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BURNING THE RISING SUN

**FROM YOMITAN VILLAGE, OKINAWA:
ISLANDS OF U.S. BASES**

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Translated by South Wind

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On October 26th, 1987, at the opening ceremony of the Youth Softball Competition in Yomitan during the Okinawa National Athletic Meet, I pulled the Hinomaru down and burned it. This act evoked enormous public response, and the trial of this historical event, the Hinomaru trial, is being held at the Naha District Court in Okinawa. All kinds of right-wing reactionaries have rushed to Yomitan.

I still think that burning the flag was the right thing to do. No matter how often right-wingers have harassed me — rather, because of their harassment — it has become my growing conviction that I did the right thing. I never knew that burning a simple ¥3,500 piece of cloth would cause such an uproar, or that this cloth possessed such magic.

THAT MORNING

The morning that I was to burn the flag, I left for the Noren Market as usual to make my wholesale purchases for my supermarket, saying good-bye to my wife, Yoko. She saw me off saying, "Good luck! I will do my best myself, too!" Yoko was in the last month of her pregnancy.

The night before, around midnight, after I returned home from preparing for this protest, I had a long talk with Yoko. We talked about many things: the high school girl who took the Hinomaru down, dumping it into a ditch..., our Yomitan mayor..., the revitalization of Yomitan village, and so on. I told her that I was the right person to pull the Hinomaru down. She just said, "I won't stop you any longer.... It's no use stopping you any way....," and she smiled.

Yoko was expecting our baby in several days. It might be hard on her not to have me beside her during birth, especially after going through a difficult labor and a Cesarean section when our first daughter, Mikiyo, was born. This time, again, she may have had worries.... I didn't know what to say. I had already made up my mind.

Frankly speaking, I was very composed that morning. In fact, I had no idea that this 'incident' would create such a great ripple later on. It seemed obviously natural to me that I should pull the flag down and burn it. I was going to carry out this natural thing in a natural way.

At 8 a.m. I finished my wholesale purchases at Noren Market, and prepared price tags to be used during my absence at my supermarket. Since I happened to know that one of my neighbors was going to the opening ceremony, I asked him for a ride there. I didn't intend to drive my car because I would have had to have abandon it after my arrest.

When I arrived at the place, Heiwa-no-mori (forest of peace) Ball Park, members of the Yomitan Village Executive Committee had

already begun to prepare a banner of protest. I sat on grass near the back-stop and waited for the opening of the Softball Competition. The sun shone brightly.

BURNING THE HINOMARU

At 9 a.m. fireworks went off behind me. Looking back, I saw white smoke drifting through the air. I then realized: "The time has finally come."

I heard that the flag had already been raised. I saw it, too. On the dark green back-stop of this still relatively new Ball Park, I saw 'Hinomaru' fluttering atop the center one of five flag-bearing poles. Seeing the flag, I was disappointed.

The day before I went to the Office of the Workers' Union of the Yomitan Village-Office to make sure that the flag would really be raised, I heard from one of the staff that the flag would surely be raised, along with the flag for Yomitan's Non-Nuclear Declaration. I was under the impression that the village was having a hard time trying to compensate for the embarrassment of having to raise the Hinomaru. I had a slight hope that even if the Hinomaru flag were raised, it might be flown opposite to the Non-Nuclear flag, so that they would be equally placed.

Against my 'hope,' however, Hinomaru flew proudly from the main flag-pole. It was waving in the wind at the top. Watching this I started to feel that the flag was proudly boasting its victory, suppressing the will of all Yomitan people and laughing at us. I quickly approached the flag-pole stand, took off my shoes and started to climb the cement-block wall with my bare feet. Although I was well prepared, I had never climbed such a tall wall. It stood ten-meters high. I was worried, but to my surprise, I soon realized that the climb was not so difficult.

I took out a pocket knife and quickly cut one of the two ropes attached to the flag. The rope flew away from me, blowing in the wind and out of my reach. I couldn't pull the flag down this way. Actually, I should have cut the other rope. I quickly cut it. The wind blew this one also. I tried hard to stretch my right hand to the next flag-pole and managed to hold the rope with the flag. Finally, with this rope in hand, I successfully managed to pull the flag down.

I tried to set it on fire with my lighter, but it wouldn't burn. The sunshine at 9 a.m. was so bright that I could hardly spot the flame. Then, but barely, I saw a black spot spreading slowly. I had succeeded in setting the flag on fire! So I shook it to fan the flames. This gesture

was interpreted as 'showing off' by onlookers, but I really couldn't afford to show off at that moment.

When the flag had burned up, I could clearly see many students watching me, having finished their group performance on the ground. I tried to climb down. It was more difficult than climbing up, but I came down carefully and slowly.

When I reached the foot of the wall, a woman handed me my shoes, which I had left paired together. I put them on and wondered what to do for a moment. There were many people looking at me and the atmosphere was very tense. At that moment, a woman's shout rang through the air: "Mr. Chibana, flee...!" I knew I had to, so I just started running. Originally, I never had 'planned' to run away at this point. I figured I would be arrested as soon as I pulled the Hinomaru down and burned it.

Afterwards, I heard that near the wall where the flag-pole stood there was a big uproar. After they'd witnessed the incident and rushed to the spot, angry right-wingers and police were shoving and pushing at not only members of the Yomitan Village Executive Committee, but also villagers and various people from Tokyo. I also heard that Chibana Moriyasu (who is no relation), a member of the Yomitan Village Executive Committee for Peace, was unjustly arrested later on; but I didn't see this myself.



The scene behind the flag-pole wall immediately after burning the Hinomaru

While I ran, one of my acquaintances shouted to me: "You've committed a great act!" He then asked: "Did you prepare a get-away car?"

I answered: "I didn't arrange one, because I didn't plan to run away."

He was amazed, and asked: "You didn't plan to escape after doing such a thing?" He offered me a ride. I left Heiwa-no-mori Ball Park in his car.

After a little while, I felt desperately hungry. I hadn't had breakfast yet. I went to the McDonald's in Kadena and ordered. I heard a police car passing by with its siren on, and thought to myself, "They're late."

Frankly, I never thought my act was executed all that 'smoothly.'

