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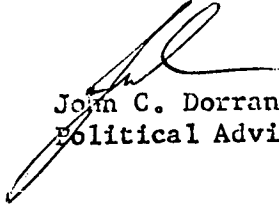
May 17, 1972

Captain William Crowe
Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations
Room 6514
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C., 20240

Dear Bill:

Jim Manke, the Public Information Chief here, just gave me the enclosed copy of an article by Fred Kluge which will run in the next issue of Reporter magazine. I am spending most of the remainder of this week trying to put together a counterpart article, but may not be able to accomplish this and the necessary clearances in time for the next issue of the Reporter.

Sincerely yours,


John C. Dorrance
Political Adviser

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Everybody wondered what was happening at the hotel. Arriving at the airstrip on Babelthuap, visitors to Palau asked what was ^{going on there} ~~happening at the hotel~~. Around the bars of Koror, over the mind-numbing racket at the Peleliu Club, people asked what was happening at the hotel. Even at the Palau Jail, where visitors purchase handicraft items carved by prisoners, the prisoners inquired about the fourth round of political status talks between America and Micronesia.

While the meetings proceeded at the Koror Continental Travelodge, the reasons I could not answer these questions were clear to me. The sessions were closed to the press and to the public and -- apart from the contents of some notably uninformative press releases -- there was nothing anyone could say during the negotiations. What was happening at the hotel was confidential.

Now that the meetings are over, now that the transcripts of the meetings have been released, now that both the American and Micronesian Delegations have made their reports, I find that I still am not altogether certain what happened at Koror. What was said -- the formal, legalistic statements that the Americans and Micronesians read at each other across a table -- is public information. What happened is another matter and now, weeks after leaving Koror, I find myself back in New York City still unable to neatly summarize what happened. Let me try, once more, to sort things out.

Things never turn out as we picture them in advance. When I learned that the fourth round of status talks would be held in Koror, and that I would be there, I remembered Palau. Sitting in New York, I thought about Palau: how

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it looks at daybreak, when the first sun hits the islands and you have a few hours of cool daylight; how dusty and hot is the middle of the day, when you can almost feel the collar of your shirt turning brown behind your neck and you have to splash cold water on your face to stay awake after a hot, heavy lunch; how, towards evening, the islands get cool and mellow and pleasant and people come out of houses and sit talking on platforms or ^{stand} loitering in the doorways of stores; how, when night arrives, ^{cars} cars with bald, eggshell-thin tires jolt over nightmare roads in search of -- of what? -- new bars? new faces? new ^{philosophies} religions?

What I pictured was that the spirit of Koror would somehow affect these important meetings. The pleasant morning hours would go for planning. The afternoons would be spent on meetings, tense, tiring sessions, give-and-take negotiations. In the evening there would be ¹ talking and drinking, the arguments and insights that would be translated into progress on the following day. And by the time it was all over -- or so I pictured it -- we would have what has always eluded us so far: a clear sense of the course Micronesia is headed on.

Now, when I look back at the two weeks we spent in that hotel, the days and the times of day are all blurred, and the hotel itself I remember as a gilded, luxurious prison far away from Koror and from Micronesia. The meetings, it soon developed, were rigid confrontations in which one side would read a prepared position paper at the other. The other side would acknowledge receipt of the paper -- sometimes with thanks, sometimes without -- and we would all return to our

rooms and prepare for the next meeting.

It was a stiff, formal routine, a world of lawbook phrases, measured politeness, and xerox machines working overtime, and it changed very little as negotiations proceeded. I was surely not in America but during the weeks in that hotel I only ~~scarcely~~^{finally} felt that I was in Micronesia. Whether the United States Delegation ever got close to Micronesia, whether it ever developed some special feeling for the islands, I cannot say. For the Micronesians, there were a few moments when things relaxed. Sometimes on the veranda^h of the hotel at dusk, or down at the edge of the ~~gardens~~ marina, where fresh fish were broiled on a piece of metal, it was possible to talk about or forget the day's events. But these were exceptional moments.

