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Opposition to Okinawa treaty

(The author, a student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, has just returned from five weeks in Japan and Okinawa.)

By Hans Binnendijk
Special to The Globe

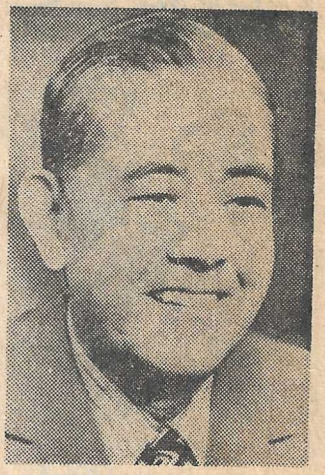
WASHINGTON — While Japanese legislators are busy dissecting the Okinawa treaty in the Diet, Secretary of State William P. Rogers is preparing to defend the controversial agreement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee this Wednesday.

Although the negotiators of the treaty are visibly pleased with the fruits of their labor, opposition elements in Japan, on Okinawa, and in the United States could ruffle an already disrupted Pacific relationship.

In the US Senate, where the Okinawa issue has been overshadowed by the textile negotiations, some legislators are concerned by what they see as a loss of military flexibility in the Pacific area.

In Japan, both opposition parties and factions of the ruling Liberal Democratic party appear ready to combine their distaste for the treaty with disappointment in the government's China and economic policies in an attempt to end Prime Minister Eisaku Sato's administration. They come to the debate armed with polls showing that a slim per-

SECRETARY ROGERS
. . . prepares defense



PREMIER SATO
. . . would make concessions

cent of the Japanese population is satisfied with the treaty.

On Okinawa, where only 13 percent of the islanders feel that the reversion agreement incorporates their wishes, the powerful Council for the Return of Okinawa to the Fatherland has called for a general strike on Nov. 10 to resist the treaty.

Why, then, are the negotiators satisfied while such vocal dissent is evident in each society? Probably because the treaty package represents almost two years of compromise. Each side relinquished some rights in order to gain others, leaving large targets for rival groups to fire at.

There are three basic facets to the reversion agreement, and each of the three interested parties is especially worried about one of them.

—The United States is most concerned with the long-run strategic implications of returning Okinawan administrative rights to Japan.

—Okinawans are disturbed about the continued massive American military presence allowed by the treaty.

—The Japanese are apprehensive about their new treaty obligations to defend the American fortress on Okinawa.

In 1968, Okinawa's high commissioner, Gen. Unger, stated that "the beauty of the Ryukyus (Okinawa) is that we have sole administering authority."

This has changed.

In May, 1969, a National Security Council memorandum, later formalized by the Nixon-Sato communique, proclaimed the reversion of Okinawa with full sovereignty to the Japanese government.

Results of that decision could profoundly affect the US military posture in Okinawa and account for most of the American opposition to reversion.

First, the US no longer will be the sole administering authority on Okinawa and US bases will become directly subject to Japanese domestic. political pressure.

Second, the US will be obligated to consult with Japan prior to (1) storing nuclear weapons in Okinawa; (2) introducing major new American forces to the island. This sudden loss of flexibility worries many top military officials. Others, argue that it makes little difference since the Nixon doctrine, military budget cuts, and advanced technology make Okinawa less of a "keystone of the Pacific" than it was just five years ago.

The key military negotiations for the treaty occured in the "Area and Facilities" subcommittee of the little-mentioned SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) task force. There, tough US military negotiators laid claim to an extremely favorable list of US bases scheduled to remain in Okinawa past Reversion Day.

Japanese negotiators desperately sought the re-

building in three countries

turn of a highly visible base to appease the Japanese and Okinawan public. First, Gen. Lampert's headquarters at Camp Sukiran and the large Machinato housing project were sought, but both were rejected by the US. Finally, the Japanese negotiating team focused on the naval airfield at Naha airport, home of the Navy's T-3 reconnaissance planes.

President Nixon made the final decision to return Naha Airport, but this was the only major base returned to Japan that was not initially offered by the US military. One US negotiator proudly stated: "We have not given the island away as some people claim, we have only tightened our belts and consolidated."

This is all too true for the Okinawans. With one of the highest population densities in the world, the islanders had hoped that reversion would bring the return of some of their land.

Now that the treaty has dashed these hopes, many Okinawans refuse to renegotiate leases with the Japanese government on land previously leased to the US. The Japanese government will have a treaty obligation to provide this land for US bases. If the treaty passes the Diet, legislation empowering the government to seize this land is very likely to be the next major target of the Japanese opposition.

Two weeks after the major reversion agreement was concluded, both countries signed an agreement that gives Japan responsibility for the immediate defense of Okinawa. Japan signed reluctantly since Okinawa is of no immediate strategic importance to the homeland. Some find it difficult to understand why Japanese troops should defend an American fortress.

Despite opposition to the treaty on both sides of the Pacific, the chances for ratification are fairly good. Although a large portion of the Japanese Diet seeks to topple Sato's government, and the treaty represents only one of their tools. Representatives of the two opposition parties, the Komeito and the Democratic Socialists, have reportedly assured American officials that if the treaty is in real trouble, they will switch enough votes to allow it to pass.

Premier Sato views the treaty as one of his greatest accomplishments, and if necessary he would make major personal political concessions to assure adequate support from his Liberal Democratic Party. The only real threat to the entire package in Japan is the possibility of an attack led by Okinawan landowners on the accompanying legislation.

The prospects for ratification in the US Senate look somewhat better. The major obstacle has been a group of Southern senators who plan to use the treaty as a bargaining tool to force a textile agreement with Japan. The recent textile accord should facilitate passage of the treaty.