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Subject: Political Education for the Marianas

I. Setting

The election results in the Marianas show there will be a new set of elected leaders with whom we will be dealing in the status negotiations. The upset of Pangelinan and others of the Popular Party members of the Congress of Micronesia, together with the consequent upsurge of the Territorial Party and prospective changes in the Marianas Political Status Commission, suggests that a political education program for the Marianas is of even greater urgency and will have to confront obstacles of misunderstanding, ignorance and some downright opposition to the Commonwealth concept. The strength of such opposition, vital to our negotiations, remains to be tested. It could largely evaporate with a timely, thorough and appropriate explanation of the meaning and effect of a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. But as always on those islands, personalities will play a considerable role in influencing popular attitudes.

Recent Saipan reporting (Status LNO A-11 of October 11, 1974) reporting on the views of the Saipan Municipal Council on education for self-government and future political status provides some important background and comment on the rather confused psychological climate with which we will have to deal. While the hand of ^{the} legal counsel ~~Mike White~~ may be showing in the Saipan Council's deliberations as reported, nevertheless the existence of considerable confusion and uncertainty among the general public in the Marianas is not to be discounted.

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The TT-wide political education program on Education for Self-Government has included the Marianas in its operation over the past year. While to some extent this inclusion has created confusion and some questioning in the Marianas as to whether or not we are in earnest about separation, the wider range of the program, spreading information to the Marianas along with the other five districts, may be looked on with favor by the U.N. when it comes to act on the issue of the Marianas separation. We will have refrained from excluding the Marianas from the general ESG program until their own District Legislature has endorsed the agreement for a separate Commonwealth. Nevertheless a program geared to prospective separate Commonwealth status is needed in the Marianas.

Nothing was done as a consequence of this order.

An effective political education program will recognize the fact that Marianas society is basically authoritarian in structure. While among the Chamorros the traditional chiefly system found in other districts does not exist, nevertheless the influence of the Catholic Church and of certain recognized families is effective in controlling popular opinion. As for the Carolinians, the vestigial remains of their traditional chiefly system still exert considerable influence, perhaps more than we have recognized because it is not visible.

In view of the electoral victory of the Territorial Party with its heavy Carolinian membership, a great deal will depend on the attitudes of the minority Carolinian population of the Marianas, particularly on Saipan, toward the predominant Chamorros. The traditional emotional and ethnic gap must be

narrowed as much as possible in order to make a Commonwealth feasible and to convince the Carolinians that they will get a fair deal. In this effort Frank Palacios, Chairman of the Territorial Party and member of the MPSC, who is also part Chamorro and very intelligent, will be an extremely useful contact. He is proud of his designation by the Carolinians as their "chief" and spokesman and feels the responsibility of representing their interests.

Accom^modation of such interests means responsible assurance in the field of economic benefits. The Carolinians may have justifiable apprehensions that the generally more sophisticated Chamorros will be the principal beneficiaries of a Commonwealth status. Nevertheless, a member of the United Caroline Association has stressed to me the fact that he himself, in contrast to many other members, supports the Commonwealth because he sees in that arrangement better financial prospects for the Marianas as a whole. Such a view should be supported and encouraged through a political education program.

^{In preparing a program}
We should set about to do some study and analysis of voting patterns in the Northern Marianas. The recent elections offer an excellent opportunity to study current indications. Such study would show us how many and what types of voters we need to have in mind in devising a program. In this connection, a study of the census information of the Marianas would be useful. The election shows that we need to know a lot more about the Carolinian population.

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It will be important to bear in mind the language needs. We have had great difficulty and long foot-dragging in getting out Chamorro translations of some of our status material. There is full capability on Saipan to do a good job quickly but we will have to be astute in judging and counteracting the reluctance which has been evident. We will have to think also more fully than in the past about getting to the Carolinian population. I do not know whether one form of language would serve them all; this is one of the questions we must explore. Carolinian participation and support is important.

II. Substance

The main political education program for the Marianas should be geared to the plebiscite on the Draft Agreement. The program would be directed toward the political legitimizing of what the leadership (i.e., the Marianas District Legislature endorsing the work of the MPSC) would already have done. As a prelude to the political education program it therefore is necessary to decide what form the plebiscite will take.

On the assumption that the plebiscite would offer an "A/B" choice of Commonwealth or remaining with the other districts, material would be geared to the explanation of the two alternatives and their relative offerings to the people of the Marianas. It will be important, in supporting a Commonwealth choice, to be as specific as possible in terms of economic and financial implications for the people. For example such questions as the following, which will certainly be in their minds, should be dealt with:

- What will a change in the status quo mean to my business operation?

- What will be the effect on my wages?

- If I am employed by the TT Government will I lose my job?

- If I am a Carolinian how will I fare under a predominantly Chamorro leadership?

- What will it mean to me (and my children) to become a U.S. citizen or national?

- What will be the effect on the schools and educational opportunities?

- Will there still be homesteading opportunities?

- What will be the effect on prices of imports (specifically rice and sugar)?

- Is my present land title secure?

