

Marianas now closer to being American

From a Saipan correspondent



Minister Albert Maori Kiki . . . a happy hooker?

the night before, not the usual tribal fighting but rioting between the guardians of law and order.

Outside Port Moresby's Murray Barracks, members of the Defence Force—a figure of 200 was given—pelted police with rocks, bottles and traffic signs after police had arrested some peace disturbers. Soldiers in plain clothes stormed out of the barracks and the fight was on. The police replied with tear gas and eventually quelled the rioters by 3 am on the Friday.

Both sides had their apologists and Defence Minister Albert Maori Kiki ordered a court of inquiry. Mr Kiki assured the Australian Government that law and order hadn't collapsed; that this and other incidents were isolated. Mr Kiki was earlier the centre of a storm of criticism over a statement he made in Melbourne on January 8 on his cure for violence.

"If law and order gets out of hand, we may consider the possibility of hooking up some people," he said at a news conference. "If you kill somebody, probably you will get hooked up," and he added that the death penalty could be used as part of the general tightening up of the country's internal security laws.

The Opposition spokesman on foreign relations, Mr Anton Parao, replied the following day. "This is very bad publicity for our country," he said, adding that it would make Australians think PNG supported outdated ideas which most of the world condemned as inhumane.

Mr Somare didn't become embroiled. A few days earlier, on January 5, he took his seat on a traditional throne as clan chieftain of the Saet clan of the Murik Lakes, Sepik River. His enthronement climaxed long initiation ceremonies which had their origin in a shadowy past. He was following in his father's footsteps and silently declaring his support for tradition although several phases of the ceremony were omitted.

The Marianas and US delegations at the December third round of talks on the Marianas' future had taken the two sides "significantly nearer" an agreement which "will assure the people of the Marianas a secure place in the American political system", said US Ambassador Haydn Williams.

"Now that this session is concluded," said Senator Edward Pangelinan, leader of the Marianas' delegation, "the members (of the delegation) have pledged themselves to take the fruits of our labours to the people".

Which all seems to add up to something concrete having been achieved in the December 6-19 session.

In brief, the delegations, if not necessarily the Marianas people, have come to terms on a wide range of subjects.

Provisional agreement was reached on these points:

- Most people born in the Marianas prior to the establishment of the "Commonwealth" and certain classes of persons residing but not born in the Marianas would become US citizens.

- People living in the Marianas and not in any other part of the US would be subject to Federal income tax only on income earned in the US.

- The Marianas would not be included in the Customs territory of the US.

- Exports from the Marianas into the US Customs territory would be subjected to the conditions which now apply to Guam.

- Direct financial support initially would amount to \$US14.5 million a year (\$7.5 million for budgetary support for government operations, \$3 million for capital improvement projects, \$1 million grant to a development loan fund, and \$3 million in the form of Federal Government programmes and services).

Land policy remains more complex although the Marianas delegation is reported to have expressed satisfaction with the November 2 US policy statement—that public lands be returned. The Marianas delegation indicated its intention to recommend the establishment of a non-profit-making corporation controlled by the people to receive and administer public lands once they are transferred to the Marianas District. This would

continue in operation until the establishment of a Marianas Government.

The Marianas delegation made several proposals on the US use of land for military purposes:

- The small uninhabited island of Farallon de Medinilla would be available for continued US use.

- The US would be able to use Tanapag Harbour, Saipan, jointly with the Marianas Government but the 320 acres requested by the US should be returned "to the public domain". (The delegation, however, suggested that agreements be entered into to restrict the use of the 320 acres by civilians so that it could be preserved for future military use if needed.)

- Isley Field, Saipan, would be under civilian control but available to the US military forces and 250 acres adjoining the field would be leased to the US. A further adjoining 250 acres would be made subject to the same restrictive covenants applying to the land adjacent to Tanapag Harbour.

- Tinian Island negotiations would continue for US requirements. (The US continues to say it wants two-thirds of Tinian for military purposes including the harbour.)

US military needs will be a major topic at the fourth round expected to begin sometime soon after March.

In his spare time on Saipan, Ambassador Williams had talks with Senator Lazarus Salii, chairman of the Micronesian Joint Committee on Future Status, in an attempt to restart the talks which foundered in November over the question of America's future financial commitments in Micronesia (PIM, Jan, p 21).

Later, Senator Salii, who agreed it had been a good meeting, said they decided to hold another round of talks "when both sides are ready". But first, economic experts in both camps will be asked to assess the Trust Territory's financial needs over the next 10 to 15 years. The experts will probably meet towards the end of January while the Congress of Micronesia is sitting at Saipan.

If a face-saving figure is agreed on by the experts, the two sides can take it from there and continue the talks, with a better chance of success, somewhere around March.