HIROSE'S COERCION OF THE HINOMARU

What prompted me to pull the Hinomaru down and burn it? I was prompted not only by my knowledge of what the Okinawan people had suffered in recent history and of the misery of war they experienced but also by my fear of Japan's current advance towards war. This is what I stated at my arraignment at the Hinomaru trial. I vicariously experienced the Battle of Okinawa through my investigation of the 'group suicide' that occurred in Chibichirigama Cave. In fact this incident*2 was not just a 'group suicide' but a massacre, and still weighs heavily on me, igniting my anger against the war and Emperor Hirohito.

First, I'd like to look back at the development of my decision to burn the Hinomaru.

On October 22nd, 1987, from his home in Kochi Prefecture, the President of the Japan Softball Association, Hirose Masaru, called the office of the Okinawa National Athletic Meet. He said that if the Hinomaru weren't raised, nor the Kimigayo sung at the opening ceremony of the 26th, there would be no games at all in Yomitan. This decision is reported to have been made by Hirose himself; no other members of the Association were consulted. This marked the beginning of a course which led to my burning the Hinomaru.

On the next day, the 23rd, Hirose came to Okinawa and high-handedly tried to coerce the prefecture and Yomitan village into raising Hinomaru and singing Kimigayo, threatening us with 'changing the

*2 : In 1945, in a cave, Yomitan village, 84 Okinawans including 47 aged 12 or less, killed themselves or were killed by their families when U.S. armed forces landed on the main island of Okinawa. Mothers killed their own children; sisters and brothers killed each other...the people killed those they loved the most because they loved them best.

location of the Games.' Finally, on the morning of the 24th, an 'agreement' was reached to hoist the flag.

I heard the news of this 'agreement' over the radio; I was on my way home from a protest-march against the then Crown Prince Akihito's coming to Okinawa. The march was sponsored by the Council for Prefectural Citizens' Sovereignty. I couldn't believe my ears. It couldn't be true.

However, the next day, the 'agreement' was verified in the morning paper. It seemed the will of the Yomitan villagers to refuse the Hinomaru and Kimigayo was forcefully killed by the violence of one man of power, Hirose. Rage surged up within me. On the morning of the 25th, it was also reported that Hirose planned to visit the Chibichirigama Cave in Namihira hamlet accompanied by officials and athletes, to pay their respects to the war victims who had died in the cave.

I made a protest sign, went to the cave alone around 7:30 a.m. and waited for Hirose and his group. They didn't show up. Reporters started to leave one by one. I thought to myself, 'They won't come,' and left for home to have a meal.

They came, however. Around 9 a.m. I saw many cars parked near the entrance of the cave. I walked to the cave, went down near the entrance, and discovered that my sign was gone. I asked someone, "Why is my sign gone?" but he didn't answer. When I questioned him further he said that he had put it 'over there.' I found it abandoned in a bush. To make my protest I put the sign back in the most conspicuous place, and asked one of the officials of the Softball Association, "Who on earth threw my sign away? By whose permission did he do it?" Soon officials from Hirose's group came to pay their respects.

That morning I didn't intend to sabotage their visit at all. My sign was only addressed to visitors, saying: "This is a place of tragedy, where 84 people who were brought up according to Hinomaru, Kimigayo and the Emperor system were driven to commit suicide during the last war. You are all here at the command of the President, Hirose. Nevertheless, I hope you pray sincerely."

However, that morning, standing beside me was Yoneya Fumi, an old woman, and her son, a bereaved family, having lost five members of their family here. She came to me and said: "I told them that I didn't want them to pay homage here, because this place belongs neither to the prefecture, the country, nor the village. And if they want to pay tribute, they should go to the Mabuni Museum. I told them to go away, but they never listened to me." After hearing these words, I walked up to those

officials and made a statement: "Why did you people visit here? Here, the people who were brought up by Hinomaru and Kimigayo died a sad and futile death. For Hirose, who is imposing Hinomaru and Kimigayo on us, to visit is a blasphemy against those who died here." At that point, Hirose arrived at the entrance.

I stepped up to Hirose and spoke to him: "Are you Mr. Hirose?" He didn't answer, and one of his attendants thrust himself between us and said: "This has nothing to do with you." After which, I started to protest to Hirose: "What are you doing here?" Ignoring my words, Hirose tried to enter the cave. I followed him and raised my voice: "Stop. You and your group are disqualified from visiting here. Go home!"

Unexpectedly, unreservedly, he stopped and paid attention to me. He passed his bouquet to one of his attendants and asked me where this so-called visiting group was; he said that he came here as a representative of 'the Association.'

Maybe he meant that it was only the Softball Association that expressed condolences. If so, why did he trample over our feelings by imposing the Hinomaru and Kimigayo on us? It is hypocritical of him to pay his respect to those who died in the Chibichirigama Cave while forcing us to honor Hinomaru and Kimigayo.

I told the old woman: "I didn't let Hirose place flowers at the memorial." She nodded, "that's good." There followed a group of athletes and hundreds of students. I appealed to them. The students listened to me sincerely, lowering their heads. Perhaps my statement was shocking to them.

As I said, on the 24th when I first learned about the news that Yomitan was going to 'hoist the Hinomaru,' I was shocked and at a loss as to what I should do as a Yomitan citizen. It was on the morning of the 25th, after the news was confirmed in the paper and I experienced Hirose's arrogance at the Chibichirigama Cave, that I was determined to pull the Hinomaru down. Of course, there were other factors that backed my decision: my study of the village's history — how Yomitan became an anti-war & pro-peace village, a series of protests against Hinomaru and Kimigayo by the villagers, particularly the Yomitan High School girl, and most importantly, my own understanding of the Chibichirigama Cave 'group suicide' gained through investigation.

