

UNCLASSIFIED

REINTEGRATION OF THE MARIANA ISLANDS

The Mariana group of islands, which includes the principal islands of Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, and eleven smaller islands, form a chain of islands of over 380 miles long with a total land area of approximately 390 square miles. Guam is the largest and is located in the southernmost part of the chain. Until 1898 the Marianas were administered as one unit by Spain. In that year, as an aftermath of the Spanish-American War, Guam was ceded to the United States, and the following year the other islands of the group were sold to Germany. Guam subsequently became an unincorporated territory of the United States, whereas in 1947 the other islands of the Marianas, together with the Caroline and Marshall groups of islands, became a trust territory of the United States under a UN Trusteeship Agreement; the whole group (with the exception of Guam) was designated the Trust Territory of the Pacific Island (TTPI).

At present the Marianas come under three separate administrations: Guam, a territory of the US, has a local autonomous form of government and is under the administrative jurisdiction of the US Department of the Interior; Rota is administered by the Department of the Interior as part of the TTPI; and Saipan, together with Tinian and the other islands of Northern Marianas, is administered by the US Department of the Navy as a part of the TTPI.

During the past few years inhabitants of the major islands have expressed a desire to be reunited under one civil administration. In Guam and Saipan resolutions to this effect have been adopted in the local legislatures, and the people of Rota have expressed similar views to the UN Visiting Missions. Their main arguments for reintegration of the Marianas are as follows: 1) inhabitants of the islands are of the same ethnic group, Chamorro (the major exception is an admixture of Japanese blood in the Northern Marianas); 2) they have a similar language, social activities, and institutions; 3) traveling and trading among the islands is complicated by the three separate administrations; and 4) merger would lessen the impact on their economies when the US forces are withdrawn or seriously reduced.

The UN has urged that consideration be given to combining the Rota and Saipan Districts, whose people have close cultural and historical ties and are economically interdependent, into a single administrative unit. It has further recommended the placing of the entire area of the Northern Marianas under the same civilian authority as the remainder of the TTPI. The UN Visiting Mission in 1961 proposes to examine the petition of September 1959 adopted by the Saipan Legislature urging reintegration of the Marianas Islands.

The following is a brief description of the major islands involved:

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 2 -

I. Guam

Guam lies 13° above the equator, 1,300 miles from Japan, 1,500 miles from the Philippines, and 6,000 miles from the US. It has a land area of 209 square miles and has been a territory of the US since 1898. Its climate is warm and humid, temperatures ranging from 70° to 90°.

The native Guamanians, who numbered about 37,000 in 1957, are US citizens. Ethnically called Chamorros, they are descendants of the original inhabitants but have a considerable admixture of Spanish, Filipino and other blood. There are also approximately 7,000 aliens, including about 5,000 Filipino workers, on the island. Although English is the official language, most of the Guamanians speak the vernacular Chamorro language.

Agana, the capital city of Guam, is the main center of population and serves as headquarters for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Island and for the US military bases in the Marianas.

The economy of the island is based principally on wages received by the civilian residents employed on the military bases and by the local civil government. Agriculture is a second element in the economy. Natural resources are limited.

The Guamanians have made remarkable progress in political advancement, especially since World War II, and their economic and social betterment has kept pace with these political strides. The territory is administered under the Organic Act of Guam, 1950, as amended. It has the traditional three branches of civil government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch is headed by a governor who is appointed by the President of the United States for a period of four years and is subject to the general supervision of the Department of the Interior. The present governor, a native Guamanian, was appointed in June 1960. The Guam legislature is unicameral and consists of 21 members elected biennially. It legislates in all local matters, including taxation and appropriations for fiscal operations of the government. Guam has no representation in the US Congress, although a bill was introduced in Congress in 1960 to give non-voting representation to Guam. Congress adjourned before action could be taken, but the bill apparently will be reintroduced in the current session.

In 1958 the Guam Legislature approved Resolution No. 367 pertaining to integration of the islands of Northern Marianas and Guam, and in September 1959 three members of the legislature met with the Saipan Legislature on Saipan and presented their arguments for integration. (See section on Saipan for discussion of integration proposals to the UN.)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 3 -

II. Rota

Rota, which is located about midway between Guam and Saipan, has a land area of 33 square miles. It comprises one of the seven districts of the TTPI and is administered by the High Commissioner through a District Administrative Officer on Rota. As of June 1959 it had a population of 990, all but two of whom were Chamorros. Raising vegetables for sale to the military forces on Guam is the main occupation of the inhabitants.

Rota has an elected municipal council of 10 members who advise the district administrator on the adoption of programs for the community and assist him in implementing these programs. Members are elected by popular vote and serve for two years.

Until 1953 Rota was administered as a part of Saipan District of the TTPI. At that time for security reasons Saipan District was placed under the administration of the Navy Department. In 1955 Rota was made the seventh district of the TTPI. The inhabitants of Rota have requested UN Visiting Missions since then to consider unification of all the peoples of the Marianas and have urged in particular that Rota be reunited with Saipan District. In their presentations to the UN Visiting Missions they have called attention to the several resolutions adopted by the Guam Legislature over the past three years calling for the unification of the Marianas. The people of Rota have argued that the present division of administration impedes travel for education, trade, and visiting relatives and that greater unity in the Mariana chain would benefit all the inhabitants of the area.

During the discussion on the merger of Rota and the Saipan District in the UN Trusteeship Council in April 1960, the High Commissioner stated that the matter has been under close study between the US Navy and Interior Departments. He added that if the administration of the Saipan District cannot soon be transferred from the Navy Department, consideration would be given to the request of the people of Rota that their island become a part of the Saipan District.

