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Letters to The Times

Naval Government in Pacific

The Secretary of the Navy Points Out Policy in Administering Islands

To THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

On Sept. 2 THE NEW YORK TIMES carried an editorial entitled "Pacific Islands." I am appreciative of THE TIMES' well deserved reputation for accuracy and objectivity, but feel that in this instance your editorial opinion could not have been derived from a full knowledge of pertinent facts.

The editorial groups "Guam, American Samoa and the mandated Islands we took from Japan" and states "that our Government intends, unless Congress should make it change its mind," to leave these islands indefinitely under military rule.

Guam and American Samoa are possessions of the United States, the former having been captured by the United States Navy during the Spanish-American War and ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris; the latter being voluntarily ceded to the United States Government.

There is a distinction between the United States possessions of almost fifty years' standing and islands recently seized by the defeat of the enemy in the Pacific. The status of these latter islands is now that of captured ex-enemy territory, and as such they are administered under military government in the same manner as the Ryukyus, the Bonins, Korea and the ex-enemy homelands.

Heads of Authority

There is also a significant distinction between "military rule" and naval civil government. The latter is in effect in those Pacific islands which are not ex-enemy territory. The difference between military government and civil government stems from the underlying basis of authority. Military government is based on principles of international law which require an occupying power to provide a form of government in the absence of the deposed power. Civil government of island possessions, on the other hand, is based upon some domestic organic act or, as in the case of Guam and American Samoa, upon Presidential executive orders.

On Dec. 23, 1898, President McKinley issued Executive Order No. 153190, which reads: "The island of Guam in the Ladrones is hereby placed under the control of the Department of the Navy. The Secretary of the Navy will take such steps as may be necessary to establish the authority of the United States and to give it the necessary protection and government." On Feb. 19, 1900, President McKinley similarly placed the islands of American Samoa under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Navy.

To my knowledge, the offering of Guam and American Samoa for trusteeship under the United Nations has never been suggested by responsible sources.

I thoroughly agree that our national security is important and that, therefore, we must maintain strong Pacific bases. Single island positions cannot be considered strong bases. Selected islands can, however, together with Guam, form a far-reaching, mutually supporting base network, although each alone would fall far short of being an impregnable bastion. Large-scale offensives cannot be mounted from a small island base. An appropriate base network, however, permits full exploitation of mobility of forces, which was such a vital factor in victory in the Pacific.

ernment in the occupied islands includes the following:

"It shall be the mission and duty of the U. S. Naval Military Government to give effect to the announced policies of the United States by:

"1. The physical restoration of damaged property and facilities.

"2. The continued improvement of health and sanitation.

"3. The early establishment of self-governing communities.

"4. The institution of a sound program of economic development of trade, industry and agriculture along lines which will ensure that the profits and benefits thereof accrue to the native inhabitants and which will assist them in achieving the highest possible level of economic independence.

"5. The establishment of an educational program adapted to native capabilities and to local environments and designed to assist in the early achievement of the foregoing objectives."

These aims are identical with those of the naval civil governments of Guam and American Samoa.

A group of selected naval officers has recently completed a course at Stanford University designed to train them for duties in connection with naval, military and civil government. In addressing this group on the occasion of their graduation on Aug. 30, 1946, the Honorable Herbert Hoover said in part: "The Navy has for many years administered such Pacific Islands as we have held and I can say unqualifiedly that their administration has been completely without blemish." He continued to say that it would be a fatal mistake to remove these islands from naval administration. He also said that it was his hope that we were going to hold to the Pacific Islands as primary to the safety of the American people and that such holding could not be held an extension of imperialism because we have no designs for economic exploitation.

I heartily concur with these views of Mr. Hoover. JAMES FORRESTAL, Washington, Sept. 20, 1946.

Objective of Government

Your editorial states that our record in American Samoa and Guam does not give adequate assurance of the preservation of democratic rights of the inhabitants of the Pacific islands while assuring the protection of national security interests. That is the exact objective of naval civil government and, for that matter, of military government as well. The Navy's record in Guam and American Samoa needs no defense. This record, however, has been recently attacked by irresponsible criticism.

It is difficult to understand your assertion that the Chamorros on Guam had more self-government under Spain than they have had since 1898. As stated in the Report of the United Nations of July, 1946, prepared by the Navy Department, on Guam and American Samoa, the civil rights of the inhabitants of Guam as to freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly and others are not infringed. Limitations which were necessarily placed upon individual liberty during operations of war by certain proclamations of the Military Governor were, of course, removed when the naval civil government was restored on May 30, 1946. Most of these limitations had been removed earlier.

Inhabitants are treated in all respects on the basis of equality with the United States citizens in Guam except for the matter of wage scales, where a differentiation exists based on the present relative standards of living. Local law prohibits any landowner alienating land to a non-Guamanian without approval of the Governor. This is part of the United States policy of "Guam for the Guamanians" which is intended to prevent exploitation of the inhabitants by outsiders.

There are Guamanian Commissioners, an advisory Congress, and all courts except the Court of Appeals are staffed exclusively by Guamanians. A United States naval officer has been appointed Governor of Guam and he is responsible directly to the Secretary of the Navy. The participation in the processes of government by the population of American Samoa is similar to that of the Guamanians.

As I have stated, certain other Pacific islands are under military government. The directive of military gov-