NO HINOMARU IN YOMITAN

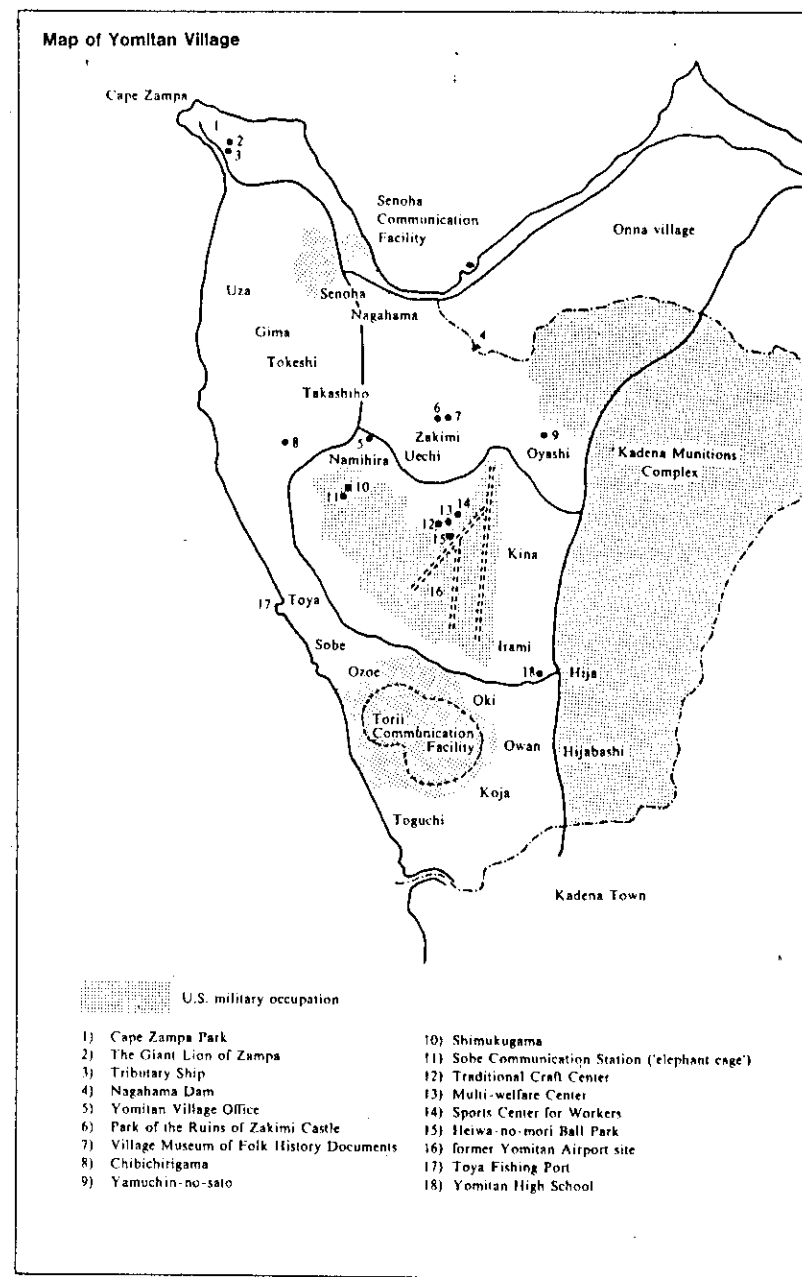
Yomitan was the landing point of U.S. forces during the war. Seventy-one percent of the village was occupied by U.S. military before the reversion, when control of Okinawa reverted to Japan in 1972. Even now, it is still forty-eight percent occupied. Having suffered from a series of accidents and even having lost lives as a result of U.S. military exercises, the Yomitan people have kept fighting one by one for the return of the bases to the people. 'Anti-war & pro-peace' has been the motto of the village. Naturally, the citizens' struggles against the U.S. bases are indispensable to their survival.

Mayor Yamauchi Tokushin openly criticized the enforcement of Hinomaru and Kimigayo in his administrative policy speech, saying: "This move of the government reminds me of growing militarism and the subjugation of people to Tennesism (Emperor worship) during the 1930's. It is a revival of the ideology of 'loyalty to the Emperor and patriotism to the country,' an ideology denied under Japan's post-war Constitution; it's a return to the pre-war dark ages. I feel terribly concerned when the administrative authorities coerce us to respect the Hinomaru and Kimigayo. It seems to be a frightful attempt by the government to control fundamental human rights."

Further, in December 1986, the Yomitan Village Assembly voted against the requirement to sing the Kimigayo and hoist the Hinomaru. The decision was sustained by 8,223 signatures in a petition against the enforcement of Hinomaru and Kimigayo collected by February 1987 by the Villagers' Council of Thinking of Yomitan Tomorrow. This Council is a comprehensive village organization, including individual participants consisting of mainly the Workers' Union of the Yomitan Village-Office, every labor union in the village, and anti-base movement groups. The Yomitan Village Executive Committee which I belong to, is also a member of the Council, and we all exerted ourselves in gathering the signatures. The Namihira hamlet, where I live, has about 600 families, almost all of which signed our petition. Therefore, opposition to the enforcement of Hinomaru and Kimigayo is generally agreed upon by the Yomitan people. For the past ten years I've joined Mayor Yamauchi in building this 'anti-war & pro-peace' village. I think I've come to understand his ideas and personality well.

One day, the mayor took the sculptor, Kinjo Minoru, and me to the Heiwa-no-mori Ball Park in his car.

Pointing to the Ball Park, he said to us: "That is my monument. Mr. Kinjo, you made 'The Great Lion of Zampa' and the Statue of Peace at



Chibichirigama Cave. They are wonderful monuments for a sculptor. But what about me? I'm hosting a National Athletic Meet on U.S. bases. I'm doing this big job in exchange for the return of Yomitan Airport. This so-called monument is for that purpose."

Yomitan Airport, located in the middle of the village, has not been returned to the village, except for a few small sections, despite long efforts for its return by the people. The mayor finally succeeded in building the Ball Park for this National Athletic Meet on the U.S. base as a result of his incredibly hard work, negotiating with the U.S. forces, and the national and prefectural governments. Yomitan may be the only village in Japan which has a sports ground in the middle of a U. S. military base. This is the best Ball Park in Okinawa, for it is also designed with thorough consideration for the handicapped. For that reason, this is a monument to Mayor Yamauchi's statesmanship. It must be seriously humiliating for him, I thought, to be forced to hoist the flag himself, during the stadium's first event, against his will. I understood his pain. Therefore, I sincerely thought I could help him make Yomitan a village of peace by pulling the flag down.

On the evening of October 25th, I again went to the office of the Workers' Union of the Yomitan Village-Office to confirm what was being done about the Hinomaru. All the staff there were angry. I heard from one staff member, that above all, the Deputy Mayor, Yasuda, was furious with this enforcement and directed all the staff, including the section chief, to wear badges of protest. Even the section chief, who usually doesn't belong to the union, was going to wear one to demonstrate his silent protest against Hirose's injustice. The staff member showed me the badges he had just bought, angrily saying that the Deputy Mayor is not the only one who was furious, but that all of them were.

