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SUBJECT : TTPI Future Political Status -- A Micronesian Intellectual's
Point of View

REF : POLAD Telegram 62C

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1. The referenced telegram reports and summarized an article prepared by Carl Heine for the Micronesian Reporter magazine's December issue. The article comments on the status political status talks recently held at Hana, Hawaii, and on the "status question environment" in Micronesia.

2. Mr. Heine is Staff Director of the Joint Committee on Future Status, Congress of Micronesia. He is generally considered to be Micronesia's most articulate and brightest young intellectual.

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CARL HEINE'S PIECE

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Enclosure one
Saipan A-34

The process of decolonization in Micronesia was set in motion in 1967 by action of the Congress of Micronesia. This expressed intention was approved and sanctioned by the administering authority. Since 1967, the Congress of Micronesia has created and empowered three select committees on political status whose primary function has been to study, negotiate and make recommendations to the Congress of Micronesia regarding any proposed changes in the political or constitutional status of the Trust Territory as a whole.

In the period between 1967 and 1971, there have been many meetings, much travel, debate and discussion, sometimes within the membership of these committees alone and at other times within the entire Congress of Micronesia. There have also been meetings with outside groups and with various agencies of the United States Government. In addition, since 1969, three rounds of formal negotiations have taken place between these select committees and authorized representatives of the United States Government.

The third round of negotiations, and the most recent one, was held on the island of Maui in the village of Hana in Hawaii in October, 1971.

A brief review of these talks will reveal that substantial progress and advancement toward the political objectives of the Congress of Micronesia have been achieved. However, closer scrutiny will also reveal that now, instead of one political choice, there are three major political factions with different goals within the Congress of Micronesia, to which I will return later in this article.

The recently concluded talks at Hana, while inconclusive, did result in agreements in certain broad areas of vital concern to the Congress of Micronesia. Any student or scholar of the Micronesian scene cannot help but appreciate that the United States has come a long way to admit and, to a certain degree, accept the basic right of the Micronesian people to determine their own political destiny.

More important, perhaps, is the fact that these talks have been able to continue and thus provide a forum for a dialogue between Micronesia and the United States Government.

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Micronesia, whether or not anyone wants to admit it, is being colonized on two opposing fronts: by the forces of modernization and by the forces of Micronesia's own traditional past. The Micronesian solidarity which developed at the time of the creation of the Congress of Micronesia is being weakened gradually. Thus, instead of a Micronesian solidarity, there is now Trukese solidarity, Marshallese solidarity and Saipanese solidarity. National loyalty is being replaced by ethnic and district loyalty.

The pace of rapid modernization and transformation in Micronesia and within the Congress has alienated the leaders from the followers, and thus increased group antagonism within Micronesia. The quest for political status has enlarged the gap between the Congress of Micronesia and the electorate for lack of public participation. The administration's programs of accelerated modernization in economic and social areas may also have increased rather than diminished the scope and intensity of Micronesian political and ethnic conflicts.

With these rapid social changes, and the contending forces of modernization and traditionalism, political loyalties have also been greatly affected. A great number of people throughout Micronesia today are confused about where their political loyalties lie since there seems to be no common goal. The Congress of Micronesia is advocating great changes in government and in political status; the administration is pushing for economic and social improvements; while the average Micronesian is caught between these two different, if not opposing, forces. The average Micronesian is in a dilemma; he is attracted to and receptive to the idea of modernization, and yet is not quite willing to return to his past.

For lack of direction regional loyalty has come to replace territorial loyalty. The people of Saipan want to go their own way, the people of Truk want their own way, the Rotanese want to secede from the Marianas, and it is possible that more districts and groups may soon decide that they too must plan their own future destiny.

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Micronesia in its search for a change in government or a change in political status has also inspired the ambitions that move men in politics. With the creation of the Congress of Micronesia in 1965, the people of Micronesia, through their elected leaders, found a new forum toward which they could focus their energies and aspirations for the development of their islands and societies. Prior to that, they could only accept what was given and ask no question. The Congress of Micronesia, however, created a new channel in which two-way communication could be established between the government and the governed.

There was a sense of purpose, of unity; the people of Micronesia rallied around and behind their representatives in Congress to help find as well as to chart their common destiny. The Administering Authority began not only to listen, but also to respond. Authority and the control of affairs, which up to the time of creation of the Congress of Micronesia were the prerogative of the Administering Authority, were suddenly released in greater measure to the Micronesian people. Ethnic, religious and regional differences that had seemed unimportant so long as an outside administration ruled, boiled up; and more often than not, the differences now dominate the loyalties of each district is peoples as the course along the winding road toward an uncertain political future continues to stunt their previous sense of common purpose and unity.

②
- districts

Today, after six years of Congress and three rounds of talks, the same people who not too long ago had united behind their Congress with a common purpose and a common destiny are now having great difficulties in moving toward national unity and a common political future.

The challenge to the future of Micronesia is, more than anything else, a challenge to leadership, to statesmanship at a trying and decisive phase in Micronesia's political evolution. These are extraordinary times and they demand extraordinary leadership and statesmanship.

