

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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ENDORSE EXISTING MATERIAL Brief Digest of the Interim Report of the
 DECLASSIFIED RELEASABLE Congress of Micronesia's Future
 RELEASE DENIED Political Status Commission

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The Congress of Micronesia's Future Political Status Commission held three meetings during 1967-68. On July 8, 1968 the Committee members issued an Interim Report describing the activities they had undertaken; setting forth the results of their studies of other Territories; and asking for an extension of their mandate so that they might complete their work.

The report starts by listing the four tasks set forth in the enacting legislation:

- a. To develop and recommend procedures and courses of political education and action;
- b. To present such range of possibilities and alternatives as may be open to Micronesians with respect to their choice of political status;
- c. To recommend procedures and courses whereby the wishes of the people of the Territory may be ascertained with respect to the political future status of Micronesia; and
- d. To undertake a comparative analysis and to select areas of study of the manners and procedures whereby other territories and developing nations have achieved their self-government, independence or other status.

The Interim Report comments on the Commission's work in each of these areas as follows:

A. Developing Procedures and Courses of Political Education and Action

The Commission agreed that Micronesians still do not understand their present government and that there could be no act of self-determination before the people are able to learn all the issues and thus make a responsible decision.

The Commission considered including the political status question in the school curriculum, but decided to defer a decision on this matter. The members felt the various alternatives and the ways of ascertaining the wishes of the people had to be studied prior to establishing an educational program.

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B. Existing Possibilities for the Territory's Future

The members felt there were two primary variables -- one geographical and the other political. As for the first, there were three possibilities:

1) The Territory could be expanded by the addition of Guam, Nauru, American Samoa, the Cook Islands, or the Gilbert and Ellice Islands - or combinations thereof. The members felt this course had little merit. The economic advantages would be small, if any -- they all shared the same problems and would only be spreading the available resources thinner. The cultural ties were weak, and, with the possible exception of Guam, the other territories were not interested in such a union. The Commission did feel that Guam was a special case deserving of further study, but additional time would be required.

2) The Territory could be divided, but this alternative also had few advantages. It raised immediate questions as to where to make the division and what to do with the parts. It might ease the transportation burden, but otherwise it would do little. Above all, both the UN and the US had said fragmentation was out of the question, thus making further consideration pointless.

3) Or the Territory could stay as it was. The Commission chose to concentrate on this last choice for two reasons: the members felt (a) that nationalism was beginning to take root in the Territory and (b) that there were advantages to size and diversity -- namely that the various districts could specialize in their economic development and yet complement one another.

Accepting the third geographical alternative, the Commission turned to the political dimension where it saw four possibilities: 1) independence, 2) free associated state (or protectorate), 3) integration with a sovereign nation, or 4) continuation as a Trust Territory.

The Commission set forth its preliminary and very tentative views on each of these alternatives as follows:

1) Independence - Micronesia could pick its own way and have an equal voice in the UN, but there were major weaknesses

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in terms of money, manpower and economic development. Outside aid would be needed to provide the necessary funds, and undoubtedly there would be strings attached. Trained manpower would have to be hired, at some cost, from outside. And when could Micronesia go it alone in terms of economic development? The Commission also felt that any consideration of independence could not ignore the US' continuing strategic interest in the Territory.

2) Free associated state - this arrangement would solve most of the problems associated with independence, but the Commission cited questions which would arise -- With what state should they associate? What type of association would be involved? -- it would clearly involve restrictions; and could either party terminate the arrangement at will?

3) Integration with a sovereign nation - here the obvious choice was the United States. The Territory's need would be met, but what kind of relationship would exist? The Commission saw three alternatives: a) Commonwealth - such as Puerto Rico - this was the loosest. It allowed the choice of independence at any time and also allowed application for statehood. b) Unincorporated Territory - this was the next step on the scale of closer and closer relationships with the US. It would be much the same as the TTPI's current status without the existence of a Trusteeship Agreement. c) Incorporated Territory - the next thing to statehood, with almost complete self-government.

4) Remaining as a Trust Territory - this had an advantage in that continued public exposure served to pressure the US Congress to expedite development. The Commission also pointed out, however, that the final resolution of Micronesia's political status would serve to hurry development by establishing more certain relationships with the rest of the world. As will be noted below, the Commission found contradictory evidence on this point.

In stating their belief that further extensive studies were required, the members particularly felt that they should make some trips -- in the TTPI to learn the wishes of the people; to Puerto Rico to study the Commonwealth system; to Washington to learn the attitudes of both the Executive Branch and the Congress;

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and to Hawaii to consult with experts at the University of Hawaii and the East-West Center and observe the constitutional debate there.

C. Procedures and Courses to Ascertain the Wishes of the People

The Commission was unable to consider this item due to insufficient time.

