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EA/J:RLSneider/jk
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Approved in S:
11/27/67

PARTICIPANTS:

~~SECRET/EXDIS~~
Memorandum of Conversation
PART I OF II

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11/15/67

Eisaku Sato, Prime Minister of Japan
Takeo Miki, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Takeo Shimoda, Ambassador to the U.S.
Toshio Kimura, Chief Cabinet Secretary
Haruki Mori, Deputy Vice Minister of
Foreign Affairs
Fumihiko Togo, Director of North American
Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Makoto Watanabe, North American Section,
North American Bureau, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
Naoshi Shimanouchi, Research, Secretary,
Bureau of Information, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (Interpreter)

Secretary Rusk
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson
William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of
State
Samuel D. Berger, Deputy Assistant Secretary
Richard L. Sneider, Country Director for Japan
James J. Wickel, EA/J (Interpreter)

PLACE: Blair House

DATE: Wednesday morning, November 15, 1967

SUBJECT: Ryukyus and Bonins

Prime Minister Sato said that he would be brief in discussing the Ryukyus problem and wished to get immediately to the Communique language on this question. He said he had to take two factors into account: first, the strong desire of the Japanese people for reversion, and second, his personal concerns as Prime Minister with Japan's security interests. He personally felt that military bases in the Ryukyus could be strengthened by reversion since Japan would be forced to live up to its security responsibilities by this action. At the same time, mishandling of this issue could lead to dire consequences. The Socialists will exploit such mishandling to their advantage. The Communists will also. It is therefore important and necessary to work out the problem.

Secretary Rusk pointed out that the two governments are closer to agreement on the Ryukyus than public opinion in both countries, but both governments must deal with

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their differing public opinions. The U.S. is in a sensitive position for several reasons. First, anything appearing to weaken our position in Vietnam would be badly received by the public and Congress. Second, Chinese Communist nuclear power has added a new dimension to our security commitments to Japan, Korea and other nations. As a result of this development, these commitments--which we accept and are prepared to carry out--are of a much graver character than previously anticipated. Third, there are constitutional limitations on what commitments a President can make in terms of his successor, given the forthcoming 1968 Presidential elections. Even if President Johnson is reelected (to which Sato indicated his full support and expectation), a commitment beyond the election date would provide a false issue to his opponent.

Therefore, it is necessary to find communique language tolerable both to U.S. political problems and Sato's political problems. In conclusion, the Secretary emphasized that the U.S. approaches this problem from the viewpoint of US-Japan friendship and cooperation, not as adversaries.

Sato said he understood the American problem fully, particularly as long as the Vietnam conflict continues. He recognized the Presidential election problem and mentioned that his own term expires in December, 1968. Nevertheless, he hoped that we could agree on a step forward which would not ignore the pressure of public opinion in his own country. He felt that both the U.S. and Japan, in Japan's case as long as the Liberal Democratic Party is in power, would follow their traditional foreign policy whatever the results of elections.

Secretary Rusk said the fourth factor facing the United States was the need to act with the understanding of Congressional leaders whether or not specific legislation is involved. Our soundings with Congress have indicated that, while there is considerable understanding of Japan's problems, the Congressional sense is not to take any dramatic movement on the Ryukyus for immediate reversion. We feel it is necessary, therefore, that the Communique language not build up any illusion of a dramatic change or stimulate agitation which could lead to difficulties when hoped for actions do not materialize.

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Sato said he appreciated the need for careful handling of Congress. Nevertheless, he hoped we could give the Japanese people some hope that U.S. Administration of the Ryukyus is not to be semi-permanent. The question of administrative rights ought also to be separated from the status of U.S. military bases, just as in Europe. He is not talking of immediate reversion, or even reversion within the next few years, but agreement within a few years on a time for reversion. Sato then proposed the following language:

"The President and the Prime Minister agreed to make efforts to reach, in a few years, agreement on a date satisfactory to the two governments on the return of administrative rights to Japan."

Secretary Rusk felt that this language would build up an anticipation of too rapid reversion. He pointed to other steps we are prepared to take during the visit to assist Sato with his domestic political problems, particularly on the Bonins and interim measures such as the Advisory Committee. The Secretary then proposed the U.S. language which was later incorporated without change into the first two paragraphs of paragraph VII of the Communique.

Sato requested a few minutes to consider the language proposed by the Secretary and retired with his advisors to another part of the room. After about 15 minutes, Sato returned and informed the Secretary that his language was acceptable, stating it was "taihen kekko" (very good). He was clearly very pleased with the U.S. language.

Sato then raised the problem of organizing early consultations on the Bonins, expressing the hope that we could meet shortly on this issue. The Secretary agreed that we could begin discussions shortly after the Ambassador returned and expressed the hope that we could conclude the negotiations quickly. He assured Sato that we had no intention of delaying the negotiations and that it was now a matter of working out the details. After some discussion it was agreed that we would state publicly that we hoped to conclude the negotiations within a year, and sooner if possible.

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Miki suggested the possibility of a subcommittee for joint review of Ryukyu reversion. This was rejected and it was agreed that no special committee would be needed, but that experts would be brought in as required.

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