I felt an atmosphere of all-out rage among the Yomitan people, and it strongly reconfirmed my commitment to pull the Hinomaru down in order to help the mayor.

A GIRL'S COURAGE AT A YOMITAN HIGH SCHOOL

In Spring 1987, one high school student took the Hinomaru down and dumped it into a ditch on commencement day at Yomitan High School, which is my alma mater. I was deeply moved by her act. And most of the people here greeted it with applause. As depicted in the movie, "*Yuntanza Okinawa*," the head teacher threatened the girl, who was holding the flag tightly, saying: "This would be a crime if you were

an adult." The girl, staring him in the face, replied decisively: "I don't care. I still don't care." I was really struck by her power...that passion! Further, I was shocked, as well as moved, that she not only pulled the flag down, but also thought to dump it in a ditch so that it would never be flown again.

Reflecting further on this incident, I've realized that it was we grown-ups who motivated her to take action. What does this mean? First, grandfathers and grandmothers and neighbors all talk about the war: How dreadful the war was! The school teachers talk about the Hinomaru. We have appealed to the people for a full-scale rejection of the Hinomaru and Kimigayo which could lead us to war. Responding with the sensitivity of youth, perhaps this was her own expression of protest.

One of the struggles we tackled in the spring of 1986 was the campaign for opposing the hoisting of the Hinomaru at the Yomitan High School commencement ceremony, which I think would have had some impact on the students. The Villagers' Council for Thinking of Yomitan Tomorrow put forth a demand to not fly the Hinomaru during the ceremony. In particular, the chairman of the Council, Yamauchi Shinei (who is no relation to the mayor), in his suit and tie, stood in the path of the school principal. He laid himself down full length on the ground before the gymnasium entrance, which was the hall for the ceremony, and said: "If you want to put up the Hinomaru that much, go ahead, do it by stepping on me." Seeing how determined he was, the principal gave up. The other members of the Council also stood at the entrance and resisted. Yamauchi Shinei used to be the deputy chairman of the Yomitan Village Assembly. These actions and appeals of the villagers must have had a greater impact on the students than on the grown-ups.

This time at the ceremony of a National Athletic Meet — a 'grown-ups' ceremony, unlike the student commencement — the Hinomaru was going to be forcefully put up. "What should we grown-ups do now?" I thought. "Pull it down" was the conclusion I finally reached.

It seemed to be a more natural action than any of the other necessary protests, at least in Yomitan. If we grown-ups restricted our protests to speech without action, no matter how loudly we voice our claims, our words would only be in vain and futile. As a grown-up, this was my way of answering the cry of those young people like the high school girl.

LESSONS FROM THE 'GROUP SUICIDE' AT CHIBICHIRIGAMA CAVE

I joined a group to investigate the 'group suicide' at the Chibichirigama Cave, which occurred in the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa in Namihira hamlet in Yomitan. What I learned from this investigation spurred my resolve to pull the Hinomaru down. What happened in Chibichirigama will be described in a later chapter, but first I want to say what I learned through this investigation. Tennoist education effected a situation in which parents killed their children, brothers and sisters killed each other; loved ones were forced to kill each other. This education is represented by the Hinomaru and Kimigayo, and is based on racial discrimination against Okinawans, which was promoted step-by-step until it was too late for us to stop it. With this in mind, a sense of crisis gripped us— if we allowed the hoisting of the Hinomaru in Yomitan now, we would be yielding yet one more step, which could lead to another one...and eventually lead us further from our true rights. Ultimately this regression might lead to war. This is what moved me to take action. What's more, there are still many old men and women, survivors and the bereaved families of the Chibichirigama Cave incident, still living in Namihira. Among them, the reality of 'group suicide' remains unspoken— too heavy and revolting even to recollect. Yet we dared to force them to break their deep silence to investigate the



Entrance to Chibichirigama Cave where 'group suicide' occurred, (the Statue of Peace is on the right)

cave incident and bring it before the public. As one member responsible for digging out the truth, how could I not take it upon myself to block the Hinomaru now? We didn't ferret out the information simply for the sake of fact-finding, but for the precise purpose of revealing the true nature of this incident in Yomitan, where we were raised, so that we will never again enter war. What would this whole investigation mean if I were satisfied with just fact-finding, and willing to become a mere onlooker as we move again towards war? Pulling the Hinomaru down was the only way I could take responsibility for these bereaved families.

THE YOMITAN VILLAGE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE GET TOGETHER

On the evening of the 25th, the members of the Executive Committee got together and were filled with reproach and anger about Hirose's action. Criticism from a wide variety of people was aimed towards Hirose's statement. The common feeling among us was a sense of deep crisis, ignited by the fact that the will of 30,000 Yomitan villagers was going to be oppressed by a tyrant like Hirose.

We decided at least to stage a protest and started to draw a banner. It read: "No Hinomaru or Kimigayo, Hirose's Statement Unforgiven," and it bore the signatures of the Committee. With this banner, we planned to demonstrate at the Heiwa-no-mori Ball Park the next day. As we were making it, I declared my decision to everybody. "I will do it," I said. "That's final."

I said this because I was convinced that it would benefit the mayor and it would help bolster the 'anti-war & pro-peace village' of Yomitan. Everybody took it for granted that someone would do it. Someone has to do it, we felt, but everybody has a job. Fortunately, I have nobody to fire me. Therefore, I thought it logical and natural that I pull the Hinomaru down.

I'd also started thinking about 'burning' the Hinomaru. I thought that when I commit this act, I should do it completely. As one who knows the heavy sorrow of being forced to recognize the Hinomaru, and who expresses the feelings of the populace, I thought it was natural to be so radical as to burn it. I really wanted to display how deeply the enforcement of Hinomaru offends us. We should consider the significance of the fact that the Hinomaru is being burned in the Philippines and Korea, as a protest against Japan's wartime invasion.

It took until 1 a.m. for us to finish the banner. I was deep in thought about the following day.

participate in the Meet because it refused to practice the Kimigayo. Some junior high school students didn't play their instruments, leaving them on their laps. Some high school girls stood up but didn't sing, keeping their lips tightly closed. These boys and girls had the true courage to demonstrate their resistance. Also, members of the Naha Municipal Workers' Union wore badges of protest and staged a sit-in before a banner at the opening ceremony.