All this suggests that it takes time, more time than many people would have guessed, to end a Trusteeship, and it takes an especially long time to end a Trusteeship which is a strategic Trusteeship. The effort to change Micronesia's political status, which began in a burst of drama ~~and excitement~~^{and excitement} three years ago when ~~Lezarus~~^{Lezarus} Saliu read the Status Commission's Statement of Intent, when Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel visited Saipan, when there was excited talk of independence, of free association, of annexation, has now changed markedly. After four rounds of negotiations, much of the ~~high spirits~~^{high spirits} - the speeches, the newsmaking, the sense of tackling a historic challenge - is passed, and only the work remains. Tedious, slow, grinding work.

The United States and Micronesian Delegations have agreed that the talks in Koror were successful. Both sides evidently feel that

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their interests were advanced, and the record of the talks supports them both. The main thrust of the United States presentation related to the areas of foreign affairs and defense. The United States Delegation stated, and restated, that it needs full authority to act for Micronesia in these areas. For some time, Micronesian leaders who discussed free association generally conceded that foreign affairs and defense matters would indeed be handled for Micronesia by the United States. What might not have been realized until Koror, was the urgency that the United States attached to its requests for these broad powers. Again and again one sensed how important it must be to Washington that, whatever internal self-government is established in Micronesia, the rest of the world be informed that when great issues of war and peace (foreign affairs and defense) arise, Micronesia remains within the American sphere of influence.

In Koror, Ambassador Williams pressed the United States requests for foreign affairs and defense authority. He secured the Micronesian Delegation's agreement to the principle that the United States should have the power authority it asked. But the Micronesian Delegation held out for some prior limitation on U.S. powers in both areas. A specific example: if the United States established a military base for, say, missile testing and, years later, decided to stop testing missiles and start experimenting with chemical and biological warfare, the Micronesians would expect that they could accept or reject so drastic a change in the use of a base. Whether the United States will grant such a veto remains to be seen, however. This may appear a far-fetched example, perhaps, but the issue underlying it is crucial: if the United States is granted full authority

over Micronesian foreign affairs and defense how will those terms be defined? How, if at all, can those powers be limited? Still, despite bothersome problems like this, the American Delegation could return home knowing that they had ^{received} substantial agreement on the principle, if not the specific practice, of American foreign affairs and defense powers in Micronesia.

What the Micronesians took home was equally important. About two years ago, they spelled out what were the four essentials of free association: that the people of Micronesia had the sovereign right to determine their political future; that they could make their own constitution and laws without ^{submitting to} obeying American precedents; that they had the right to control their land; and, finally, that they had the right to end any future association with a foreign power; to end it ^{themselves} by themselves, with or without their partner's consent. During the third round of talks in Hawaii last October, the Micronesians obtained what looked like U.S. agreement on the first three ^{(sovereignty,} issues: ^{land,} and laws. The fourth principle, christened "unilateral termination," was a much tougher issue. At first, the United States opposed unilateral termination, contending that the proper way to end any future relationship was with the consent of both sides. Whatever positive arguments could be made for "mutual consent" such an arrangement would have given the United States a tacit veto over the political destiny of Micronesia. After four foreign administrations - all of which exercised their own vetoes over Micronesia in their own ways - Micronesians were in no mood to grant that kind of veto to anybody.

This head-on conflict between the two sides was broken late one afternoon when Ambassador Williams announced that the United States would be willing to accept eventual unilateral termination. There were several footnotes to this concession however. I counted about three. First, the United States ^{for defense and foreign affairs authorities} needs will have to ~~possibly~~ have been met. Second, during its initial years, the compact will not be unilaterally terminable; only after five years (Micronesian proposal) or fifteen years (U.S. counter-proposal) can the compact be ended by either side; third, if the compact is ended, a previously-negotiated security treaty will provide the terms under which the United States can continue its military privileges in Micronesia. Still, despite these substantial conditions, the United States did accept Micronesia's deeply-felt insistence that, from here on, Micronesians ought to ~~be able to end~~ have ~~to~~ ultimate control over the foreign powers who show up in their islands.

