

# INTER-CONTINENTAL...

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percent, this has dropped to 20 percent, and the District Administrator has left open the possibility of zero Micronesian stockholders if the needed financing cannot be raised through this means.

On Monday Sablan expressed optimism that the debenture plan could go ahead just as soon as the High Commissioner gives his formal approval. Even under the current clause" restrictions, "If and when the law changes," Sablan told us, "the Japanese companies can convert a percentage of their debentures to stock. If the law doesn't change, then the hotel will have to reimburse them." "Convertible debentures are really an unsecured form of financing. The

Japanese have agreed to expose themselves." In an effort to get into the Saipan market.

The TJ Attorney General's Office has been studying the convertible debenture scheme for several months, even while the decision was referred to the Interior, State and Justice Departments in Washington. Attorneys for PMC plan to confer further with the Attorney General's Office beginning June 28.

Sablan indicated that construction of the hotel could start in another year following the design, Public Works approval and bid phases. The major U.S. architectural firm of Leo A. Daly is doing the design, which, said Sablan, is low-profile."

# TRIAL ASSISTANT...

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representing them in court.

Like the other 15-20 trial assistants on Saipan (until Friday, all male), Mrs. Iba does not have a formal law degree.

A Saipan native from San Antonio Village, she attended Guam's George Washington High School on a scholarship, graduating in 1959.

"Which five kids now, it's tough to go back to school," Mrs. Iba said. She would like to continue her studies, especially in the law, but for the moment plans to confine her legal education to what she can learn "on the job" around the Public Defender's Office and the courts. "She's really sharp," Assistant Public Defender Benjamin Abrams kept repeating.

It was Abrams who suggested that Mrs. Iba become a trial assistant.

"At first, I just didn't think I should do it," she told us, pointing to the traditional relegation of Micronesian women to the home. The more she thought about it, though, the more she saw the need for what she could bring to the trial assistant's work, as well as a need for a change in the traditional role of Micronesian women. Her husband, a policeman, is backing her up. Mrs. Iba has no particular plans to review the laws for any that discriminate against women. "It's not so much the laws," she explained, "it's just our customs. Her special field of interest is criminal law,

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## COMMONWEALTH -- ON A MILITARY STRING

Dear Editor:

While the subject of political status for the Marianas District is still a "RED-HOT" issue especially after the revelation by the U.S. delegation that Tinian Island will be taken over by the U.S. military, after full consultation with the people of Tinian, I would like to share my observations of the status issue and comment on some vital points brought out by the head of the U.S. "Bargaining Team."

I am now more convinced than ever before that the only reason why the U.S. is interested in pursuing possibly to the end, the "Political Status" negotiation with the Marianas District is to fulfill its selfish interest of acquiring lands for its military requires in order to meet its defense responsibilities in the Pacific.

The so-called "Political Status" negotiation should be more appropriately labelled "Military Status" negotiation as it is obvious that the success or failure of the whole negotiation hinges on whether land compromises for military uses can be reached between the two "teams."

I am further convinced that other than the demonstration that the U.S. military is interested in our

strict have just as much right to express their opinion on the issue? Was it because the U.S. that the Saipan... confidentially assured by our "team" that the Tinianese will welcome them with open arms just as the Tinianese did several years ago?

Although I feel strongly that the Tinianese should have an important input in the area of military land requirements and agreement as it will ultimately and directly affect them, if and when the build-up takes place, I feel equally strongly that as long as they are a part of the Marianas District, they are in no way or in no position to decide for themselves matters that will ultimately affect the rest of the islands. To put it simply: A military installation on Tinian, should the people be conned into accepting the U.S. proposal of luxury living and unlimited prosperity, will disrupt the daily living of people on Saipan for sure.

Perhaps citing examples from other areas under military control is unfair, but one thing always stands out as a matter of myth or perhaps a fact. The feeling of threat to the people's lives due to the everpresent danger of enemy attack either to be aimed directly to the military base or ammunition storages located elsewhere. This, I predict, will become the fact of life for the people on Tinian as well as Saipan if Tinian is converted into a "target area."

Before going into my analysis and critique of Mr. Williams' public announcement on the U.S. interest and conditions for a mutually satisfactory and lasting political relationship with the Marianas District, let me expound a little on the already agreed upon political status; the elusive democratic concept called commonwealth. If we refer to Webster's definition, we'll end up confused as it has no bearing on the intent and pur-

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...there is not a single honest sign of humani-  
islands; there is not a single honest sign of humani-  
tarian concern on the part of the U.S. for welcoming  
the Marianas District people into the U.S. political  
family. There are certainly two sides to every story,  
but I feel that in the present political status story,  
there is only one. If the people for some valid rea-  
sons will not give up their lands for military use,  
then we might as well kiss U.S. citizenship goodbye.