Thus, even at the opening ceremony of the Autumn National Athletic Meet on October 25th, quite a few people held an attitude of 'No Standing' for the Hinomaru and 'No Singing' of Kimigayo. These were mostly people involved with the Meet, athletes and their families. This meant that even among the people who supported the Meet itself, many objected to Hinomaru and Kimigayo. My burning of the Hinomaru was 'just one act' of resistance among many. In that sense, I was only following what many boys and girls had done before me. The reason right-wingers reacted so strongly, I assume, is that what I had done was not an isolated incident, but one backed by a tremendous network of people.

On October 24th, a reporter showed me a copy of Hirohito's 'honorable address' which Akihito had brought, and asked me to comment on it. Predictably, his message was exactly the same as what had been presented at the inaugural rally of the Council for Prefectural Citizens' Sovereignty; there wasn't the slightest indication of his accepting responsibility for the war as supreme leader. On the contrary, the message suggested that Okinawans had done a good job, and was rife with subtle nuances that we should remain steadfast in this perseverance. His words rubbed the bereaved families of the Battle of Okinawa the wrong way. I think that Hirohito should be disqualified as a human being. He was asked about how he would take responsibility for the war that he himself launched, and how he would apologize and evaluate his role. He simply ignores the question. Some older people have said that they would approve of the Emperor's visit only if he formally apologized. However, no apologies were included in his 'honorable address.' Instead, what was brought to Okinawa with 'his address' was 'martial law' in the form of 5,000 riot police, and the enforcement of Hinomaru and Kimigayo.

ARREST AND DELIVERY INTO THE CUSTODY OF THE POLICE

After 5 p.m. on October 26th, the day I burned the Hinomaru, I 'reported' myself to the Okinawa branch office of the Naha District Public Prosecutor's Office, and I was finally arrested on a warrant around 9 p.m..

As I said before, I ate a hamburger at McDonald's after I burned the Hinomaru. After that, I contacted a lawyer ('Dial 110 for Police Harrassment'), and around noon I met with an attorney, Miyake Shunji and some others in the waiting room of the Okinawa branch office of the Naha District Public Prosecutor's Office. We discussed various future legal strategies there. One member of 'Dial 110' suggested: "Since you did this with your firm belief, you had better hold a press conference to present your side of the story and honorably turn yourself in." I decided to do so.

In haste, I borrowed paper and pen and jotted down my personal convictions to use as my 'inaugural statement.' I scribbled down 'group suicide,' citing as its cause, the Emperor, Tennoist education of Hinomaru and Kimigayo; and I further cited the enforcement of Hinomaru and Kimigayo at the National Athletic Meet, my anger with Hirose's statement, and finally, I concluded: "I thought of the people who truly love the peace of Okinawa, my dear Yomitan people who truly refuse war, and I burned 'the Hinomaru' with all the knowledge I have gained through experience, study and living my life." I read this at the press conference at 4 p.m. As far as I remember, reporters representing only *Kyodo News*, *Asahi* and *The Okinawa Times* were there.

Before and after the press conference, I called the Naha District Public Prosecutor's Office to announce my appearance, and to my surprise, they said that I would inconvenience them if I appeared now! They explained that a warrant for my arrest had not been issued yet, and they couldn't arrest me if I appeared. This perplexed me. Before 5 p.m., I called the Office again, at which time they said they were finally ready. I turned up at the Office shortly after 5 p.m..

Before I went there, I called my mother at home to explain the whole thing, and asked her to understand the incident. She was angry. Yoko was already in labor. My mother reproached me, saying: "Didn't you think before acting?" and added: "Giving birth is a heavy duty for a woman and now you do this..." and then she broke off. I understood her anger. I could say nothing but repeated: "Please take good care of

Yoko."

Under these circumstances, it was not until that afternoon that I heard Chibana Moriyasu had been unjustly arrested at the Heiwa-no-mori Ball Park earlier that morning. I had learned it from my attorneys, and it was totally unexpected. I expected to be arrested when I burned the Hinomaru. I didn't ask anybody to protect me or let me escape after I pulled the Hinomaru down, which was obvious to those at the scene.

I spent from half past 5 to no later than 9 p.m. at the Chibana Police Box in Okinawa City, because I had not been arrested yet. I laid down, got up and scanned the pornographic comic books there. I didn't know that this was what it was like to 'be arrested.' The funniest thing was that a security policeman dropped in, showed me my picture and said: "Chibana, you cannot escape now, because if you do, everybody has this picture and is looking for you." It was strange to hear this when I was already in the police station. It seemed the police were not aware of the fact that I had been in the waiting room of a law court from noon to 5 p.m. on that day, one that is located next to the Prosecutor's Office. At 9 p.m., a warrant was finally issued and I was arrested. Twelve hours had passed since I had burned the Hinomaru.

The birth of my child, a complaint by the mayor, a right-winger's arson, their assaults on my supermarket, and their destruction of the Statue of Peace at Chibichirigama Cave.... This series of events, which all took place while I was being detained in a detention house of the Urasoe Police Station, I learned about, one by one, only after long delay. In jail, I was welcomed by other inmates.

Interrogations were conducted from 10 a.m. to noon, from 1 p.m. to 5, and for one hour at night. All the security investigators were verbally abusive.

As some yelled that I was "un-patriotic," others shouted that I was a "traitor," and another said: "In Yomitan, the mayor, the Congress and the people are all against Hinomaru. Only Yomitan is against it so adamantly. Why don't you become independent and make a republic?" When I answered that it was a good idea, they became enraged and started yelling again. What they said was in no way different from what the right-wingers, who thronged to the village later, barked out.

Compared with the local investigators, the *yamatonchu* (mainlander) prosecutor seemed like a 'gentleman.' He seemed to be of my generation, the *Zenkyoto* (the student resistance movement of the 60's-70's) generation, too. First, he talked about revolution and said he had also read *The Capitalist* and studied Karl Marx. He seemed to have a somewhat keen interest in my ideological background. Obviously, I

burned the Hinomaru not directly out of thoughts of revolution, but thinking more of the past, present and future of Okinawa. He didn't seem to understand it at all, which was natural. It was wrong to 'expect' him to.

