

US Facing a Moral Dilemma

by Francisco T. Uludong

HONOLULU - When the future political status of Micronesia is finally settled, the United States will probably face the accusation that it had been a very conscious, involved party to the Micronesian attempt to resolve among themselves their future political status.

Aside from the deliberate Americanization of the islands and inevitable, permeating effects on the Micronesian life styles, the United States as early as 1963, according to the confidential Solomon Report to President Kennedy, contemplated a political annexation of the islands. Now it has formally and publically unveiled a program calling for a political relationship with the Micronesian people.

Whether the Micronesians will have genuinely exercised their right to self-determination at the plebiscite will be judged, in part, on how well the United States had merchandized its program to the people of Micronesia. This role poses a moral question as to whether the United States, as a UN-designated trustee for Micronesia, has the right to interfere in or influence the Micronesian decision on the islands' political future?

Since the Hana negotiations, the United States made its offer of a "new relationship", the United States has upped its efforts to sell it to the Micronesian populace. Although no over-all agreement was reached at Hana, the United States has launched an all-out, calculated campaign to "inform" the Micronesians of its offer. Using as an excuse articles and statements made after the October negotiations, the United States, through a State Department of-

High Commissioner's office in Saipan, has issued several long statements in the past couple of weeks supposedly to set the record straight with respect to its offer at Hana.

The United States has pre-empted the use of all major communication channels of the government in this publicity campaign, although the Trust Territory Administration is said to be a non-partisan bystander in the status negotiations. The statements, issued by John Derrance who is attached to the High Commissioner's office but reports directly to Washington, have appeared in the administration's bi-weekly HIGHLIGHTS and carried by the government's Micronesian News Service over all the radio stations in Micronesia. A directive from the High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston's office has also directed the radio stations to translate the statements in all major languages of Micronesia.

In the statements the Micronesians who have commented on the proposals and positions taken by the United States at Hana are accused of "deliberate distortion" and campaign to "misinform and misguide the people of Micronesia."

To those of us who are aware of the power and impact of slick public relations, the language and style employed in the statements are designed to appeal to the unsophisticated Micronesian mind. And because of their limited access to the administration propaganda machinery, there is little chance that the Micronesians who have raised questions concerning the United States offer will be able to command as wide an audience as the United States has from the widely

dispersed Micronesian population.

The publicity campaign seems aimed at gaining support of the Micronesian public opinion to bear on their leaders in the Congress of Micronesia to accept the political relationship as defined and proposed by the United States. It also has the semblance of an effort to discredit the members of

the Micronesian Congress who have questioned the United States offer.

The US offer as expounded during the October 4-12 negotiations at Hana would have the unsuspecting Micronesian believe the United States really places his well-being over its own security and military interests in Micronesia. On the surface, the American proposals and positions give an impression that the US has agreed to the Micronesian "free association" proposal with the exception of the feature of unilateral terminability. And in fact, the American drafted joint communiqué after the negotiations refers to an "agreement, in principle on most Micronesian concerns except the termination issue. The transcript of the American presentations repeatedly reminds the Micronesians of the "major concessions and changes" made by the United States.

The American offer, however, was very vague and ambiguous on a number of major points supposedly agreed upon "in principle" by the United States. The publicity campaign being waged in Micronesia still fails to answer the questions subsequently raised by the Micronesians on these points. This writer wants to raise them again in the hope that the United States will somehow clear the air of the

various interpretations of its offer by stating clearly exactly what they mean. Among others, the current American offer raises the following questions:

1) Once the relationship is in force, does the United States consider the Micronesians as a separate people with a right to their own national sovereignty?

2) After the plebiscite, does the US recognize the Micronesians still possess the right of self-determination?

3) Is the US talking about the same protection for American citizens and businesses in Micronesia as that enjoyed by Americans in the Philippines?

4) When the US says it will "bind itself legally not to exercise eminent domain" in Micronesia, does it mean that the US has renounced, once and for all, the power of eminent domain in Micronesia?

5) Although no mention of it was made at Hana, does the US intend to use waters adjacent to Micronesian islands for military purposes?

In trying to appreciate the Micronesian apprehension about entering into this "new relationship" with the United States, the Americans have to realize that the Micronesians do not consider the "major concessions and changes" now made by the US as such: the Micronesians see them as belated American efforts to grant the Micronesians what is morally theirs in the first place. Or, as stated by Sen. Lazarus Salil, chairman of the Micronesian Delegation, they represent the American "recognition" of the Micronesian concerns and political rights.

