

An Editorial

# Time To 'Reason Together'

There are many interesting areas of speculation concerning the plan we understand is proposed by the military to take a major part of the island of Tinian for a large military installation.

But one thing stands out perfectly clear to us: Any military establishment developed on Tinian won't necessarily take any part of the bases away from Guam. The Tinian establishment would, we believe, be in addition to the present Guam installation.

Very logically, it wouldn't make any sense otherwise. Nobody is that stupid in the Pentagon, or in Congress. Nobody could justify moving any bases off Guam, and re-establish them 125 miles down the road, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Even at the Guam Economic Conference held yesterday at the Hilton Hotel, the military admitted that they projected a growth factor of eight per cent a year in military personnel on Guam, for the next three years. That doesn't look like they are planning any cutback.

People have a tendency to read what they want into a major news story. Some, who think that the Guamanian people are being unloyal and unpatriotic about not wanting the U.S. Navy to take Sella Bay, look at the possible military takeover on Tinian as some sort of dark punishment to the local establishment, or at least as a clear warning. The argument goes, as Managing Editor John Walter pointed out yesterday, that if the people of Guam put up too big a fuss over Sella Bay, then the military could take their estimated \$120 million to Tinian, and put the ammunition wharf there. It is possible, Walter said, that the contingency plan that the Navy and GovGuam have been discussing, all the while they've been denying having any contingency plan, might very well be Tinian.

But again, this wouldn't necessarily detract from Guam's present bases. There is no way that the Naval Station, Naval Communications Center, N.A.S. Naval Supply Depot, the Naval Hospital and

many of the other installations would be affected, or moved. In fact, any installations on Tinian would cement the logistics role of the men stationed on Guam.

Given the present recreational value and the scenic value of Sella Bay, we're inclined to think most islanders would say, "Fine, put the ammunition wharf on Tinian"—provided that the other bases here remain fairly constant in population, and in job volume.

The people of Tinian and the Northern Marianas have a different problem.

We don't go along with Trust Territory liaison officer Capt. L. Gordon Findley, who cited Bikini Atoll, Eniwetok, and Kwajalein as three cases in which the U.S. has exercised its option in the past to relocate native Trust Territory populations for reasons of international security.

Those moves took place more than 25 years ago. The situation around the world is much different today. We don't think that the U.S. would want to incur the wrath of the people of the world by arbitrarily moving 700 people off an island like Tinian. We're afraid that world reaction, through the United Nations, would cause an uproar which would cause the U.S. a good deal of embarrassment.

There is a certain amount of irony in the fact that most of the Tinian people actually wanted the military to move to their island. None, though, expected that they might be forced to move off themselves. It is a good deal like a thirsty man, stopping to desperately ask for a drink of water. Instead of giving him a drink of water, you stuff his head in a rain barrel, drowning him.

We too believe that the whole show is a "trial balloon," sent up to get the reaction of the people, not only on Tinian, but to see what the rest of the world would think.

It is quite likely that the military can move a little slower, move into Tinian, but still not disrupt the island life completely—the picture, in fact, painted by the carefully-drafted statement issued

on Saipan yesterday. They should consider not a Kwajalein-like takeover, and military government, but instead consider working out a close relationship with the people of Tinian, who should have a civil government of their own.

As far as the village of San Jose, this too might be negotiated. As one resident, Mayor Antonio Borje, put it, the residents would probably relocate if the U.S. government paid each homeowner \$35,000 for new housing, along with adequate compensation for business owners.

In other words, if the military really needed San Jose relocated, it could be done, although it would require new housing, new port facilities, a whole new infrastructure, such as hospital, sewage disposal, water, power, and schools for the people. But again, those civilians should not have to be subservient to the military in such matters as immigration, or capital investment. This surely would be unacceptable to the people. Tinian isn't that small an island; there certainly must be room for both the military and the civilian population.

Congressman Felipe Atalg said it best: "The people of the Marianas, I am sure, to some degree wish to see the U.S. military return to Tinian, but they do not want to become virtual peons on what was formerly their own land, where they cannot have some voice in their government, economic development, or where the island will become a dumping ground for war materials and personnel not wanted in Guam."

We think that it is vitally important that the military make their plans known, to the people of Guam, and the people of Tinian. Then, it is vital that we sit down and reason together on the alternatives that would allow us all to live with each other. We don't consider the people of Tinian as just another bunch of islanders with no rights or friends. They are people, and it is their island. If the military can work out some solutions that are acceptable to the people, fine. If not, perhaps they had best consider yet another option. JCM.