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Memorandum for the Record
Interagency Group Meeting
on the Future of the TTPI

01/16/70
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(criminal)

PARTICIPANTS

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Mr. Heller
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REVIEWED by JHB DATE 5/17/88

State - Mr. Wright

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Mr. Ruser

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Mr. Frisbie

TS authority to:
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Mr. Peale

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Loesch Report

Assistant Secretary Loesch reported that he felt his trip to Micronesia had been very successful in terms of providing the chance to talk with Micronesians -- both individuals and groups -- of all types. He said that, consistent with his mandate, he had not really discussed status at great length. In fact, in making his way through the districts he had only given copies of the Political Status Act of the Micronesian Political Status Delegation members. He had agreed that he would not discuss status itself until he met with the delegation as a whole in Saipan at the end of his trip. In Saipan he had had one good meeting with the delegation, but even on this occasion he had received no reaction to the Political Status Act. (This was due at least in part to the fact that the delegation had

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just assembled on Saipan and thus had had no real opportunity to consider the Act. Moreover, the Marianas members of the delegation had only received the Act the day before.) Loesch did inform the delegation of the outcome of the Interior land proposal and said the reaction was quite calm; in fact he felt that the delegation had always expected this result.

As for other reactions, Assistant Secretary Loesch got the strong and clear impression that the Micronesians are determined to have some form of Constitutional Convention -- that they are "up tight" on this issue. As for the timing of future meetings, the Micronesians initially proposed that the next and "last" meeting take place in the TTPI sometime between February 23 and the end of March -- with the meeting lasting about one week. The timing is tied to the desire (for reasons unrelated to the future question) on the part of both Interior and the Micronesians to reschedule the regular Congress of Micronesia session for sometime in the spring. The delegation wishes to be in a position to report to the Congress at that time.

As for their view that this will be the "last" meeting, their meaning is not so clear. E.g., they did not say what they would do if we did not agree to meet with them at that time or if the week's meeting did not produce agreement. The Interagency Group's best estimate was that the delegation was only saying that it felt it had a mandate from the Congress of Micronesia to ascertain US views of the future and report back to the Congress -- that it was not in fact a delegation with real powers to negotiate and that as a consequence it was not faced with the problem of producing a final agreed position or determining such an agreement was impossible. The Group agreed that, while this estimate might remove the sense of urgency and the threat implied by a "last" meeting, it did raise major problems of how the United States should deal with this delegation which probably was not ready to agree, and perhaps not even to react definitively, to any proposal.

Secretary Loesch feels that the TTPI is really coming to a boil in a good sense -- the people are really interested

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in their development, economic and otherwise, and are chomping at the bit to obtain the capital and other necessary ingredients to move ahead. The feeling toward the United States is excellent. Loesch feels the Action Program is really moving and perhaps more important, the people are aware of what is being done and are very pleased. Thus, in general this is a good time to be moving on the future question. Loesch feels one cannot over-emphasize the power of the chiefs in any test of public opinion. For instance, while he felt even the people of Palau, if left on their own, would vote for the United States, the Palauan leaders wanted to know why they could not make their own decision as a district and go it alone. This did not mean this was their decision, but should they so decide, Loesch was convinced they could produce the votes.

Discussion of Next Steps

In view of all these developments, Secretary Loesch said that it was his view that we should reopen the question of giving the Micronesians our Constitutional Convention proposal and that, in fact, he recommended getting inter-agency agreement to send it out to the delegation immediately. He felt that only by accommodating the Micronesians on this issue which he felt was critical to them could we have any hope of achieving agreement in this so-called "last" meeting. Secretary Loesch said he realized this would modify the decision of the Secretaries and Dr. Kissinger, but that he was more convinced than ever that the initial recommendation of the Interagency Group to offer the Constitutional Convention was the right one and the issue should, therefore, be reopened.

This led to an extended discussion in which the following were some of the issues and problems raised:

1. The dangers of the Constitutional Convention - The open-endedness of a Constitutional Convention had been the point which both Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Rogers had stressed in the brief discussion which the Secretaries had had on this matter. The dangers involved were obviously still there.

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2. The uncertainty of the Micronesian view on the basic question of their future relationship with the United States. If we knew they were thinking along the same basic lines as we were -- that they were agreeable to something which would fit the mold of an unincorporated US territory -- then the dangers involved in a Constitutional Convention would be greatly reduced. But we were by no means certain that such agreement existed.

3. The question of the power and the mandate of the Micronesian Political Status Delegation - If they were just a fact-finding group; if they could not, or would not, reach an agreement or perhaps even give a general expression of Micronesian thinking, particularly on point 2 above, was it perhaps not wiser to let the "last" meeting be inconclusive and see what the Congress of Micronesia had to say? Hopefully we would get something concrete out of the Congress.

4. The question of credibility - Would we not increase our credibility gap with the Micronesians if, immediately after giving them the Political Status Act, which presumably represented some soul searching on the part of the US Government, we turned around and offered the Constitutional Convention Bill? Since the basic status envisaged in both bills was the same, couldn't we use the Political Status Act to elicit some reaction before taking the next step to the Constitutional Convention offer?

5. The question of timing - The President had approved the Under Secretaries Committee recommendation of last April to end the Trusteeship Agreement and extend US sovereignty as soon as possible. As Loesch had pointed out, the climate seemed favorable now. But the Secretaries had stressed the need to proceed in an orderly fashion, saying the urgency was no excuse for making a bad agreement. The Trusteeship status enabled us to meet our needs and we should therefore not feel an overriding need to end it.

6. The views of the Micronesian people - In view of the difficulty of getting a reaction from the delegation, there was considerable discussion of alternative ways of trying to find out what the Micronesian "people" really think about their future. Secretary Loesch felt, whatever

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C we tried, in the end we would be right back where we started -- that it was the leaders who would decide and tell the people how to vote. So no matter what we learned from "the people", it would mean little -- and the leadership was not talking. Loesch described his efforts to get a feeling of their views and emphasized that it is almost impossible to learn what they are thinking. He stated his conviction that only at a Constitutional Convention would you finally learn what they had in mind. He did not deny the risks involved in this situation, but he still felt they were unavoidable.

The Group finally decided that, while we would probably have to offer the Constitutional Convention proposal in the end if success was to be achieved, the basic need now was to get a better idea of exactly what type of relationship the Micronesians have in mind -- if they are thinking within the same basic parameters as we are. Since our parameters were clearly defined in the Political Status Act (and do not change in the Constitutional Convention proposal), we should therefore stick with the Act for now and press the Micronesians for a reaction. Since they had indicated that they wanted the next meeting to be the last and had set the time framework, it was felt further that we could press reasonably hard for such a reaction as a prerequisite to our agreeing to and setting the time for a next meeting.

X It was therefore decided that Secretary Loesch should write to delegation Chairmen Salii and Silk asking for the delegation's views on the Political Status Act, particularly on the general framework of the status it envisages. Loesch would say that we needed this information in order to prepare for the next meeting and once received, we would be able to be more specific as to a time suitable to us.

There was no confidence that we would get a clear signal in response to this request and it was even possible we would still get no reaction. But it was felt that we at least had to try before reopening the Constitutional Convention proposal with our Principals. We would make subsequent decisions in light of the Micronesian response, whatever it might be.

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One final point was agreed upon... namely, that the next round of discussions should in any event not take place while the UN Visiting Mission was still in the Territory. Since it is due to depart the Territory in mid-March, we would therefore tentatively plan for a meeting in the last two weeks of March. No mention would be made of this decision to the Micronesians at this time, however.

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