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ing out exactly what the Micronesians want to realize that their proposition for a "free association" political arrangement with the US is patterned after the "free association" arrangement between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

Under that arrangement, New Zealand recognizes the right of the Cook Islands to a national sovereignty of their own, a right to exercise self-determination in the future, and an unqualified power of eminent domain. The Cook Islands as well as New Zealand have the right to unilaterally terminate the association at any time. The association also does not provide for any protection whatsoever for New Zealand citizens or businesses.

More importantly, New Zealand agreed to enter into such an arrangement with the Cook Islands without demanding for provision or protection of its military or other interests. None.

Deep in Micronesian reasoning is the feeling that not only does the US need Micronesia at present and in the

future for its own military protection but also that Micronesia has in the past contributed enormously to the American military superiority through the use of its islands for atomic bomb and missile tests.

It is also important for Americans to realize that the Micronesians had nothing to do with the UN Trusteeship Agreement which placed them under the administration of the US. That they are now giving up their precious right to independence in order to accommodate the interests and power of the US is an indication of the compromise Micronesians are making at this point. Micronesia could retain the status quo and insist that the US fulfill its UN obligations until the people of Micronesia are ready to become an independent nation as all other former UN trust territories have done.

The official position of the Micronesian delegation has not been put more eloquently than a statement by Sen. Saliu at

the Hano negotiations when he stated that Micronesia is a "small nation that wishes to maintain its identity while in a relationship with a large and strong nation." While maintaining that Micronesia is "indefensible," Saliu added that the Micronesian delegation noted "all the interests of the United States with respect to maintaining peace and security in the Pacific."

This is not to imply that all Micronesians share this official position of the Congress of Micronesia on the status issue. In the Marianas, a majority has repeatedly expressed its desire for closer ties with the US. There is also a growing independence movement represented by the student-based Micronesian Independence Advocates and the Micronesian Independence Coalition which claims one-third of the Congress of Micronesia.

If the US really wants to retain Micronesia for its interests in the Pacific, it will never enjoy a better opportunity. The current position of the Congress of Micronesia appears to have the support of the majority of Micronesians.

Micronesian's view of 'association'

By FRANCISCO ULUDONG
Micronesian Independence Advocate

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It is also essential in finding out exactly what the Micronesians want to realize that their proposition for a "free association" political arrangement with the United States is patterned after the "free association" arrangement between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

UNDER THAT arrangement, New Zealand recognizes the right of the Cook Islands to a national sovereignty of their own, a right to exercise self-determination in the future, and an unqualified power of eminent domain. The Cook Islands as well as New Zealand have the right to unilaterally terminate the association at any time. The association also does not provide for any protection whatsoever for New Zealand citizens or businesses.

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commentary

"Commentary" offers space to readers who want to express thoughtful, reasoned opinions at greater length than provided by the Letters column. Contributions are welcomed, especially those in disagreement with general prevailing viewpoints. All will be considered, but none can be returned. Each should be typed and bear signature, address and occupation of writer.

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And if history provides any lesson, it is that the Micronesian independence movement will continue to grow, creating an environment which may not be too receptive to the U.S. presence in Micronesia.

to enter into such an arrangement with the Cook Islands without demanding for provision or protection of its military or other interests. Nonetheless, New Zealand now accords the Cook Islanders more benefits, including financial assistance, defense protection and international representation, than the United States is willing to accord the Micronesians.

Deep in the Micronesian reasoning is the feeling that not only does the United States need Micronesia at present and in the future for its own military protection but also that Micronesia has in the past contributed enormously to the American military superiority through the use of its islands for atomic bomb and missile tests.

IT IS ALSO important for Americans to realize that the Micronesians had nothing to do with the U.N. Trusteeship Agreement which placed them under the administration of the United States and that they are now giving up their precious right to independence in order to accommodate the interests and power of the United States.

If any real compromise is being made at this point, it is Micronesia's right to independence which is being surrendered. Micronesia could retain the status quo and insist that the United States fulfill its U.N. obligations until the people of Micronesia are ready to become an independent nation as all other former U.N. trust territories have done.

The official position of the Micronesian delegation has not been put more eloquently than that made by Sen. Salii at the Hana negotiations when he stated that Micronesia is "small nation that wishes to maintain its identity while in a relationship with a large and strong nation." While maintaining that Micronesia is "undefensible," Salii added that the Micronesian delegation noted "all the interests of the United States with respect to maintaining peace and security in the Pacific."

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