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The Great Betrayal 大いなる裏切り
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December 27 will be remembered as a bitter day in Okinawan history. On that day, Okinawa Governor Nakaima Hirokazu cast aside his campaign promises, his statements made repeatedly during the last three years, and his duty as Governor to represent the Okinawan people's will, and approved the Japanese governments' application for permission to begin reclaiming land offshore from Henoko in northern Okinawa, on which to build a new US Marine Corps base. This amounts to approval of the base, which he had promised to oppose.

This is also an event that will be researched and debated for years by people who want to understand the mechanics of colonial domination. It is a classical case, as though Nakaima had studied the works of the great anti-colonial scholars such as Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi, and learned from them what to do. As they wrote, a colony can't be controlled by outside force alone; it requires cooperation from among the elite class of the colonized people, elites who hope to profit from the colonial situation, who have learned to think like the colonists, and who imagine themselves as having passed over into a status of equality with them.

In his *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon wrote that in a colony the national bourgeoisie ought to: "put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle-class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways – shocking because anti-national – of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois." Nakaima, poor fellow, probably has no inkling of the cynical jokes being made about him by government officials at drinking parties in Tokyo and Washington DC. "Who would have thought (they are surely saying) he would sell Okinawa's soul so cheaply?"

But if Nakaima behaved stupidly, this doesn't mean he was stupid. With remarkable skill he played the role of a colonized elite putting "at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital" he had attained through his elite status. He fooled a lot of people. I have to confess, to my great embarrassment, that he fooled me. I had persuaded myself that his vagaries and ambiguities were designed to deceive the Tokyo Government, and that in the end he would stand with the Okinawan people. I still find it astounding that a person who is offered the rare opportunity to become a national hero, one whose story would be passed on for generations into the future, should instead choose the role of liar, betrayer, one who will go down in Okinawan history as one of the great examples of how colonialism can corrupt the soul. And for what? The "concessions" Nakaima claims to have gotten from the Prime Minister fall into three categories: 1) Vague promises that the PM will not be able to keep, 2) things that had already been decided months or years ago, and 3) a little bit more money in the Prefectural budget.

In biblical terms, it seems that Nakaima has sold Okinawa's birthright for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:33). Reclamation (i.e. dumping massive amounts of dirt, rocks, junk into Oura Bay) would destroy it perhaps forever, while the money and other "pottage" will be dissipated in a few years. But the "seeming" is not the "being". Okinawa's birthright was not his to sell, and the Okinawans are determined to prevent the sale from taking place. They are demonstrating almost daily in front of the Prefectural offices, launching a court action to have reclamation declared illegal, and carrying out all sorts of other protest actions. As I was writing this, the Okinawa Prefectural Legislature passed a resolution demanding Nakaima's resignation. The language of the resolution is extremely strong. It says, "For a politician who campaigned on the slogan, 'move the base out of the Prefecture' [kengai isetsu県外移設], this is a violation of a public pledge", and it continues that Nakaima's claim that it is no such violation "is made in bad faith, and debases the dignity of the Okinawan people". [The word I translated as "debases the dignity" is boutoku [冒瀆] which also translates as "blasphemy" or "sacrilege". Support has also come from abroad. A group of 29 scholars, writers, peace advocates and artists including movie directors Oliver Stone and Michael Moore, Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire, Pulitzer Prizewinners John Dower and Herbert Bix, and linguist Noam Chomsky, signed a very strong statement criticizing the Governor's action and the base project. [http://peacephilosophy.blogspot.ca/2014/01/international-scholars-peace-advocates-html]

The next major event on schedule is the election for Mayor of Nago City (where Henoko is located), to be held January 19. The issue is clearly defined there: the incumbent Mayor Inamine Susumu, who is standing for reelection, is adamantly against the project, the challenger Suematsu Bunshin is enthusiastically for it. Inamine has said that if re-elected, he will use his authority as mayor positively to block the project (for example he can refuse permission to use ports and rivers that are under Nago City administration). All polls show a majority of voters supporting Inamine, but for the Tokyo Government it is vitally important to have him defeated, and it is reported that they are prepared to spend fabulous sums to achieve that. And they are expected to send in some of their superstar politicians to campaign for Suematsu. Money will also be poured in by the companies expecting to get construction contracts, and pressure will be put on their employees. So very much now depends on whether this election can be bought.

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