D. Study and Comparative Analysis of Other Territories and Developing Nations

The Commission made studies of five such territories or former territories -- Puerto Rico, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Philippines and Guam. In each case the report goes into some detail on the historical evolution of the political status now existing in the nation/territory. The Commission then made a comparative analysis of the five nations/territories and concluded that none of them were economically self-sufficient at the time their current status was achieved. It noted that, with the advent of tourism, Puerto Rico achieved a degree of economic independence, but this took place ten years after commonwealth status. In the other cases, however, despite efforts and plans for development, results were disappointing both before and after the determination of political status. Thus the Commission concluded that economic development does not follow directly from the resolution of the status question. Therefore Micronesia should not seek early status determination solely on economic grounds.

In the political realm, the Commission observed that (a) in all five cases, the metropolitan government had neglected political development and (b) at least in the case of American territories, political agitation played a role in achieving a change of status. The neglect arose primarily because the territories lacked the necessary political leverage to bring their situation to the attention of the metropolitan power. In all cases, the dependent territories had lacked a voice in selecting the leaders of the metropolitan country and had no vote in its legislature. The Commission noted that the TTPI was doing better in this regard, both because of Trusteeship Council pressure and because of increasing awareness of the US strategic interests in Micronesia.

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As for agitation, it had definitely been stronger in territories which had been or were still under US control. In addition to advancing the resolution of the political status question, this agitation had resulted in the formation of political parties and had helped develop the indigenous leadership necessary after status determination.

The Commission concluded by observing that its analysis was very superficial and that much deeper treatment was required.

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Some Random Comments on the Micronesian Status Commission's Interim Report

1. It is very much an interim report -- the Commission makes this point repeatedly. Its only really firm conclusion or recommendation is that, no matter what its future status, the geographical limits of the TTPI should remain as they are now (with the possible addition of Guam). The full Congress of Micronesia, at its Fourth Session, agreed that further study was required and appropriated the additional funds requested by the Commission.

2. Thus, reading between the lines is dangerous. Nevertheless, one might surmise from the interim report that the Commission sees the most advantage in some form of integration with the US -- probably a Commonwealth status such as Puerto Rico -- but in any case, with the right to break the tie and opt for independence at any time. This conclusion is based on several points:

a) In addition to the theoretical difficulties with independence mentioned in the report, in its case studies on the Philippines and Western Samoa, the report is hardly enthusiastic in its descriptions. In the case of the Philippines, in addition to pointing out continuing problems, the Commission made no effort to indicate that the TTPI's situation was really comparable. The analysis of Western Samoa emphasized its continuing economic weakness, despite a better record prior to independence than now exists in the TTPI -- and thus questioned whether Micronesia was fit to follow the same course.

b) As for the associated state or protectorate, the case study of the Cook Islands hardly served to dispel the theoretical

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shortcomings cited by the Commission. Here again the economic weakness, if not utter dependence, was cited. It is interesting, however, that the case study clearly pointed out the Cook Islands' right to break its ties with New Zealand at any time.

c) As for the integrated territories, the report puts Guam, with its heavy dependence on the US military, in a special case. Puerto Rico, however, receives quite favorable attention and while not clearly stated, the Commission apparently saw at least some similarities between the situation in the TTPI now and that in Puerto Rico prior to 1952. Among other signs of the interest in the Puerto Rican example is the Committee's request for funds to permit a visit there for the purpose of closer study. Again it is noteworthy, and I believe significant, that the report clearly (albeit erroneously) states Puerto Rico's right, should it so choose, to sever its ties with the US at any time.

*Davidson also
advised Nauru*

3. Perhaps casting some doubt on the above, is the mention in the case studies of Western Samoa and the Cook Islands of the role played by Professor J. W. Davidson of Australia in the final resolution of the status of these two territories. Since Professor Davidson has accepted an invitation to consult with the Commission in Saipan (he arrived in early February and has now presumably returned to Australia), perhaps the Commission members are more positive in their appraisal of their Pacific counterparts than one might otherwise conclude.

4. Another qualification of the Commission's probable preference is the indication in the report that the members are not opposed to a continuation of the Trusteeship System, at least for a limited time. Not only was this possibility considered as one of the alternatives, but the report's analysis of the case studies clearly indicated the advantage to the TTPI of having the Trusteeship Council to exert pressure on the United States. Finally, although the Commission early in its report stated that political uncertainty adversely affected the economic development of a territory, it later also concluded that economic advancement did not necessarily or even usually follow determination of political status. Thus the Commission presented no conclusive reasons for pushing for an early change in status, and in fact gave a number which argued for a delay.

5. One final point of possible significance is the Commission's mention of the role of agitation in the determination of political

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status -- particularly in the other American Territories. Of particular interest is the fact that the report cites two benefits resulting from such agitation: not only the obvious one of stimulating the resolution of the status question, but also the spawning of political parties and the training of future leaders. One can draw one's own conclusions as to the connection between the report's analysis on this point and the growing ferment in the TTPI.

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