

The Future of Micronesia

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I

THE WINDS of change have swept across much of the globe since the end of World War II bringing in their wake the creation of many new nations, some too deficient in size, cultural development and natural resources to afford the luxury of self-development. These same winds have now reached the strategic Trusteeship of Micronesia, which was committed to our care by the United Nations in 1947. Proposals for a new relationship with our government are being debated by the island inhabitants. They range from the extreme position of immediate independence ("Complete Independence" and "Freedom Now"), to advocacy of the intermediate relationship of a freely associated state ("Free Association," as a Commonwealth with ties to the U.S.), and end at a third alternative: the continuation of the status quo while the Islanders work towards a viable economic and political status.

The year 1972 has been suggested as an appropriate time for a plebescite in which the Islanders may express their preference.

However, in advance of such action, our own government in the last year has suggested self-governing status for Micronesia in permanent association with the United States in accordance with a plan to be negotiated with representatives of the native peoples. In October of 1970 discussion started between members of United States Congressional Committees and native leaders comprising a ten man Future Political Status Commission named by the Congress of Micronesia. In the interest of provoking an in-depth consideration of the factors involved in the change of relationship from trustee power and ward to that of equal sovereignty, this article is written.

The government set up by the United States at the close of the war with Japan known as "The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands" administers as trustee all of the Carolines, all of the Marshalls and all of the Marianas Islands, except Guam which is United States territory. This government is divided into six separate administrative districts: Palau, Yap, Truk, Ponape, the Marshalls, and Saipan in the

Marianas which is the seat of the territorial government. The great arc of islands in the western Pacific known as the Micronesian Crescent extends from the Gilberts on the east to Palau on the west, only five hundred miles from the Philippines. It includes some 2,100 islands of which some 96 are inhabited, and ranges across an area of some 3,000,000 square miles of water surrounding 687 square miles of land, and contains more than 100,000 inhabitants.

The Marshalls Islands are less than 2,000 miles from Hawaii and the same distance from Japan as well as from Australia. They include our atomic energy installations at Eniwetok, and the huge air and naval base of Kwajalein, which is set in a lagoon that could berth all the navies of the world. Other fine harbors are at Guam, Tinian and Saipan in the Marianas, in the Truk Lagoon some 500 miles southeast of Guam, and at Ulithi in the Yap District, some 350 miles southwest of Guam. The bare ocean areas east and north of the Marshalls have been the scene over the last few years of splash-down for our space craft. The strategic importance of the Islands of Micronesia to the United States has been recognized by the policy of our government to oppose the incursion of any other nation into the ocean areas where they are situated.

As a group these islands entered modern history with their discovery by Spanish seafarers in the sixteenth century. The colonization by Spain was minimal, limited to a few sporadic settlements on Yap, Guam and in the Marshalls until the nineteenth century when all of the district principal settlements were established. However, by the middle of the century rivalry intensified between Spain and Germany, which had colonized a number of the Marshalls Islands and established coaling stations, and was intent on further economic exploitation.

Spain's control ended in 1898 with the cession of Guam to the United States at the end of the Spanish-American War, and the sale of the remaining islands to a Germany intent on developing world trade and in acquiring foreign bases for its expanding naval forces. Though German control did not exceed fifteen years duration, the imprint of the German character on native subsistence and culture was far-reaching. This was so particularly in the planting of crops, and in the development of a system of land registration designed to bring into orderly relationship the state of legal titles and rights of inheritance and use of land, the chief resource of the islands. Greater economic development occurred during the short German stay than in the three centuries of Spanish rule.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Japan, which had watched with growing concern the German incursion into an area dotted with stepping stones to the Japanese Islands, lost little time in seizing the Islands; and by joining the nations allied against Germany it solidified its claim for paramount control at the war's end. This was accorded by a League of Nations mandate in 1920 under whose aegis Japan undertook a program of economic infiltration and development. Administrators from Japan assumed direction of political and economic affairs, gearing production to the needs of Japan's expanding economy and war potential.

