

〈The Uchinada Struggle〉

The Uchinada Struggle was the first anti-base protest movement to take place in the postwar period and chiefly concerned the construction of a weapons testing range on the Uchinada sand dunes. With the Korean War in full swing, in 1952 the US Forces demanded that Japan offer them a site to test their shells, and in response the Japanese government selected Uchinada as a viable candidate. In response to this, Uchinada residents rose up and formed a protest movement, one that received support from various political parties, labor organizations, students, and intellectuals. It was through the help of these various forms of support that the Uchinada Struggle over the base became national news. However, in March of 1953, the weapons testing commenced as planned, and the Japanese government drafted policies that would allow the sites to be used indefinitely. In response, the residents of Uchinada tirelessly staged sit-ins and circulated petitions. Unfortunately, the movement gradually lost steam as internal divisions developed within Uchinada and the testing range was fortified, and in September of the same year, the Uchinada municipal government came to the decision that the weapons testing would continue. Nevertheless, the Uchinada Struggle had an undeniable impact on nationwide military base protests and is still highly praised as the "starting point for grass-roots democracy" in Japan.