- Will the U.S. minimum wage law apply? What will it mean to me? -- As worker? as employer?

- Will immigration be controlled? (Meaning: will we be protected against an influx of Filipino workers?)

Explanation of the "B" option (remaining with the other districts) will require explanation of the other possible choices which "Micronesia", i.e., the other five districts, might make: free association, independence, status quo. While some pertinent facts will have been made available in the Marianas under the current ESG program operated by TT Headquarters, the specific meaning of such choices for the people of the Marianas should be

treated in the Marianas political education program. Probably the greatest local incentive for a choice of remaining with the other districts is the continuation of the Headquarters on Capitol Hill which generates the principal income of the people of the Marianas. Thought of removal of that big employer sends tremors of apprehension all over the district.

A second "unity" influence is the local Carolinians' feeling of kinship for their relatives in the other districts and their lack of compatibility with the Chamorros. Voting patterns and results in the recent COM elections indicate that this is a stronger influence than we have recognized heretofore. The elections have shown us the influence, perhaps critical in the voting of a new element of Carolinians (and some Marshallese) on Saipan--the articulate, educated activists who fill almost all of the officer-rank positions of the TT administration. Many of them have acquired land on Saipan (e.g., Legislative Counsel Kalib Udui and Special Consultant Dwight Heine) and have very high personal stakes in the continuation of a Micronesian Government on Saipan. Removal of the Capital would mean starting all over again for these civil servants who have risen relatively high. Established by their jobs on Capitol Hill, they are apparently bonafide registered voters in the Marianas--a point implicitly recognized by the Popular Party's decision not to contest the election.

To back up the Chamorro-led support for separate status/ points to emphasize in describing choice "B" would then focus on financial considerations, showing that free association would

bring far less financial benefit than Commonwealth, and that independence would in effect leave the resource-poor islands on their own with only shaky chances of any economic aid from elsewhere. In view of the fact that people in the islands seem often to cling to the old cargo cult of the Pacific, that munificent gifts will come from somewhere, it needs to be made clear that the U.N., and even Japan under its reduced circumstances, would have to look carefully before giving even far less aid than the U.S. grants.

As for a status quo option, that may be a little harder to counter since, in Shakespearean terms, there are those in the Marianas as elsewhere who, feeling confused and apprehensive, prefer to suffer the ills they have than fly to others they know not of. Nevertheless, this problem can be largely met by adequate information on the status choices and their implications. While for historical and cultural reasons including the present lack of homogeneity, a theme of "nationalism" in the Marianas cannot be used as successfully as would be the case in Palau or the Marshalls, for example, nevertheless local pride is still important, especially for the Chamorros, and can be appealed with a view toward the establishment of their own government as the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.

As developments are now unfolding it appears that we may wish to have an additional polling in the Marianas, prior to the plebiscite. This ^{could} be a referendum on separate administration ^(or the Marianas could be a separate Commonwealth) to be held as soon as possible after MDL approval of the agreement. While this would be a simple yes/no choice on an administrative ^{matter}

matter, it too will require some preparation of the voters which must therefore be included in the political education effort. The referendum will offer opportunity to meet many of the questions listed above. Pre-education should therefore present in terms of facts and figures (jobs, wages) just what separate administration will mean, ^{if the... with a... the} and to show it as a preliminary ^{the ESC program should be related to the separate...} step to actual self-government for the Marianas.

of a Convention is a major step to...
III. Channels

A. Role of the Status LNO

The Status LNO and his deputy will have a very important part in the political education effort. They will be on the spot and during the program will probably need to give it their priority attention in view of the major importance to us of the outcome. They will need to be "unleashed" from the restrictions placed on Status LNO by the Ambassador-High Commissioner agreement of October 1973 so that they may actively participate in public meetings, school seminars, press interviews and other such activities as may be deemed appropriate. They would present the U.S. view of the Commonwealth arrangement, and would probably as a rule appear jointly with a member of the MPSC or other Marianas spokesman. They would be expected to be the authoritative voice of the United States Government, and they must therefore be kept meticulously and currently informed of all ^{relevant} relative developments.

B. Marianas Participation.

The political education program should make use of local spokesmen whose authority and presumed wisdom are popularly recognized. Of

course it will be necessary that such persons should themselves be firmly convinced of the advantages of the Commonwealth and the provisions set forth in the draft Agreement. In other words the leaders of the community need to be committed.

One of the most effective channels therefore, especially in light of the small population of the Northern Marianas, will be face-to-face meetings with authoritative and knowledgeable presentations by selected leaders and full opportunities for open question-and-answer follow-up. This direct democratic process is a practical one in the Marianas.

Among leaders whose support will be significant if not essential are:

- Senator Borja - a real baby-kissing politician who never misses a wedding or a funeral; a grass roots operator and orator.

- Judge Benevente - Chamorro patriarch and ranking respected Catholic layman.

- Frank Palacios - a key figure of Chamorro/Carolinian background.

- Dave Sablan - U.S. citizen with business connections with the Carolinian community.

- Jose Tenorio ("Joe Ten") - because of his wealth and influence, we must try to get him on board.