After 1935, when Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, it unilaterally and in defiance of League protests undertook to incorporate the islands into its development plan known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It proceeded to improve harbors, install air bases and military emplacements, and introduced many thousands of farmers, industrial workers and naval and military personnel. The pressure to carry out the agricultural and industrial

program of Japan in these islands continued unabated until the coming of World War II; it was accompanied by a repressive atmosphere which became intolerable to the natives as the Japanese war machine proved inadequate to protect the islands from the leapfrog tactics of the United States forces. In the last stages, with no relief available from the mother country, large numbers of Japanese military and civilian personnel were left to compete with the indigenous inhabitants for the scarce food these islands were able to produce.

But even before the war years Japan had taken over the best located and most productive lands for its strategic requirements and for individual use, paying small and in some cases no compensation to the clan which was the owner. Claims for redress when permitted to be asserted were settled most often by the decree of the police-master and not by civil judges as in Japan. In the field of political control and self-government, Japan made little effort to develop local autonomy, ruling the natives through administrators appointed from Japan and acting on the people through the authority of their hereditary chiefs. They did, however, encourage intermarriage and rewarded the most talented students by educational trips to the motherland. Economic penetration was fostered and Japanese goods and commerce increased to the point where the absorption of the native population and their culture into that of the more vigorous Japanese would have ultimately occurred. This course of events was reversed, however, by the termination of the war, leaving the mass of Japanese military personnel and migrants to be repatriated to their islands and the native population to be restored to their dispossessed lands.

II

UPON COMPLETION of the conquest by

United States forces in 1945, the Civil Administration of the Islands was assumed by American military forces under the international law of belligerent occupation. This no doubt could have continued indefinitely on the basis of the strategic necessity of assuring for all time the benevolent control of these island approaches to the Hawaiians and California. However, the State Department under President Truman decreed otherwise in the euphoria generated in the wake of creation of the United Nations. Upon the assumption that Japan, as a result of the war, had ceased to exercise any authority in these islands, the United States decided to submit the matter of initial administration and ultimate independence to the newly established United Nations Trusteeship Council, and to accept a trusteeship under its authority.¹ This was accomplished in a trusteeship document which imposed substantial obligations on this country as the trustee power, with little recognition except in one respect for the blood and treasure expended in the conquest of the Islands. This exception was to place the United States in the position of operating a strategic trusteeship² (the only such recognized by the United Nations) in deference to the unusual situation created by conquest of an area deemed vital to the security of the United States. Implicit in such a trusteeship was the right to install and maintain military bases and forces in the territory,³ and to exclude other nationals from migration into and even trade with and transit through the district.⁴

Pertinent provisions of the Trusteeship Agreement approved by the President and Congress on July 18, 1947 are worth noting: under the Agreement the United States assumed the obligation of promoting the economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants, of protecting their civil rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination, of fostering and developing

a general system of elementary education, and the pursuit of higher and professional education as well. It also agreed to promote the self-government of the people in accordance with their expressed wishes, and to give them an increasing share in the administrative services in the territory. And lastly, it agreed to provide a system of law which would give due recognition to the well-recognized native customs of the inhabitants.

In order to provide a proper framework in accordance with the standards recognized by Western civilization and within which the rights given the inhabitants might develop, a system of laws and regulations was promulgated by the occupying authority and adopted in a code known as the Trust Territory Code of Laws. It consists of a Bill of Rights modeled on the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution, and a constitution and series of laws setting up a system of government similar to that in force in the United States but with certain significant differences.

One of these differences was the provision for the vesting of executive power in a High Commissioner appointed by the President of the United States, as well as district administrators for each of the six districts to be appointed by the Secretary of Interior. Another was to bestow the ultimate legislative power on the High Commissioner with similar local authority vested in the district administrators of the respective districts, and in the island municipal councils where organized municipalities had been incorporated.

This legislative power has been considerably dissipated with the development of district legislatures for each of the administrative districts, and since 1964, of a Congress of Micronesia consisting of elected representatives from each of the districts. In addition, four of the districts now have

natives as district administrators, with native born deputy administrators in all of the districts.