Three days later I heard that my wife had given birth. Attorney Miyake told me it was a baby boy, and both baby and mother were well. I was happy. I appreciated Yoko's strength. As I was anxious to see his face, I urged that my baby's picture be taken immediately and brought to me. Though the picture was totally out of focus and looked vague, still, it made me very happy.

I had that picture with me in my police cell and gazed at it repeatedly. In fact, in order just to bring it here, I had to endure a small quarrel. A prison guard said I couldn't accept it because I was not allowed visitors. I protested: "You also have family, don't you? Why can't I keep a picture of my baby whom I haven't seen since he was born?" The guard silently nodded consent. It was only later, when I was indicted and brought to the detention house, that I was able to see the baby in person, although it was through glass. Yoko brought him during a visit when visitation rights were finally granted. He looked very much like me with his big eyes. My eyes filled with tears. I was unsure what to name him. I had nobody to consult. My family was pressing me to decide. Two factors were involved: one, that his name should use a part of my name, 'Sho,' and two, that it should include three Kanji characters like our eldest daughter's name, 'Mikiyo.' It was very difficult to find two other characters to follow 'Sho.' Finally we named him 'Shotaro.'

During detention, the day starts late: 7 a.m.. I used to get up at 5 in the morning for wholesale purchases. Once I was awake, I could never go back to sleep again, which was painful, because I had nothing to do. I heard the same bird singing every morning. I rolled over in bed or stood on my head at dawn. I used to think I would die for the chance to sleep more, but actually, now that I could, I felt uncomfortable. Although I knew only a few inmates, those who came to my room were all in support of what I'd done. Also, I was able to get various outside information from them. One of them, two years younger than I, who had a black American father and an *uchinanchu* mother said, "I understand you." The others were all sympathetic too. Thus, inside our room, life was relatively 'peaceful,' while the outside was storming with right-wingers and reactionaries.

Soon after I was arrested, I heard from my attorney Miyake, that our mayor was considering an indictment against me. Someone said that

right-wingers threatened the mayor telling him that they would murder me if he didn't indict me. I told Miyake: "Please tell him to indict me, because I damaged village property. If he forgives even this petty sum of damage, he won't be able to rightfully exercise his authority. I say this, even though I have cooperated with the mayor in building our village." I had to make my point clear, even more so, because of what I had done with him. That was my position. I left the message with the mayor. On October 29th, it was announced that the village decided to indict me.

I heard from Miyake that right-wingers thronged to the village everyday and threatened the mayor and the village with bombings. He also told me that my supermarket had been set fire to on October 28th. What's more, on November 8th, the right-wing Okinawa Justice Party completely demolished the Statue of Peace Through the Generations at Chibichirigama. I'd been secretly worried about this Statue ever since I heard about the right-wing violence throughout the village.

Chibichirigama, home to the Statue, had become the main meeting place for people who were 'anti-war & pro-peace,' and for those who protested against right-wingers, the Emperor, the Hinomaru and Kimigayo. So on the day when my interrogator gravely asked, "Do you know that Yomitan has been in an uproar?" I began to worry about Chibichirigama. The 'anti-war & pro-peace' struggle in Yomitan was suffering serious hardships from reactionary and right-wing violent assaults.

OUT ON BAIL

On November 2nd, a hearing was conducted in which the reason for my detention was presented. The guard said, "Chibana, let's go." I was transported by car, wondering if this was to be the interrogation. When I arrived at the court, I was puzzled to see many supporters there and it made me nervous. Thinking back, I was afraid that I had acted discourteously to them, because I was so nervous the entire time I was entering and leaving the court that I couldn't even greet them.

As I entered, many supporters were there to call out to me: My younger brother, Mrs. Chibana Moriyasu, members of the Executive Committee, college professors, and many others. They all kept saying: "We've never closed your shop for even a single day!" At that point, I didn't understand why everybody kept mentioning my shop. I hadn't yet heard about the right-wingers' arson. So, not closing the shop didn't seem very significant.

The court eventually approved my detention. The following was my opening statement: "First, it was natural that I should pull the Hinomaru down and burn it. If I had not done so, the sentiments of the people would never be demonstrated. Since I turned myself in, there is no possibility of my escaping or destroying the evidence. Therefore, you must release me on my cognizance."

Attorney Ikemiyagusuku Joh assessed the importance of the fact that on the prosecutor's application for detention, the court changed the wording of the charge, from "Burning the national flag" to "Burning the Hinomaru." Attorney Miyake claimed that according to the provisions of the criminal code, the case was only a matter of damaging ¥3,500 worth of flag, and therefore, that the crime was not grave enough to justify a 23-day detention. Both were sound views.

Thus, the hearing finished. At a time like this nothing was more rewarding to me than the people's support. Also, after the hearing, on November 14th, when the Kariyushi National Athletic Meet was held, supporters gathered outside the Urasoe Police Station to give me encouragement. This made me feel wonderful. I was very moved on the day before the indictment when, for the entire day, my supporters swarmed outside; they had awaited my departure to and my return from the prosecutor's examination.

On the basis of my attorney's judgement I expected that I probably wouldn't be indicted. However, the Naha District Public Prosecutor's Office indicted me on November 17th, and transferred me to the detention house.

It turns out that I was kept there only a few days, during which time I was allowed visitors. I met my baby, whom my wife brought and my supporters as well.

On November 20th, I was finally released on bail. Although, the decision to set bail for me was reversed a couple of times because of quasi-complaints from the prosecutors, that evening I was released from custody together with Chibana Moriyasu. We got together with our supporters and members of the Executive Committee for congratulations, and patted each other on the back. However, I sensed something strange in their behavior. They were panic-stricken with fear of right-wingers' assaults.

That evening, the eve of Yomitan Festival, I had really wanted to go to a concert which I had helped plan. It was a joint concert of Komuro Hitoshi, Takada Midori and The Giant Lion of Zampa drumming group. The first thought that came to me when I was released was that I would now be able to go. However, everybody told me that going to

Yomitan Festival was crazy. I didn't yet understand the 'situation' outside.

We talked about it. I would be in danger if I went back to Yomitan. It was said that the right-wingers were saying they would kill me when I was released. Still, I thought I would go home. No matter how dangerous, that is the place I thought I should be. So we decided that I would go home anyway.