- Ben Manglona - Rota member of MPSC - very persuasive speaker.

- Joe Cruz - Tinian member of MPSC, dynamic if somewhat erratic.

- Chamber of Commerce

- Church Leaders

-- Father Arnold, Pastor, Mount Carmel Church

-- Brother Jose, Tinian Church

-- Rev. Mack Williams, Pastor of Saipan Community Church.

(This protestant congregation is almost exclusively Carolinian).

Additionally, the general category of teachers should be utilized, particularly the faculty at Marianas Highschool and at Mount Carmel. The Principal of Marianas Highschool and the teachers of history and civics should be included by personal contact and furnished with materials for classroom use.

Involving the schools, especially the high schools, means full consultation and briefing sessions with the District Department of Education and the teachers involved. High school students returning home to talk to their families will be effective envoys.

Radio is a useful medium, heard in all the outer islands of the District as well as on Saipan. On the latter, television is also a practical medium. Both radio and television would be good channels for debates and brief dramatizations geared toward the advantages of a Commonwealth.

Because of the continuing ambivalence in the responsibility (and apparent attitude) of the district public affairs office, the political education program probably cannot count on much initiative from that source. This is unfortunate since that office has the most expertise on public information techniques and has command of the administration's communication channels.

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Personnel from the office may however prove useful in such fields as translation and distribution, but, depending on the evolving attitude of cooperation from DISTAD Ada (who holds a pretty tight rein), they may be reluctant or may seek special remuneration for their efforts as an extra-curricular activity.

IV. Finance

Cost of the type of program projected here should not be high. Expenses will include: travel within the small district for such purposes as public meetings and school or community participation, tapes for radio and classroom use, services of translators, television production (if feasible), expenses of a U.S. advisor or "resource person" to be present in the district during the pre-plebiscite campaign. Total estimated cost:

V. Timing

The time to launch the main political education program in the Marianas is immediately following approval by the Marianas District Legislature of the draft Agreement. This schedule presupposes that such a program will focus on a plebiscite. Such focus would have the advantages of limiting the scope of an education program and thereby making it more meaningful and directly pertinent to the status issue.

OMSN Consultant, Professor Wheeler, has commented out of his experience on such matters that a duration of 6-8 weeks is advisable for such political education work. I would agree with this estimate for the Marianas. I believe that this time frame would

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help focus on the specific issues involved and would permit sufficient intensity to generate interests and spread information. Longer duration would risk boredom and apathy. But sound preparation in planning and preparing materials will require a long lead time.

If the UNTC can accommodate our hopes for holding the plebiscite in late June or early July, prior to the convening of the ^{Micronesia} Constitutional Convention on July 12, then ^{April} May and June should be the months for the intensive political education effort. If however, the UNTC cannot arrange for its representatives to be on hand for a plebiscite before July or August, then a first phase of the program would be geared to a referendum on separate administration ^{to be held immediately after} the MDL approves the agreement. That approval could come as early as the February session, provided that the agreement will have been signed. ^{if possible} The referendum should follow as quickly as possible in order to terminate the present ambivalent situation in the administration of the Marianas. As background for this referendum, explanation of separate administration with actual facts and figures so far as possible, should start following the signing. It need not await ^{the} MDL approval. An early start will speed up the action and is in no sense jumping the gun since separate administration--pros, cons, and apprehensions--has been talked about in the Marianas for months. Responsibility: DOTA.

As soon as the Agreement is initialed, it should be translated and distribution commenced. It should be released promptly as a

public document--no secret covenants secretly arrived at.

Responsibility: MPSC/Status LNO. Earlier, in fact any time,

we can begin assembling lists of questions which will need to

be answered in explaining the Commonwealth. Responsibility:

OMSN (working with DOTA), Status LNO and MPSC. Radio/television

scripts and classroom materials could be written, ready for use.

Responsibility: U.S. with MPSC participation.

While we know from sad experience that so far the MPSC has been reluctant or at least unresponsive in shouldering responsibility for public information activity, nevertheless to be effective within the Marianas, the program must appear to be recognizably sponsored and promoted by people of the Marianas--those who have a personal stake in the issue. We can advise and offer technical assistance and participate actively in explaining the agreement and the related issues. The MPSC must in effect, however, sell its product to its own people. We will have to recognize that the MPSC may prefer channels or timing different from ones we would choose. They will know better than we what means and methods are most effective, and, provided they are in earnest about the goal (a state of thought that we must continually assess), they will take the necessary steps. Of course if they are not in earnest, then the goal is meaningless. Our role is to help make the goal meaningful by providing full and frank explanation of just what it means.

In sum, this paper envisages a specific political educational program for the Marianas to be carried out in two parts to prepare

he people of the Marianas to vote in (a) a referendum on separate administration, ^{or for a commonwealth institution} and (b) a plebiscite offering two choices: Commonwealth or remaining with the other districts. The program would be a joint effort of the MPSC and the U.S. (through OMSN, DOTA and Status LNO) with the MPSC hopefully taking the more conspicuous role but with the U.S. not only providing support but also participating publicly.