Each district has a political affairs officer whose major responsibility is the development of new municipalities organized and controlled as to local matters by the residents of the area involved. Their responsibility is to levy and collect taxes for public improvements such as schools and roads, and to defray the cost of local government. More and more of the decisions involving local matters have been delegated to community councils, the district legislatures, and to the Congress of Micronesia, with the major cost of administration and public works being subsidized by the United States Congress. However, the ultimate decision on public works and the expenditure of tax monies and United States subsidies is still the province of the High Commissioner and the American staff.

In the course of the last ten years many new primary schools have been built and education has become a reality for children living in even the most distant islands. At the end of the 1969 school year some 32,708 students were in attendance in some 190 public and 19 private elementary schools, and in 8 public and 11 church mission high schools, with more under construction. The head of the territorial school administration is now a Micronesian, with other islanders occupying high educational administrative positions in the central government. Thus, the objectives of the Trust Agreement seem to be approaching realization and but for the lagging economic development, would promise an early termination of trusteeship status. It is, however, a regrettable fact that the budgetary funds provided by the United States have jumped from the less than six million dollars annually for the period 1958-1959 to the forty-one millions for the year 1969, with a deficiency appropriation of some

seven and one-half millions for that year recently approved by our Congress, and the President has approved further some sixty millions for fiscal 1971.

Nevertheless, a movement by some Micronesian leaders has developed support for a program leading to immediate complete independence, or as an alternative, to incorporation as a free state in association with the United States. Certain complaints made from time to time by these leaders are usually voiced to bolster their desires for independence.

III

THE FIRST of these complaints is resentment at inability to gain fiscal control of the public exchequer. Since only five percent of the budget is raised by taxation in Micronesia, the Administration has been unwilling to allow the Congress of Micronesia or the district legislators to have the final disposition of funds appropriated by the United States Congress. Recently, after much wrangling and objection to imposing an income tax on native businesses and incomes, the tax act passed by the Congress of Micronesia was vetoed by the High Commissioner as inadequate. Accordingly, in the event of independence and cessation of the funds supplied by the American government, the Micronesians would indeed acquire control of their taxing and disbursing procedures, but would have in the main a debtridden administration unless they would be willing to impose adequate taxation to carry on their governmental needs, or find additional sources of revenue not now apparent. Hopefully, they might be able to reduce the cost of government to a small fraction of its present extent, but this could be accomplished only by eliminating the numerous social service agencies which have proliferated over the last six years.

Most Americans are unaware of the number and extent of the United States government programs which are presently being carried on by the Trust Territory Government; among those current in Micronesia are the following, with appropriate alphabetical symbols:

- Community Development (CD)
- Grant-In-Aid (GIA)
- Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs)
- Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)
- Community Action Agencies (CAA)
- Neighborhood Youth Program (NYP)
- Job Corps (JC)
- Micronesian Community Action Development Organization (MCADO)
- Technical Assistance Agency (TAA)
- Territorial Economic Opportunity Office (TEOO)
- Office of Aging (OoA)
- Civic Action Teams (CAT)
- Health & Urban Development (HUD)
- Health, Education & Welfare (HEW)
- Social Security (SS)

The total number of government employees serving the 95,000 people of Trust Territory is shown as 5,000 in the figures released during 1970. However, this probably does not include the 650 Peace Corps workers, and Washington staff members of the Department of Interior participating in the administration of government in the islands. Thus the total for the relatively simple, unsophisticated society of Micronesia would seem to exceed on a comparative basis the combined federal, state and local employees now maintained in these welfare-oriented United States. In our anxiety to provide ever-increasing social services to the Micronesians it appears we have made it well nigh impossible for them to ever afford the luxury of self-government.

Another complaint has been made that though there are many Micronesians in high executive posts in the present administration as well as numerous other employ-

ees, they do not represent the people of the islands since they were not selected by their choice. The same contention can, of course, be made with respect to civil servants in any democracy.

A particularly sore point until recently has been the different wage scales in effect in job classifications affecting Micronesian staff members. The Administration has been unable to recruit American staff members at lower rates than those paid on the mainland; U.S. rates are of course far greater than rates payable to Micronesian laborers and professionals in their current labor market. Applying native wage standards in keeping with the highest in effect in comparable island communities had seemed fair in past years to American budgetary authorities. However, in the past year all Trust Territory employees have been put under one pay schedule in a Merit System assuring equal pay for equal work.