At Hanza Supermarket, everybody was excited about my return, and they were all hugging each other. The members of the Executive Committee shed tears of joy, and I was moved to tears, too. Everybody, including the employees and the people who had guarded my shop from the right-wing attacks, celebrated my release.

My mother, drenched in tears, welcomed me home. My house was crowded with family, supporters from Tokyo, and people returning from festival events. We created a tremendous racket: a triumphant congratulatory party.

Above all, what delighted me most was that one of the older women in my neighborhood hugged me with joy, repeating: "It's good that you're back." She worried about my health, and said over and over again: "We kept shopping at your market even though the right-wingers were coming every day. Power to you!" She shouted around, "Shoichi has returned!" and took the trouble to bring another older woman to see me. This woman, too, said: "The right-wingers were coming every day and telling us not to buy from your shop, but I kept buying things there. I was going nowhere else!" I was overwhelmed with gratitude.

RIGHT-WINGERS STORM THE VILLAGE

"Peace has come too early for the villagers who have burned the 'National flag'; this is Heaven's punishment" — this is the message which the right-wingers left, having destroyed the Chibichirigama Statue. It was merely one flag, yet when it was burned it created a tremendous uproar among reactionaries. It was only 'by accident' that the flag demonstrated how much 'power' it possessed. I say, 'by accident,' because I never imagined that the right-wingers, the government and people in various other walks of life would respond so fervently. I only thought what I was doing was natural, not a pretentious display. Of course, it wasn't that I hadn't predicted any reaction; I thought that they might throw stones at my shop. That was what I had expected.

As a result of this incident, I've discovered that there are quite a few in the world who are brave enough not to surrender to the violence of

right-wingers; and locally I've felt a warm reception among the people. What Mōriyasu and I had to face on our return to Yomitan, after our release on bail on November 20th was a continuation of the daily battles against all reactionaries.

On October 26th, because I had burned the Hinomaru, right-wingers immediately rushed to Yomitan. They threatened the mayor and the Village Office; they threatened arson and assault against my supermarket. Day in and day out, right-wingers persistently paraded by my market in large vans barking through loud-speakers. They continued until the end of the following February. They tried to take 'revenge' by disrupting my business and trying to destroy my shop. Nevertheless, the people didn't abandon me.

A group of supporters started keeping watch at night, taking turns, four people at a time, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.. As they all had jobs, they would work in the day, and stay up all night, guarding the market, regardless of pouring rain or freezing winter days. Although it is said that we have no winter in Okinawa, still it can get incredibly cold once in a while. I was tremendously grateful to those who guarded my shop. When nobody was available, members of the Executive Committee helped me. Even my mother tried to help sometimes. I'll never forget those people who stood watch all night, aware and worried that at any time right-wingers might attack.

Temporarily, sales dropped 50 percent due to the daily assaults. However, when they heard the news, people from all over the island travelled to Yomitan to shop at the Hanza Market. A 'shop and support' campaign was conducted by members of the Naha Municipal Workers' Labor Union, the Workers' Union of the Yonahara Town-Office, the Sennowan Municipal Workers' Labor Union, and teachers from the Chubu High School of Technology, as well as others. Collectively, at the end of the year they ordered their year-end gifts from my market. In addition to shopping in the daytime, the neighbors also provided encouragement for the 'look-outs' at night.

The sales of the shop recovered. The right-wingers who would come in strings of six or seven vans with loud-speaker blaring: "Don't shop at the un-patriotic Chibana Shoichi's shop! The shoppers are equally guilty," had to give up. In February, they even admitted, "The sales of the shop of the anti-patriot, Chibana Shoichi, have risen ever since he burned the Hinomaru, which is the strangest phenomenon. Ladies and gentlemen, how can you allow such a thing?" In fact, it wasn't true that sales had risen, but at least the local people had all come back; something I really appreciated.

Speaking of support, I also appreciated the more than 100 telegrams of encouragement sent from all over the country. Many of them were from school teachers and from the Alliance for the Liberation of the Buraku.*6

During my absence, my mother repeatedly received threatening phone calls from right-wingers. The worst among them were not the silent calls or the name calling — 'un-patriotic' and 'traitor.' Many were really gruesome. My mother had no choice but to answer every phone call; since at any time she might have received news from the hospital of my child's birth. Therefore, I can't begin to measure how much these telegrams must have encouraged both my mother and wife at such a stressful time.

One reason the right-wingers attacked the Statue in Chibichirigama may have been because my shop had been so firmly protected, and they couldn't attack it. There was no question that right-wingers were responsible for the destruction. However, since my action had triggered it, after I had been released, I visited the bereaved families of the Chibichirigama Cave one by one and tried to apologize for the circumstances. The President of the Bereaved Families Association, Higa Heishin, as well as all the Association's members, were shocked by the memorial's destruction. They expressed their resentment: "It's as if these victims had been killed twice." The Statue was the symbol of the Nami-hira people's unity; a total of 1,500 people had participated in building it. Every single household had contributed to a fund-raising drive in the hamlet. A great amount of money was sent from the Minamata people (victims of mercury-poison pollution in Minamata City in Kyushu). Perhaps several millions of yen were raised.

This Statue of Peace Through the Generations is a peace-seeking memorial for the bereaved families who finally broke their heavy silence 40 years after the war. Their shock at the destruction was beyond description. Nevertheless, I felt they were gracious and kind-spoken. They cared about my safety and tried to comfort me, saying that we could build it again. Afterwards, two right-wingers, who had ruined the Statue, had their attorney bring ¥1.2 million in 'sympathy money' to the bereaved families, but the families firmly refused it. For it was not a matter of money, but of heart.

On March 30th, right-wingers from all over Japan gathered at

*6 : Some three million Japanese are *buraku* people, a hereditary group who for centuries were the untouchables of Japanese society. Although their legal outcast status was abolished in 1971, many people still regard them as unmentionable, unemployable or unmarriageable.



The Right-wingers' van pushing into Yomitan

Yomitan and held a rally with the pompous title of 'A Mass Meeting for the Reprimand and Denunciation of Burning of the Hinomaru.' In addition to 60 right-wingers in Okinawa, 250 right-wingers from 95 mainland groups joined in. Altogether, about 300 flocked to Yomitan. During the several days that they stayed in Okinawa, my supporters stood guard at my house everyday, about ten people at a time. Nobody would rent a place to the right-wingers, so they ended up gathering at the ruins of the Yomitan Airport runway, which gave rise to no special incident.