III. Saipan

Saipan, which is located about 110 nautical miles north of Guam, has a land area of some 46 square miles. It is the largest and most populated island in the Northern Mariana group.

Saipan, Tinian (which is separated by a narrow channel from Saipan and has a land area of 40 square miles), and the eleven smaller islands of the northern Marianas (excluding Rota Island) constitute one of the seven districts of the TTPI. Saipan District has been under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Navy since 1953 and is administered by

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 4 -

the Commander, Naval Forces, Mariana, who has headquarters on Guam. A Navy district administrator is stationed in the main town of Chalan Kanoa on the west coast of Saipan. In June 1959 Saipan District had a population of 7,424, which includes a large group of Carolinians. Some 6,000 of the inhabitants live on Saipan Island. (Since 1951 the other six districts of the TTPI have been under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior and are administered by the High Commissioner who has headquarters on Guam. The UN Trusteeship Council has from time to time urged that Saipan District be combined with the other six districts of the TTPI under a single civil administration and that the government headquarters be moved from Guam to a central location within the trust territory.)

Legislative authority for the municipality of Saipan is vested in the Congress of Saipan, a unicameral organization; however, its acts do not have the force of law until approved by the administrator. The legislature consists of 15 congressmen elected at large for two-year terms. The mayor of Saipan is elected for a four-year term and heads the executive branch of the municipality. Tinian also has a municipal congress with advisory functions.

Following a conference with three members of the Guam legislature, the Saipan Legislature adopted on September 23, 1959 by a vote of 7 to 5 Resolution No. 7, entitled "Relative to respectfully requesting and memorializing the United Nations to take under serious consideration for future recommendation the reintegration of the Marianas Islands by incorporating them within the framework of the Territory of Guam." (A copy of this resolution is attached).

A special session of the Saipan Legislature on November 21, 1959, by a vote of 8 to 0 (there were four abstentions), approved Resolution No. 8, entitled "Relative to reiterating, confirming and otherwise ratifying the contents and purposes of Resolution No. 7, ...". This resolution states, in part, that "subsequent to the adoption of said Resolution No. 7 a very favorable response and comment was received by the members of the Twelfth Saipan Legislature, particularly by the overwhelming majority of the people of Saipan."

Resolution No. 7, which was submitted to the UN in September 1959, proposes that in pursuance of the objectives of the Trusteeship System and in accordance with the apparent desires of the inhabitants serious consideration be given to integrating the Mariana Islands within the governmental framework of the Territory of Guam, including the granting of US citizenship. The resolution further proposes that the UN undertake a study of the possibility of holding a plebiscite throughout the Mariana Islands in order to learn the views of the inhabitants on this important subject.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 5 -

Following discussion of the Saipanese Resolution No. 7, in late 1959 the UN Trusteeship Council voted to send a visiting mission to Saipan in early 1961 to investigate the extent the Saipanese support for the petition to reintegrate the Marianas.

During the conference between the Saipanese and Guamanian legislators on September 11, 1959, it was reported that a survey revealed that 63.8 percent of the Saipanese favored unification of the Northern Marianas with the government of Guam. However, it was brought out in the discussions that some Guamanian members of the legislature initiated the reintegration movement several years ago and were leading it then and that many Saipanese did not fully understand the various ramifications of a change from a Navy to a civil administration. In the meantime the Saipanese and the Tinians have become more fully aware of the complexities of such a Union and some have apparently had second thoughts on the advisability of this move.

During a meeting on December 1, 1960, of the joint Saipan-Tinian legislatures with two members of the US Senate, the High Commissioner of the TTPI, the Governor of Guam, some Navy officials and others, the views of the Saipanese and Tinians on reintegration of the Marianas were presented. A Saipanese legislator stated that the people had never been fully informed on the question and that a committee had been appointed to study the problem and to present factual answers to the many questions raised about economic and political implications of such a union. He stated that they were considering asking the UN to consider permitting Saipan District to become a territory of the US apart from Guam. The Tinian members stated that they were interested in the question but admitted they were not sufficiently familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of reintegration and that some Tinians would prefer US territorial status independent from Guam. One Saipanese legislator who opposed integration with Guam questioned the economic position of Saipan under Guam if the military should leave Saipan; he questioned whether Guam would assist the Saipanese with employment, air and surface transportation, and public works and utilities, and whether they would have the financial status and social services they now enjoy. The Governor of Guam replied that he could not give an answer to their questions and that the issue of reintegration of the Marianas had never been put before the people but that the Guam Legislature had acted on its own accord.

The Saipanese are reportedly giving serious thought to and looking for guidance on the question of reintegration, especially since they now realize that integration with Guam would remove the area from UN jurisdiction and US Navy administration and place it under the administration of the Governor of Guam. One observer states that he does not believe

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 6 -

there is a great desire at present among the Saipanese to integrate with Guam and that the Saipanese accepted the idea initially because they thought it would be the fastest and easiest way to gain US citizenship.

The Chamber of Commerce of Saipan in November 1960 questioned a statement made by the Mayor of Saipan that "the great majority of the people of Saipan favor political reintegration with Guam." The Chamber expressed the view that "to integrate with Guam at this time could be disastrous"; that "under the UN and our administering authority (the US Navy) we are making great strides politically, economically, socially and in education"; and that "we would be subjecting ourselves to economic exploitation before we attain the ability to hold our own."

UNCLASSIFIED

State-FD, Wash., D. C.