A further area of protest has developed around the maintenance of American military and scientific installations notably at Kwajalein, and at Eniwetok, the headquarters of the Atomic Energy Commission. Native spokesmen have requested and the Congress of Micronesia has adopted legislation (vetoed by the High Commissioner) providing that there be no expansion of these facilities pending action on the proposals for independence. Although there had been substantial damage to health and to community life in the Marshalls from atomic fallout prior to 1960, claims arising from this occurrence were settled years ago, and there is reason to believe that this objection is advanced mainly for bargaining purposes; it is without real substance.

Further criticism has developed around the alleged failure to teach political organization and democratic procedures, and more importantly, the admitted failure to bring the islands to economic self-sufficiency. As to the first, the progress in mass edu-

cation and preparation to assume the responsibilities of self-government has been substantial when measured against the situation of the islanders prior to American occupation. (It should be noted for instance that these peoples were without a written language.) And their inability to achieve self-sufficiency in economic terms must be compared with the modest needs of a community once based almost solely on a coconut economy and one now becoming increasingly adjusted to Oriental rice, Japanese fish, beer and beauty preparations, and American liquor, cigarettes, machines and industrial know-how. Most apparent, however, is the increasing awareness of the native leaders that though their distinctive culture has miraculously withstood the impact of four centuries of colonization, it will not survive in the face of an attempt to convert it into an affluent modern society. How to protect the one while deriving the benefit of more of the other is the problem.

IV

THREE ALTERNATIVES are under present consideration by the Future Political Status Commission appointed by the Congress of Micronesia: Complete Independence (and Freedom Now), Free Association, and continuance for a term of years under the status quo.

The proponents of Complete Independence are those who wish to take advantage of the democratic procedures and educational advances derived from the American occupation. On this they propose to build a nation based on similar cultures and customs, but without a common language other than English. They liken their status to that of our original thirteen colonies, which they mistakenly believe had as their original goal the founding of a nation independent of the mother country.

The Complete Independence adherents apparently believe it is not necessary for the native islanders to master economic problems first in order to live; they assume that the islands can somehow furnish self-subsistence to their growing number of inhabitants. As one leader puts it, "It is more important to have a coconut than a coca cola." Nevertheless, in the face of the heavy cost of education, public health, transportation, communications, social services and public works entailing continuance of substantial deficits under the American administration, it is difficult to envision an independent Micronesia able to carry itself unless the American security facilities are taxed at a confiscatory rate. Presumably the United States could retaliate by dismantling its installations and moving them elsewhere, which could spell economic ruin to the islanders unless some other nation offered subsidies in exchange for similar facilities or penetration, thus threatening the strategic protection presently afforded us by the islands.

It would seem that if a substantial majority of the islanders desires to disassociate itself completely from our trusteeship, this can be readily accomplished if assurances satisfactory to our government can be obtained that the new government will be viable and not likely to fail on account of economic insufficiency. In addition, satisfactory arrangements must then be concluded for the continued use of military and scientific installations presently owned by the United States without interference from the new authorities or the imposition of regulations impairing their usefulness. Keeping in mind the problems we are presently experiencing in our operation of the Panama Canal, the necessity of adequate protection for our strategic interests should be self-evident.

Similar considerations should encompass negotiations for Free Association of an in-

dependent Micronesia as a Commonwealth joined by economic, political and military ties to the United States. A major difference between the Complete Independence adherents and the Free Association advocates is that the former seem intent on reversing the Westernization of the islands and concentrating instead on the strengthening of native cultures. This would restore the close association of clan members, which Western education has tended to weaken, and assure the paramount position of the native chiefs and elders. There would probably be a reduction in the program for development of foreign trade and of tourism which require hotels and recreational facilities appealing to the world traveler.