There is no reliable indicator at the present to show  
whether or not the people of the Marianas District are  
for or against the proposed military build-up on the  
islands. There was a general consensus in the past of  
the people wanting, wishing, desiring and praying that  
someday they will be U.S. citizens. This was under-  
standable as most of the people naively viewed such  
move to benefit them economically. Those same people,  
however, had no idea or were never informed of the real  
sacrifice they have to make as a price to pay to be  
U.S. citizens.

The newspapers are always full of accounts of remark-  
able success of various discussions between the people;  
specifically "Tinianese," and the "Team." There are  
also conflicting opinions, but more often opinions ex-  
pressed against the idea of a "major" military complex  
on Tinian. Why did such "rash" backfire develop when  
all along the U.S. thought they had the people under  
control? One reason is perhaps the fact that the mi-  
litary plan was not made known earlier and its poten-  
tial impact not revealed.

What bothers many people, including this writer, is  
the naive attitude by both teams to solicit opinions  
only from the Tinianese on the issue of military build-  
up on Tinian.  
Why narrow down the sampling of public opinion on  
such an important part of the "Political Status" nego-  
tiation to the people of Tinian alone? Don't the peo-  
ple on Saipan, Rota and the rest of the Marianas Dis-

poses of the political status  
ted between the U.S. and the Marianas Political Status  
Commission. If we take for granted the grand proclama-  
tion of mutual understanding and lasting political rela-  
tionship between the two sides, we still end up with-  
out a definition, because the two teams never bother  
to fully explain to the people what a U.S. commonwealth  
is all about. Our team somewhat took the concept for  
granted as being the best choice as recommended by the  
U.S. consultants. Perhaps some of our team members  
have been to Puerto Rico and they liked what they saw.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

so naturally, what's good for Puerto Rico is good enough for the Marianas! I feel that we are all fooling ourselves by embracing a form of political association that only a handful of people here know anything about, and not much, to say the least. Additionally, to make us look even more ignorant, we are already embarking on a political journey that is totally uncharted. The Political Status Commission should, as a starting point, initiate a public education program now, otherwise the "Commonwealth of the Marianas" will never turn out to be what it is "intended" to be. We are having problems right now understanding the workings of the government of the Trust Territory and we've been at it for a long time.

Now to Ambassador Williams' statements and my thoughts on them:

## On Public Land:

I like the genuine desire on the part of the U.S. to return all lands held in trust to the people of the Marianas. It is about time that the U.S. government start admitting the fact that the land belongs to the people and that continual condemnation of lands for the sake of "national security" as an excuse is a poor one. His remarks, however, about questions to be resolved regarding the return of land held in trust leaves me with the idea that the U.S. will take its sweet time studying the "legal and technical" as well as the "administrative and timing" constraints. Will the U.S. really return the lands to the people if the Tinian military plan is voted down by the people? I personally

U.S. team can do us a lot of good if they undertake a land inventory and nullify all illegal land transactions before the status agreement is formalized. If this is not done now, a change in our political status will reveal to us all who really are the large landowners of Saipan. NO, it will not be the military, but the businessmen from other countries.

## On U.S. Minimum Military (Land) Requirements:

Farallon de Medinilla: Since the U.S. military has already set a precedent on consulting with the people, I feel that the Northern Mariana inhabitants should be asked their opinions regarding the bombing practice on the island.

## On Saipan:

I'll say please leave us alone! I wish the Ambassador will come right out and say we will return the land instead of "we are proposing to return" the land.

It is interesting to note that the U.S. would like to return some land now held for contingency purposes, and will make some land available for civilian use. I question this proposal seriously. Not too long ago, the Navy refused to allow the Trust Territory government to construct a sewage treatment plant at Puerto Rico area and had even insisted that the sewage outfall should not be constructed near the retention area. This resulted in the TI spending additional capital improvement money to redesign the sewerage system. The moral of the story is this: Our rights to our land is not worth our salt. I'll say take your contingency plan elsewhere and leave Saipan alone.

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don't think so, as it has been explicitly stated during the "Panian Summit Conference" that the U.S. "has every legal right" to acquire land whether we like it or not. Assuring the Marianas District then, with the hope of one day getting back the lands held in trust is an enticement to accepting the proposed Commonwealth-Joint Military Government. I'll say this about the Ambassador's statement on public land: Turn over all the land now then come back later and "let's make a deal."

