggression in Europe.

74Ibid., 731.
75Fisch, 163.
The Soviet Union soon installed leftist governments in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and events in Germany led to the Soviet erection of a land blockade of West Berlin. The Cold War had become a fact of life in Europe by 1948. The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a Soviet atomic explosion climaxed these events.

In Asia, Mao Tse-tung's Communist Party came to power in mainland China on the day Sheetz's appointment was announced. The Soviet Union made public its possession of an atomic bomb several days later. The Korean peninsula, divided into the Communist north and the pro-West south at the end of the war, threatened to become a battleground again. The Soviet Union and the United States were pitted against each other in an ideological battle for hegemony in the region as well as elsewhere.

To "contain" the expansion of Soviet power, the United States developed a military policy based on nuclear deterrence, extensive deployment of the Strategic Air Command, and regional alliances such as NATO and the Pact of Rio with Latin-American nations (1947). A so-called "red scare" emerged in the United States; Senator Joseph McCarthy would start a his communist-hunting crusade in February 1950. The increasingly anti-Communist defense policy of the United States, fuelled by the intensifying East-West confrontation in Asia and the rest of the world, inevitably cast dark shadows over Okinawa.

Belief in the strategic value of Okinawa to the United States was widely shared by American policy planners. As mentioned earlier, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had suggested early on that the United States should retain Okinawa for strategic purposes. General MacArthur had told Kennan back in March 1948, that Okinawa was "the most advanced and vital point" in a U-shaped area stretching from the Aleutians to the Philippines and Midway.76 "With adequate force at Okinawa," Kennan heard MacArthur saying, "we would not require the Japanese home islands" to prevent amphibious attacks from the Asian continent. The general "attached great importance to Okinawa, and felt it absolutely necessary that we retain unilateral and complete control of the Ryukyu chain south of Latitude 29," Kennan wrote. "The people were not Japanese, and had never been assimilated when they had come to the Japanese main islands." Interestingly, MacArthur did not believe that the United States should retain bases "anywhere in [mainland] Japan" after the conclusion of a peace treaty, because this was the only way to prevent other powers, including the Soviet Union, from making an equal claim.

By May 1949, as discussed above, the National Security Council decided that, under the peace treaty with Japan, the United States should retain military bases on Okinawa "on a long-term basis."77 Okinawa was now clearly marked on the international strategic map of the United States. As MacArthur told the New York Times in 1949, the Pacific ocean had become "an Anglo-Saxon lake and our line of defense runs through the chain of islands fringing the coast of Asia" from the Philippines, the Ryukyus, Japan and the Aleutians to Alaska. And Secretary of State Dean Acheson, made a widely quoted remark at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in 1950: the "[U.S.] defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus. We hold important de-

---

76 "Conversation between General of the Army MacArthur and Mr. George F. Kennan," 5 March 1948, in Kennan, "Recommendations with Respect to U.S. Policy toward Japan," 25 March 1947, FRUS, 1948, Vol. 6, 701. The belief that "the [Okinawan] people are not Japanese" was shared so widely among American leaders that it could have played a role in the subsequent U.S. decision to separate the islands from Japan under peace treaty.

fense positions in the Ryukyu Islands, and these we will continue to hold." 78

The timing could not have been worse so far as the Okinawan people were concerned. After having undertaken various political, economic, social and education reforms in Japan, the United States was about to conclude peace and security treaties with that country in the shadow of the deepening tensions in Asia. Okinawa, remaining under U.S. military occupation, was emerging as a key and unrestricted bastion. Its political future and welfare was apparently to be traded off for Japan’s security and prosperity.

78 Dean Acheson, “Crisis in Asia—An Examination of U.S. Policy.” Department of State Bulletin (January 23, 1950), 111-118.