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RYUKYU ISLANDS
(OKINAWA)

JUNE 1960



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I. BASIC DATA

1. Geography: Island chain reaching from southern Kyushu, Japan, to within 65 miles of Taiwan. It consists of 848 square miles divided among 64 islands under US jurisdiction. The Amami group, in the northernmost portion of the Ryukyuan archipelago, was returned to Japan in 1953. The largest island, Okinawa, with 454 square miles, is the site of a major US military base, strategically located midway down the chain 400 miles from the Chinese Communist coast. The capital is Naha City, Okinawa. Naha's population is 220,000.
2. Population: 865,000 with about 683,000 on Okinawa Island. Basically Mongoloid with Caucasoid and Malayan admixtures. With 1,505 people to the square mile, Okinawa is one of the most densely populated non-metropolitan areas in the world.
3. Language: Ryukyuan, a variant of Japanese now unintelligible to anyone speaking only standard Japanese, is the popular language. Japanese is the official and commercial language, and 70% of the people are estimated to be bilingual.
4. Economy: Operates on two distinct levels: (1) the unviable basic domestic economy founded on subsistence agriculture, fishing, and forestry, which employ 49% of the working population of 396,000 but account for only 21% of national income; (2) the "military-base economy," which employs 13% of the working population and generates 36% of the national income. Receipts from exports (\$25.9 million in FY 1959), principally sugar, amount to about one fourth of expenditures for imports (\$98 million), but sales and services to US forces alone bring the Ryukyuan balance of payments into near equilibrium.



II. GOVERNMENT

1. Background: American control of the Japanese Ryukyu Islands began after the battle of Okinawa in 1945 with the establishment of direct military government. When Japan regained independence in 1952, it retained "residual sovereignty" over the Ryukyus, but the US retained administrative authority.
2. Form: The government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI), established in 1952, is semiautonomous, operating under the US Civil Administration for the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) with a US-appointed Chief Executive, a unicameral legislature elected by universal adult suffrage, and a judicial branch. All essential powers rest with the USCAR, headed by the High Commissioner, Lt. Gen. Donald P. Booth. 
3. Political Parties: The conservative Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party was formed in October 1959 through a merger of conservative forces in order to gain a plurality (14 seats) in the 29-seat legislature. The moderate Okinawa Socialist Masses Party is second in representation (10 seats) and relies for support on strong grass-roots organization and popular appeal. The leftists are represented by the Liaison Council for the Protection of Democracy (Minren) and its parent party, the pro-Communist Okinawa People's Party. Subsequent to the ouster of OPP leader Kamejiro Senaga as mayor of Naha and the settlement of the Okinawan land issue, pro-Communist influence has diminished although Minren presently holds 5 seats in the legislature.
4. Communism: Party strength estimated at 75 hard-core and 200 to 300 active members.
5. Stability: The US Civil Administration and the presence of US forces provide a stable foundation for the Ryukyuan government.

III. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Although the Ryukyuan economy has never been self-sustaining, continued presence of US forces and civil administration provides a stimulus to economic planning, growth, and a rising standard of living. Two related issues rise from this presence:

1. Land Use: Ryukyuans resent US occupation of 10.8% of the total arable land in the islands, and this issue provides the most visible irritant to relations between USCAR and the local population. Although agitation results from any US attempt to acquire additional land, the issue has been temporarily quieted by changing US payment from a lump sum for indefinite leases to rental fees negotiated every five years. Connected to this issue is pacifist objection to introduction of missiles, which also necessitates acquisition of additional land.
2. Reversion to Japan: Political developments are geared to obtaining the eventual reversion of the islands to Japan. A drive for increased governmental autonomy, currently taking the form of agitation for election of the chief executive, is an early step toward this goal. Reversion would permit Ryukyuans to gain full citizenship rights and therefore is widely desired, despite the realization that the present higher standard of living would deteriorate under Japanese administration.



IV. BIOGRAPHIC

1. OTA, Seisaku: Chief Executive. He is a native of Okinawa with a distinguished career in the Japanese civil service. Before World War II, he served on two occasions as a judge in the Naha city courts. His highest position in the Japanese service was as civil administrator of the Pescadores Islands. He is one of the principal sponsors of the conservative Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party. Age: 56.



