

DECLASSIFIED

CA-5708

05
7

UNCLASSIFIED

Page No. 1 of 4
Encl. No. 1
A- to Canberra

The Christian Science Monitor
August 27, 1969

US Tie Proposed

MICRONESIANS WEIGH HICKEL POLICY OUTLINE

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Garapan, Saipan

In the aftermath of Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel's recent visit to Saipan, a sticky, eye-of-the-typhoon type calm prevails over the politics in this Micronesian capital. The air of studied deliberation indicates that the time for negotiating a change in Micronesian status has at last arrived.

This new phase of Micro-American relations was born, rather automatically, when Mr. Hickel proclaimed during his visit to Micronesia the Nixon administration's "new American policy" in the Trust Territories.

In a surprisingly casual talk, Secretary Hickel described the policy and its goal -- which, boldly stated, is the establishment of a permanent political bond between the Trust Territories and the United States and the elimination of the United Nations in Micronesian affairs. Mr. Hickel's address amounted to a low-profile manifesto directed not just to the Micronesians, but to the United Nations and the world as well.

Unilateral appearance

At the time of Mr. Hickel's address, no petition formally soliciting a political affiliation with the United States had even been submitted by the Micronesians. Mr. Hickel's declaration of intent to absorb Micronesia into a permanent political association thus appeared unilateral.

The address has had a significant effect on the Saipan political scene. A local American pundit called it a "walrus talk" and

DECLASSIFIED

CS-421595

UNCLASSIFIED

Page 2 of 4

Encl. No. 1

A- to Canberra

noted that Micronesian reaction was most unoysterlike. In fact, the Micronesians have become "clams." Island politicians, usually voluble and free with newsmen, today are tense and unavailable.

The Micronesian Congress is moving steadily away from American influence, and this partition is reflected socially. Mixed parties are becoming rare. Micronesian leaders, even those fluent in English, now "require" interpreters.

Mr. Hickel's policy address has inspired an astonishing degree of unity. Even a senator whose Marianas District constituents have expressed a desire to affiliate with Guam, separately has decided to cooperate with the "solid-front movement," along with the rest of Micronesia.

Formal petition sought

Micronesian leaders quickly grasped the significance of the Hickel declaration. They realized even before Washington, it seems, that regardless of the intent the unilateral nature of the manifesto had the effect of bestowing quasi-diplomatic status upon any future Micronesian delegation negotiating their future.

Apparently desiring to nullify this possibility, Interior officials began pressuring the Micronesian Congress to petition the United States formally to grant them association status.

The Micronesians have counteroffered an entirely different package: They agree to discuss political affiliation only after America negotiates with them on the question of self-government. Hence, there would be no guarantee that the Micronesian people would then ratify by plebiscite any proposition to associate their free government with the free government of the United States.

American officials, apparently in an effort to negotiate on their own original terms, then tried a tactic reminiscent of the one formerly used with American Indians. There was a ring of the old assurance: "Come and meet for yourself the great white father."

Page 3 of 4

Encl. No. 1

UNCLASSIFIED

A- to Canberra

Noting the imminent Guam stopover of President Nixon, Interior officials ceased begging the Micronesian legislators and began bargaining with them. The Micronesians were advised to draw a blank-check resolution requesting the President to consider personally means by which affiliation with the United States could be accomplished.

This resolution would be presented personally by a star-studded cast of Micronesian leaders. Then, it was suggested, the islanders could see and hear from the President himself that regardless of what they signed, their wishes and desires would always be given the foremost presidential consideration.

Indian experienced tapped

The Micronesian leaders were prepared. Senate President Amata Kabua and Congressman Heinrich Iriaki had already begun seeking legal advice from an expert on American Indian cases. They engaged an attorney, Harrop Freeman, a professor of law at Cornell University.

Acting upon his advice, the Micronesians, instead of drawing up a petition for the President, forged a "weapon" -- Senate Resolution 31.

The resolution, which was ceremoniously handed to Mr. Nixon, appears to be an Asiatically worded paradox: It says nothing, yet says everything. Addressed both to the President and to the Congress, it merely asks them to consider seriously the future political status of Micronesia.

Different message conveyed

But in "diplomatese" it had an entirely different message: By addressing both the Congress and the President, the resolution rejected the "white-father image" of the American Presidency and served notice that the Micronesians were not going to make the mistake of negotiating with one branch of the US government only to be demolished by another.

UNCLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

CA-5708

UNCLASSIFIED

Page 4 of 4

Encl. No. 1

A- to Canberra

By failing to mention political association with the United States, the Micronesian forces were rejecting any thought of political partnership without the prior opportunity to air long-standing grievances. By addressing both Congress and the President, and by omitting any reference to the "new American policy," the Micronesians managed to elevate the negotiations above the level of the Interior Department.

At this stage, the prime Micronesian goal is to direct the attention of the Americans to the folly of entrusting facets of diplomacy to insularly oriented agencies. They express a strong preference for negotiating with the Department of State because of its sensitivity to world opinion and its experience in economic rehabilitation. They point to South Korea, Taiwan, and even South Vietnam as examples of the State Department's more successful ventures in economic development.

But the final Micronesian political aspiration, its leaders say, is "to be a self-governing state in free association with the United States."

UNCLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

OS-421598