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Nuclear Policy Project

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### III. INFLUENCE ON NATIONAL POLICY

#### A. Demonstrable Effects

The intensity of Japanese public reactions to association with nuclear weapons in practical ways has limited the effectiveness of Japan's security arrangements with the US. In the present climate of domestic opinion, for example, the Japan Government could not publicly agree to storage by US forces of nuclear weapons in Japan and still retain office. The Hatoyama government tested public opinion on this score on March 14, 1955, with a statement in the Diet by the Prime Minister that Japan might not oppose atomic stockpiling in Japan "if it were determined that a policy of strength was the only way to maintain peace." In a series of Diet interpellations over the next three months, the government was forced to retract this statement and restate its policy in the following terms: 1) the Administrative Agreement provides no authority permitting the US to introduce nuclear weapons in Japan; 2) thermonuclear weapons were not then stored in Japan by the US and any immediate proposal to introduce them would be rejected; 3) Japan's consent would be required for the introduction of nuclear weapons and the US has no intention to bring them in without Japanese consent.

In defending this policy, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu on June 27, 1955, further assured the Diet that he had obtained on May 31, 1955 an "understanding" from Ambassador Allison that US forces were not "in possession of nuclear weapons in Japan" and that the US intended to seek Japanese consent to their introduction. This statement had its desired effect in cutting off Diet criticism of the government's policy. However, there was in fact no such understanding. In a secret letter of July 7, 1955, the foreign minister was officially informed by the Embassy that the ambassador "made no commitments on May 31 regarding the storage of atomic weapons in Japan" and that "the US Government does not consider itself committed to any particular course of action." In reply, a letter from the foreign minister of July 13, 1955, gave assurances that "nothing in the discussions in the Diet commits the US Government to any particular course of action." The tenor of the reply suggests that the government secretly did not share, at least to a decisive degree, the objections of the Japanese public to nuclear weapons storage.

This correspondence remains secret, however, and the public continues to believe that important US assurances have been obtained. This belief was strengthened when the present Prime Minister, Kishi Nobusuke, was interpellated on this subject during a Diet session on February 11, 1957, and again referred to such an "Allison-Shigemitsu agreement" as assuring Japan's neutrality in respect to nuclear weapons. (Apparently he did so against the recommendations of diplomatic advisers.) Subsequently, however, a storm of opposition by the Japanese public to the contemplated deployment of an atomic task force to Japan resulted in a US press statement that it had no intention of sending such forces to Japan and would in any event consult Japan prior to such a decision. Kishi later told the Diet that he would never agree to such deployment. Consequently, the erroneous impression given by Shigemitsu to the Japanese Diet and public has been substantially (though coincidentally)

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validated, and from this sequence of events, it is clear that Japanese public opinion is a controlling factor in the formulation of Japan's national policy toward nuclear weapons: On the whole, the Kishi government may be more accurately described as the follower than as the leader. Japanese public opinion on this general question.

The Soviet Union has exploited the influence of Japanese public opinion to wring yet another protestation of "nuclear neutrality" from the Tokyo government, in the form of comment on the Pravda article of January 23 which warned that the USSR would counter a nuclear weapons attack by the US from Japan with identical means. Although a Japanese Cabinet spokesman called this warning a "bluff" and an "attempt to scare," he declared that Japan is not providing any bases for nuclear warfare and stated that his country plans to avoid being involved in war.

1. Nevertheless, disclosure that the Allison-Shigemitsu "agreement" never existed would probably do grave damage to the conservative political position. The Socialists, if they should come to power, might very well make public the letter from Ambassador Allison for its political effect.

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