On Land Alienation:

Again, I think the idea of establishing an effective means for preventing the land from falling into outsiders' hands is a good one, although, again, I think the proposal is about 10 years late. We really don't need the help of the U.S. government to protect us from losing our lands to outsiders. We only need to help ourselves for it is through our own greed and selfish attitude that lands now are being 'stolen' by outsiders. I will blame the local legislatures, politicians and responsible officials for land alienation. Legislation safeguarding land from outsiders should have been enacted a long time ago. We do not need to be told by anybody that we need such land legislation. Our own elected leaders are just as guilty in perpetuating the sale of land to outsiders as the Trust Territory government is in not doing a thing to investigate and verify suspicious land transactions. The Congress of Micronesia is on record as being gravely concerned about illegal land transactions, yet, not a single land legislation to protect the loss of Micronesian land has ever been enacted. If we are to wait until the status agreement is fully signed and our constitution drawn up which will include provisions prohibiting the sale of land to outsiders, I would predict that a major part of Saipan's useable land will have been bought up by outsiders by such time. We need the help now, and the

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# LETTERS

*Continued from page 7*

On Tinian:

During a meeting between the people of Tinian and the negotiating teams of U.S. and Marianas delegations, it was mandated by the Ambassador that "The U.S. does not intend to use 'muscle' to acquire land, although it has every legal right to do so." If this kind of double-talk was properly translated into our vernacular, it would have created a catastrophe to the current talks. But apparently, the double-talk was translated very carefully.

I was hoping that the U.S. would be more explicit and specific in its military plan for Tinian. Instead of talking in generalities. Why didn't the Ambassador come out and say that so many planes, ships, bombs, etc., will be located on Tinian so that the U.S. land requirement can be better understood by the people of Tinian? Perhaps, if the U.S. had done this, it will save them the trouble of having to accommodate the people on Tinian with the remaining one-third of the island. Many people, if not all, I am sure, will probably leave the island voluntarily. If they know what kind of environment they will be exposed to with the presence of the U.S. military.

The U.S. delegation, as the Ambassador stated, understands fully the important role that land ownership plays in the lives of the people, not only on Tinian, but elsewhere as well. But what in essence they are

and their grandchildren if the military comes to Tinian. How clearly the U.S. understands this important concern is hard to tell. The promise to compensate present landowners of their lands at fair market value is not enough to convince the people to give up their lands. The U.S. must realize that land is priceless to the people and parenthetically any land taken must be replaced by land in order to be fair to the people, and at the same time protect the interest of future generations on Tinian. But it seems like this is a far-fetched possibility especially when the U.S. has already made it clear that they want the entire island of Tinian, although it is willing to turn back one-third of the island for civilian use.

Let's look at the effect of the possible loss of Tinian to the military in terms of Saipan or for that matter the entire Marianas District economic future. Tinian is known for its industrious farmers and high agricultural productivity. Can the Marianas District in the future continue to depend on Tinian for agricultural produce after the military complex has been established? Will one-third of Tinian have enough useable land for future agricultural activities to support demands on Tinian, Saipan and elsewhere in the district?

I personally feel that the proposal of the U.S. to take over Tinian completely should be reviewed carefully for its potential sociological and economic impact on the people of Tinian as well as the entire Marianas District by everyone concerned, not just by U.S. consultants. I do not agree that the sacrifice to be made on our lands and our tranquility by allowing military ins-



offering the people on Tinian a sense of community, a sense of purpose, a sense of direction, a sense of pride and economic and social values and lifestyle. It is possible that the military presence on Tinian will either deliberately or unintentionally transform every single individual there into nothing more than a military-base parasite. Yes, money will be abundant and modern conveniences will be introduced, but the price to pay for all these is irreplaceable. Sociologically, a prolonged dependence on the military will ultimately result in complete degeneration of traditional mores, sense of cultural virtues and values, and identity as people. Why? Because with the land area so small the people will be subjected to an environment that is not only new to them, but more importantly a confining environment designed without viable alternatives to the traditional lifestyle now in existence. To some of us who have been to Eberle in the Marshalls we would be less than honest if we don't admit that the living there is intolerable. Will the U.S. military guarantee decent living and respect to the inhabitants of Tinian? The Ambassador stated the U.S. military plan on the issue of community living as follows: "We plan to work with the local civilian community to plan and promote the rational economic development of the southern one-third of the island. At the same time we would be protecting the essential character of the current Tinian community from undue outside pressures and influences including a major influx of new residents and possible undesirable commercial and recreational activities."

The plan certainly says a lot but at the same time means very little. From another viewpoint, the plan seeks to avoid the very same "problems" that the military installation will bring to Tinian such as "undue outside pressures and influences," etc.

A number of people on Tinian have expressed a deep concern over the possible loss of land for their children

collaborations is outweighed by the promise of economic development through unlimited military dollars. Ask yourself this question: Is commonwealth for the Marshalls with a "military string" attached the most sensible approach for our future political relationship with the United States of America?

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