The Free Association advocates are resigned to an increasing influx of tourists and to the commercial climate they would develop. They are not concerned that a successful tourism program would tend to preempt desirable locations and intensify the congestion and competition for living space which has already appeared in some of the districts. Some 20,600 tourists visited the islands in 1969, of whom some 60 percent came from the United States, and 5,300 from Japan, with more expected in subsequent years. These proponents expect in any event that the association of the new independent state with the United States would result in continued economic assistance and capital development by the United States because of our strategic interests.

This view has been fortified by the recent statement of the High Commissioner publicized in the second quarter, 1970, issue of the *Micronesian Reporter* that he looks for an increase in the annual budget of some \$30,000,000 for the next years with the government competing against the private sector for the services of graduates of institutions of higher learning. This worthy gentleman fails to consider the fact that ful-

ly 50 percent of the native population is under 20 years of age, and that up to now a relatively small number of those undergoing schooling have reached the labor market. When they do, it takes no seer to predict the pressure on government to subsidize uneconomic programs and activities in order to eliminate mass white collar unemployment.

Possibly the Free Association and Complete Independence advocates both have in mind that the new state could start with a substantial treasury derived from settlement of the claims recently advanced by the natives for payment of war damage claims of some three billion dollars. These claims were triggered by the Japanese-American agreement of April, 1969 which required each party to pay five million dollars towards satisfaction of the damages sustained by the natives in the conquest by United States forces in the years 1943 to 1945. Whether claims of this magnitude can be left for settlement after Independence or Free Association may well be doubted, particularly if no satisfactory assurances concerning the maintenance of United States military and scientific installations are forthcoming. And any amount ultimately awarded will surely fall far short of the extravagant claims now advanced, which have been made or suggested on numerous other occasions.

V

THE VIEW which recommends itself to this writer is the so-called third alternative, namely that continuance of the status quo for at least fifteen years would be in the best interests of the islanders. This would permit the present controlled development of resources and access by visitors, with

continuation of the laws presently in force restricting business operation and ownership of lands to Micronesians, except where the Administration is of the opinion that the public interest is better served otherwise. It would assure the orderly expansion of the tourist program presently under way with the backing of the United States, at least to the point of determining whether an adequate number of visitors would make the long and expensive hop to this island area some 5,000 miles west of San Francisco. In this way it could be determined whether the tropical climate could attract sufficient patronage to take up the slack in commercial and industrial development.

Over the last ten years we have constantly expanded our governmental structure in the islands in order to furnish welfare and social services on a scale comparable to those furnished in highly industrial nations. In the opinion of this writer, the course we have thus followed is at odds with our primary duty under the trusteeship charter. It seems clear that if self-determination of the inhabitants is our goal as trustee power, and if either independence or free association is what they desire, we are using tactics which are bound to make either of these eventualities impossible to realize.

An alternate course is to sharply curtail the welfare services now being provided by government which the islanders could never afford if left on their own, and reduce the governmental structure to a level which present or conservatively estimated future revenues can support. Otherwise, we shall find ourselves committed to a course of perpetual subsidy for a population which can survive only as long as the American public is willing to continue in the role of almsgiver.⁵

⁵Preamble to the Trusteeship Agreement (approved by the U.N. Security Council on April 2,

1947, and by the President and Congress of the U.S. on July 18, 1947) is as follows:

WHEREAS Article 75 of the Charter of the United Nations provides for the establishment of an international trusteeship system for the administration and supervision of such territories as may be placed thereunder by subsequent agreements; and

WHEREAS under Article 77 of the said Charter the trusteeship system may be applied to territories now held under mandate, and

WHEREAS on 17 December 1920 the Council of the League of Nations confirmed a mandate for the former German islands north of the equator to Japan, to be administered in accordance with Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations; and

WHEREAS Japan, as a result of the Second World War, has ceased to exercise any authority in these islands;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Security Council of the United Nations, having satisfied itself that the relevant articles of the Charter have been complied with, hereby resolves to approve the following terms of trusteeship for the Pacific Islands formerly under the mandate to Japan.

²Article 1 of the Trusteeship Agreement states as follows:

The Territory of the Pacific Islands, consisting of the islands formerly held by Japan under mandate in accordance with Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, is hereby designated as a strategic area and placed under the trusteeship system established in the Charter of the United Nations. The Territory of the Pacific Islands is hereinafter referred to as the trust territory.