All of this is a pretty impressive record for two weeks in Koror. The United States got most of what it wanted in foreign affairs and defense. Micronesia got most of what it wanted on termination. You could leave Koror almost convinced that there will be a workable future relationship between Micronesia and the United States. And, already, people are saying that future negotiations will be mainly concerned with putting all these understandings into legal language. The compact between America and Micronesia is ~~in~~ in the hands of the lawyers, ^{if sometimes seems} ~~or so they say~~.

Why, then, do I feel an undercurrent of pessimism and a sense of continuing uncertainty about where things are headed? Why do I feel

that there are some large reckonings yet to come? Why, after three years of work, four rounds of negotiations, ^(in 1961) is there ^(in 1961) this feeling that this whole business between America and Micronesia is far from done with?

Here are some of the answers I come up with.

-----The practical issues remaining to be settled at the conference table are not trivial. Whether Micronesia can live with the full authority the United States requests in defense and foreign affairs, or whether the U.S. can tolerate any limitation or control of those powers by a Micronesian government has not been determined. Whether the two sides can ~~for~~ agree on a pre-negotiated security pact which would go into effect if the compact were ended also remains to be seen; if they cannot, the agreement on termination evaporates. And, still almost unmentioned is the largest practical issue of all. It is what news reports have politely called the issue of "finance" and it comes down to this: how much is the United States willing to pay for its privileges in Micronesia? How much will Micronesia need to sustain its self-government and - one hopes - create a ~~well~~ balanced economy?

-----Even at this late date, there is one important philosophical problem which keeps turning up at the discussions between Americans and Micronesians and which has still not been laid to rest. It is the issue of Micronesian sovereignty. Although the United States has recognized the sovereign right of the Micronesian people, it isn't clear whether it would ^{agree to} allow the formation of a sovereign Micronesian government. As a result, discussions of free association have repeatedly been hung up ~~in~~ in debates about whether, and in what sense,

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and to what extent, the government of Micronesia could be considered sovereign. The U.S. position appears to be that a government of Micronesia which entered into free association with the United States and which ^{has} ceded wide powers to the United States, could not be considered a sovereign government. Whether Micronesians can accept this remains to be seen. All of this debate about the nature of sovereignty might sound like a matter for a political science classroom, but already there are strains of pride and national feeling showing up on both sides of the argument, and one suspects that this ~~matter~~ matter will have to be thrashed out.

-----One other issue can't be omitted from a report on status: the matter of Micronesian unity. I do not refer to the request of the Marianas District for separate negotiations with the United States, or to the United States' indicated willingness to conduct separate talks with the Marianas. You could see this move coming from years and miles away, and its emergence at Koror surprised no one. More important, perhaps, than the ^{dispute} fate of any one district is the precedent that may have been set for the other five districts. In years to come, when inevitable conflicts arise between the districts, one shudders at the impact the Marianas precedent may have, at the tension which may result, and at the weapon that may have been forged - a weapon others may use against Micronesia and which Micronesians may yet use upon each other.

These are some of the reasons why one feels that things are so far from settled in Micronesia. There's just one last point. The

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negotiations might still collapse in disagreement, for any of the reasons I've mentioned. But even if they succeed - as I suspect they will - it only means that America and Micronesia will not be free of each other. ~~The ground rules will~~ And that is the final source of my uncertainty. The political ground rules will be changed, the ~~cond~~ economic bookkeeping will be altered, but a great power and a scattering of tiny islands will continue to confront each other, test each other, make demands on each other. Tied and tangled, America and Micronesia are going to have put up with each other for a long time to come. ~~And of this country~~ And so, one can hope for much. And be sure of nothing.