THE WIDENING CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

The right-wingers reacted much more strongly than I had expected, but after I burned the Hinomaru the circle of supporters guarding my shop and encouraging me during my trial has widened, much more than I had expected. I burned the Hinomaru: a 'natural' act resulting from the accumulative struggle against the Hinomaru and Kimigayo. In response, a great number of people throughout the nation gave me their encouragement and support. Doesn't this demonstrate the great number of people who believe that the danger of war underlies the Hinomaru and Kimigayo?

Immediately after the 'incident,' and as the activities of the right-wingers made evident, support for our position had already arisen not only in Okinawa but also across the nation. It is still expanding. I've

already mentioned that I received many telegrams right after my action, and that supporters devoted their own time to protect my shop and that members of labor unions and school teachers backed me by shopping at my market.

In addition, various people from the prefecture supported me, too, such as professors Arasaki Moriteru and Arimei Masao. These various people extended helping hands. Overcoming various obstructions thrown up by the reactionaries, some unions, such as the Teachers' Union, have made the circle of support even wider.

Right after my release on bail, the Villagers' Council of Thinking of Yomitan Tomorrow planned a supporting rally on November 26th. Unfortunately, because of right-wing threats and disturbances, the rally couldn't be held; a group of 50 right-wingers flocked to the hall in Gino Bay, occupied its entrance and threatened hall officials. The local authority also exerted influence. Hall officials finally rejected the Committee's request to use the hall. The rally's failure was attributable to our naivete concerning the intensity and power of the right-wingers.

From this incident, I as well as others finally realized for the first time how formidable an adversary the right-wingers had been. Both my mother and wife had wanted to attend this rally, and my mother was especially shocked by its cancellation.

In Okinawa my main support was drawn from the following groups: the Villagers' Council of Thinking of Yomitan Tomorrow, the Council for Prefectural Citizens' Sovereignty Protesting the Emperor's Okinawa Visit, people of the north block of One-tsubo Anti-war Landholders' Organization and the Youth Executive Committee Protesting the Emperor's Okinawa Visit.

What's more, from the end of year to the present, many support rallies have been held all over Japan, and various support organizations have been founded. In Tokyo, two councils were formed: the Tokyo Council Questioning the Emperor's War Responsibility and Protesting his Okinawa Visit and the Council Deliberating and Protesting Against the Destruction of the Chibichirigama Statue of Peace. In Kansai,*7 the following two organizations were established: the Kansai Committee Supporting the Hinomaru Trial of Yomitan, and recently, the Kansai Committee Supporting the Chibana Trial. In Sendai,*8 on June 18th, 300 people got together to form a support organization; and in Hiro-

*7 : The western region of Japan which includes such cities as Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto and its vicinities.

*8 : A city located in northern part of Japan.

shima and Northern Kyushu, support organizations are being prepared.

On April 17th, for the first time after the incident, I attended a rally on the mainland, the Okinawa Festival for Human Rights. It was also the beginning of the clashes with right-wingers on the mainland. At Zen-suido Hall in Tokyo, some 30 right-wingers of the 'Issuikai' family,*9 attacked supporters guarding the entrance with wooden sticks; but they were repulsed. After my speech, a question and answer session followed, which turned out well and inspired me with courage.

From then on, the several rallies I took part in, both on the mainland and in Okinawa, involved clashes with right-wingers, but were successful because the expectation that right-wingers might break in highly charged the atmosphere. Ironically, the tension the right-wingers caused seemed to instill meetings with heightened enthusiasm. In preparing against their assaults, we tightly cooperated to defend ourselves against the enemy. Would this unity spur us to achieve the rallies? This happened, for example, on May 13th, at the inaugural meeting of the Kansai Committee for Supporting Chibana Trial in Kansai; on May 14th, at a rally of the Okinawa Committee for Self-Determination and Unity; and on the 15th, at a rally of the Yokohama School Union and at a rally of the Council Deliberating and Protesting Against the Destruction of the Chibichirigama Statue of Peace. Each meeting was charged with tension and enthusiasm.

During the June 18th rally in Sendai, right-wingers broke into the hall, striking our supporters in charge of guarding the entrance. Four persons on our side were arrested; nevertheless, with a full house of 300 participants it was a great success. On the following day in Tokyo two rallies were held, in Hibiya Park and Meiji Park. I attended the latter one, where I was attacked by right-wingers. I wasn't hurt at all, but the incident spawned a fast-spreading rumor, and some even said that I had been badly injured. *The Okinawa Times* reported: "The accused, Chibana was struck." My mother asked me if I had been attacked.

I never told my mother or father in advance about my plan to burn the Hinomaru. However, after the incident, and especially during my detention and during my wife's hospitalization for pregnancy, it was my mother who was thrown into the eye of the reactionaries' storm. The harassing telephone calls were just one facet. During that time many things occurred, and through association with various supporters, I think my family gradually came to understand my action to some degree. Nevertheless, it is also true that they have been concerned for

*9 : New Right-wing group.

my safety. Through the end of last year to the beginning of this year (1988), my mother stubbornly objected to my going to the rallies on the mainland. She even said: "If you dare to go, you'll no longer be my son." Even now, she is unhappy at my joining rallies on the mainland.

It has been both the material and spiritual efforts of countless people who wish for an anti-war Okinawa, and indeed, an anti-war Japan, that gave the courage and willingness to fight right-wing violence and protected my family against the force of the storm. To be frank, I'm afraid of right-wingers. I wouldn't be able to fight them alone. However, that doesn't mean I wouldn't fight; it means that when I hold on and fight alone, many other people would come to back me, and that support creates the power to strike back at any reactionary.

That is actually what my family and I have experienced since the incident. We've been joined by a number of people in support of our cause, and we will continue to spread our message from now on.

There are many tasks left, including the trial, that must be completed to create a more powerful and extensive 'anti-war & pro-peace' movement starting from Yomitan and Okinawa. My family and I will live and do our best in the challenges ahead.

Chapter 2

YOMITAN, MY YOUTH



Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa (Okinawa Peace Wishing Museum)