This writer had the privilege a year ago to ~~give~~ ^{- gwe} a paper at a seminar at the University of Papua and New Guinea, the title of which was

"Unification and the Coming of Self-Government." Since that time, some of the observations which were made have gradually coming to the fore. The writer had seriously questioned not whether the Micronesians had the capability and readiness to govern themselves, but rather whether they had reached the stage where the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties could affect political units into a common territorial framework with a government which could exercise authority and provide a sense of common purpose.

The Congress of Micronesia has somewhat lost its provisional base at the seat of government; perhaps the fact that it is now going to the people, to the districts, to hold its regular sessions will resurrect that measure of confidence and pull the people of Micronesia together. Only time will tell.

In the final analysis, it must be this legislative body that ultimately makes recommendations and gives direction in the long and uncertain years ahead as Micronesia strives to define and decide what its political future will be -- alone, or in alliance with another country. However, if this august body is unable to provide the kind of leadership that is needed at a time like this, even greater numbers of ethnic and sub-district groups may want to go their own ways and determine their own futures.

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The second round of talks held in May, 1970, on Saipan between the Political Status Delegation and the U.S. representatives revealed profound differences between the two positions. As a result, an impasse was created. At the recently held third round of talks at Hana, the U.S. came closer than at any previous time to embracing the legal rights and political demands of the Micronesian people, if not in substance and detail, at least in spirit and broad general principles.

However, the talks at Hana also revealed, for the first time, and in an official circle, that the Micronesian Delegation has within it profound differences in political opinions and goals. ~~In fact,~~ ^{- In fact,} it would seem that while the United States is getting closer and more willing to discuss changes, the Micronesian representatives are more divided and moving further and further away from the position of free association, away from leading the people of Micronesia toward one common destiny.

With all the differences in goals and opinions within both the Congress itself and among members of the Joint Committee on Future Status, it is worth noting that these political factions did not block the Joint Committee from pursuing its official position on Free Association during the discussions at Hana. That course had been set in the mandate of the Congress to the Committee when it was established in January, 1971.

In every society affected by social change, new groups arise to participate in politics. Micronesia is no different. It is becoming apparent, however, that the Micronesia's westernized elite no longer can be as self-assured as it used to be. Consolidation of Micronesia's diverse ethnic communities into one nation of Micronesia is further away today than it was six or seven years ago. The challenge of trying to weave the varied social and political fabrics to form the pattern of Micronesia's future will tax the skill and statesmanship not only that of the Joint Committee on Future Status, but also of the Congress of Micronesia itself.

There is no assurance that if the present trend continues, the political objectives of the Micronesian people will be improved. There are increasing signs that people in Micronesia are getting restless, and are confused about Micronesia's political alternatives and goals much less the chances of survival as a single political entity.

There seems at present to be no concerted goal or direction in Micronesia. The Administration is pursuing its own goals and objectives according to its own obligations and responsibilities. The Congress of Micronesia is engaged not only in trying to build a nation, but also in pursuing its own priorities and objectives. The district governments and district legislatures to their own ways.

Unless there is concerted direction from someone, national loyalty will continue to deteriorate. The established institutions in Micronesia, such as the Congress, the administration, district governments, the judiciary, churches and schools, are not of one goal, and lack purpose and direction. Unless they are organized with a common purpose and a common end during this period of crisis in Micronesia, they are not able to give objective expression to the national will. All these require a national leadership. Both the Congress and the Administration are in a position to exercise this kind of statesmanship and leadership.

Perhaps somewhere, sometime in this decade, both the administering authority and the Congress of Micronesia, as representative of the people, should jointly make some effort to redefine and direct national goals and priorities for the Seventies. Present goals and objectives overlap, and the public is confused. As it is, the interplay of politics between the new hopes and the old ways may eventually yield substantial damage to Micronesia itself.

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As a consequence of rapid change and growing uncertainties, people in certain areas of Micronesia have found their goals more in tune and harmony with one another and with those ideas and concepts which are non-Micronesian than with those that are Micronesian in character.

- Micronesian

The people of the Marianas, at least a great majority of them, are united and ready to accept the idea of a commonwealth government with all its problems and blessings; they appear to be together in their pursuit of this goal.

A great majority of the people in the Marshalls, Ponape, Yap and Palau fall generally under the category of advocates of free association. There are minority factions within these districts, but it can be argued that at least they, too, are willing to adopt a foreign arrangement in which they will be able to share both blessings and problems.

The case of Truk is an unusual one. Truk, from all appearances, is opting for complete independence, free from all foreign domination including ties with other districts of Micronesia. It is not clear what their idea of independence is--whether it is a return to the past and a subsistence economy or whether it is a proposed to try their hand in the experience of other countries who have achieved modernization and an advanced technology. One cannot overstate the situation, however, for there are those in Truk who may not at all be willing to go the independent way.

- proposal

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The official U.S. position at the third round of negotiations at Hana, was one directed at and in response to the Micronesian proposal for free association. At no time during the talks at Hana did the U.S. Delegation make any attempt to respond to or encourage any discussion in the direction of either independence or commonwealth proposals. And as has been pointed out previously, the official Micronesian position was also directed to the proposal for free association.

Internal self-government in Micronesia will come within the next few years, probably sooner than anyone expects. Transition to the status of free association will follow, but political momentum is not always easy to predict with any measure of accuracy. Neither can anyone predict the ultimate interest of the U.S. military nor economic role of the United States in what will one day be called the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.