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MICRONESIANS ASK LOOSE TIE TO U. S.

If Negotiations Fail, Island Unit Favors Independence

By ROBERT TRUMBULL
Special to The New York Times

CHALAN KANO, Saipan, May 6—A political status commission in Micronesia has recommended that the territory be made a self-governing nation in a "free association" with the United States.

In the event that the negotiations for an American link are unsuccessful, the commission suggested that "complete independence" be sought.

Micronesia consists of 2,141 Pacific islands and atolls scattered over an ocean area the size of the continental United States. The United States governs them as a United Nations trusteeship. There are 93,000 inhabitants.

The importance of Micronesia to the United States was underscored here this week by a visit by Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel, whose department is responsible for their administration.

With United States military bases in Japan and Okinawa under increasing political attack, attention has been focused on the islands as a possible new defense perimeter in the Western Pacific.

Scenes of Heavy Fighting

Many of the islands were the scene of heavy fighting in World War II. Saipan and other battle sites, once prospering population centers under the former Japanese rulers, have never recovered from the wartime devastation.

The condition of Saipan after nearly 24 years of post-war American rule was said to have shocked Mr. Hickel, who was seeing the island for the first time. The site of rusty, tumble-down wartime structures in places of great natural beauty has brought the criticism that the United States has let the islands degenerate into tropical slums.

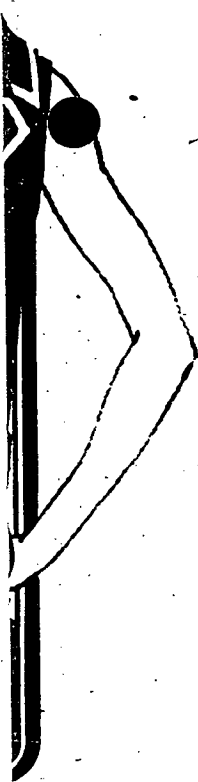
"Public opinion has been so opposed to the American administration of the trust territory that the United States cannot take the Micronesians for granted," Senator Lazarus Salii, chairman of the six-man status commission, said in an interview.

However, he said, against a background of long colonial rule, first by Spain and then by Germany and Japan, most islanders strongly favor a permanent connection with the United States.

Report Due in July

The status commission was appointed two years ago by the Congress of Micronesia, a legislative body with limited powers. The group, composed of four Senators and two members of the lower house in the All-Island Congress, will make its formal report in July.

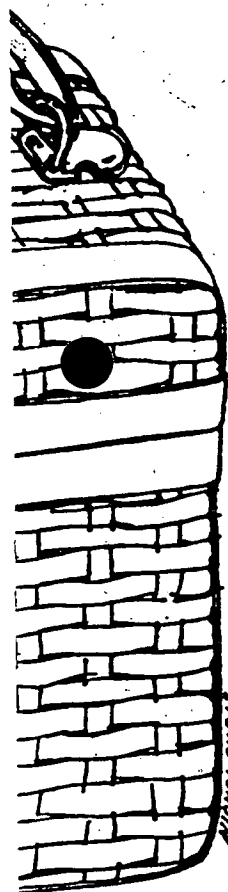
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"The recommendation for internal self-government and free association with the United States will be the core of the report," said Mr. Sali, a 33-year-old graduate of the University of Hawaii.

While Mr. Hickell declined to comment on the status report beyond saying that "there are obviously some good recommendations in it," officials accompanying him indicated a strong disposition in Washington to keep the strategic islands American.

"The United States simply is not going to give up Micronesia," one member of the party declared emphatically.

At a news conference on a hotel veranda overlooking a white sand beach and a sparkling blue lagoon, Mr. Hickel stated that the trust territory's political future could be settled before 1972, the date proposed by the Johnson Administration for a plebiscite.

Details Can Wait

Mr. Sali suggested, in an interview, that an early plebiscite could endorse the union with the United States in principle, after which the details of the association could be worked out at a more leisurely pace taking "perhaps five to eight years."

"There is a feeling of urgency that some decision be made," he declared. "The uncertainty as to where we shall be in the future is becoming bothersome to more people every day."

He suggested that the economic needs of a semi-independent Micronesia might continue to be met by the United States through payment for military rights on the islands.

Since the war, defensive operations have been confined mostly to the Marshall Islands, at the eastern end of the trust territory. These were the site of extensive nuclear tests at the Bikini and Eniwetok atolls. Kwajalein Atoll is now used for missile tests.

However, various islands have undergone surveys by the military. The latest, a few weeks ago, was said to have been concerned with possible training sites on Saipan as Tinian in the Marianas. Under the agreement with the United Nations Trusteeship Council, the United States is permitted to use the islands for military purposes.

Housing Group Elects Head

ALEXANDRIA BAY, N. Y., May 6 (AP) — Mrs. Dorothy Trichener, chairman of the Binghamton Housing Authority, today was elected president of the State Association of Housing and Community Renewal Officials.



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