³Article 5 of the Trusteeship Agreement states as follows:

In discharging its obligations under Article 76(a) and Article 84, of the Charter, the administering authority shall ensure that the trust territory shall play its part, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in the maintenance of international peace and security. To this end the administering authority shall be entitled:

1. to establish naval, military and air bases and to erect fortifications in the trust territory;
2. to station and employ armed forces in the territory; and
3. to make use of volunteer forces, facilities and assistance from the trust territory in carrying out the obligations towards the Security Council undertaken in this regard by the administering authority, as well as for the local defense and the maintenance of law and order within the trust territory.

⁴Article 8 of the Trusteeship Agreement states as follows:

1. In discharging its obligations under Article

76(d) of the Charter, as defined by Article 83(2) of the Charter, the administering authority, subject to the requirements of security, and the obligation to promote the advancement of the inhabitants, shall accord to nationals of each Member of the United Nations and to companies and associations organized in conformity with the laws of such Member, treatment in the trust territory no less favorable than that accorded therein to nationals, companies and associations of any other United Nation except the administering authority.

2. The administering authority shall ensure equal treatment to the Members of the United Nations and their nationals in the administration of justice.

3. Nothing in this Article shall be so construed as to accord traffic rights to aircraft flying into and out of the trust territory. Such rights shall be subject to agreement between the administering authority and the state whose nationality such aircraft possesses.

4. The administering authority may negotiate and conclude commercial and other treaties and agreements with Members of the United Nations and other states, designed to attain for the inhabitants of trust territory treatment by the Members of the United Nations and other states no less favorable than that granted by them to the nationals of other states. The Security Council may recommend, or invite other organs of the United Nations to consider and recommend, or invite other organs of the United Nations to consider and recommend, what rights the inhabitants of the trust territory should acquire in consideration of the rights obtained by Members of the United Nations in the trust territory.

⁵Since preparing this article news arrived of the breakdown of negotiations between the United States delegation composed of representatives from the Departments of Interior, State and Defense, and observers from the Senate and House Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs, and the Micronesian Political Status Delegation named by the Congress of Micronesia.

In a news dispatch from New York dated April 20, 1971 United Nations correspondent William Fulton wrote in the *Chicago Tribune* that the Micronesian Delegation had turned down Washington's offer of semi-autonomous Commonwealth status similar to that of Puerto Rico, and the United States in turn had refused a counter-proposal for complete local government in free association with the United States. To bridge the resulting gap, President Nixon has appointed Franklin H. Williams of San Francisco, president of the Asia Foundation, to act as his personal representative in reopening negotiations with the Micronesians.

Concerning the Matter of Choice

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THE THEORY which I am about to expound is based on the premise that the great majority of human beings, when given a choice between pain and painlessness, will choose to avoid the pain whatever the degree. That when faced with a choice between the accomplishment of a task at the expense of a less amount of labor than he has been accustomed to, the average human would choose the less laborious means, even though there might be other value factors involved. That if he could accomplish a journey with greater speed than had been previously possible, he would choose the means which delivered him at his destination most expeditiously, provided there was no significant sacrifice in the way of comfort involved. That if the choice was offered between luxury and austerity, he would choose the luxurious.

The list could be extended without adding to the persuasiveness of the argument, but the final and most significant point has to do with the choice between life and death and with the prolongation of life. Of course

there are exceptions which can easily be pointed out, even in the matter of life and death and longevity, but I feel certain that the premise is an essentially sound one. It would even seem that the impulses or instincts which lead the average human to make choices in these directions are inherent, and form a basic component of the behavior of all animals. At the bottom is the instinct of self-preservation, and tied in with it is the instinct which leads to the choice of the pleasant and comfortable over the disagreeable.

So, the choices which I have indicated seem to me to be not only to be expected, but sensible ones to make as well. When confronted with the opportunity none will hesitate to choose that which is pleasant, or to postpone death as long as possible; to do so is human, and in all probability instinctive as well, a tropism which the naturalist would insist was as integral a part of human behavior akin to that power which forces the moth into the flame.

I first pondered on these matters when