

Preface

I WANT TO ADMIT that in this book I have committed the cardinal sins of oversimplification, overgeneralization, and propounding value judgments. No one can write about the present political upheavals in Micronesia without inviting charges of vagueness and arousing others to positions of controversy. No one can write about the diverse, complex, and often confused world of emerging Micronesia without feeling inadequate to the task and even guilty about the results of his efforts.

Yet the task of writing such a book was compelling. One Micronesia I knew was the one conveyed to me through the oral tradition. Yet from the time I was taught to read, and especially during the last fifteen years, I came to discover, through a considerable amount of literature written by non-Micronesians, another Micronesia. And I came to realize that the Micronesia of the oral tradition and the Micronesia of the written literature are not the same and that, although the assessment of the "outside observer" was nice to have, most of the time it was not a true reflection of the real Micronesia I thought I knew.

This book, therefore, is about the Micronesia that I, a Micronesian, have come to know. It is not necessarily the Micronesia that official Washington knows, or the Micronesia of the anthropologist, geographer, or missionary. In short, it is the Micronesia of the insider rather than that of the visitor, however much a student of our land he may be.

One must almost have to be a Micronesian to understand the nature of this great dilemma, and to appreciate the intensity of

feeling it arouses. It is a dilemma posed by the availability of more than one course of action. To simply cast away the yoke of Western colonialism is not enough, for there is disagreement at home between those who desire to preserve the old archaic servitude system and those to whom that desire is just as repugnant as the retention of colonialism. The scope of the Micronesian's internal struggle at the crossroads is, therefore, twofold.

The consolidation of national feeling in Micronesia will prove much more difficult in the years to come. However, the immediate problems of devising a satisfactory posttrusteeship political framework are much more urgent. Micronesian leaders are rapidly being faced with the need to make fundamental choices in both internal and external policies, choices that will affect the future of Micronesia. The structure and philosophy of government they lay down now and the direction they give future development, with regard to both outsiders and Micronesians, will ultimately decide whether the proposed compact of free association with the United States will be a blessing or a bitter disillusionment.

There is conflict between the drive for modernization, which will mean the material enrichment of the lives of the Micronesian people, and the desire to preserve those elements of the Micronesian cultural heritage that are being and would be in ever-increasing quantities threatened by the modernizing process. Micronesia is caught between opposing ideological forces proposed from outside and within.

The second phase of the book deals with why Micronesians wanted to decolonize their islands and with how the question of unity became a serious threat to the future of these islands and with the dilemma facing the decision-makers.

I have presented a subjective view of what the colonial powers have done to Micronesia with particular emphases on what the United States of America is doing in Micronesia, what the Micronesians are doing, and why they are doing what they are now doing. The book is about Micronesians' experience of colonization by outsiders and their attempts to achieve decolonization and the building of a future island nation. Colonization is an experience that has touched all Micronesians.

For those unfamiliar with Micronesia or with her experience as a ward of Uncle Sam, the book may present issues and attitudes difficult to appreciate or accept. It may appear to some that I have grossly distorted the American image in Micronesia or that I have

distorted the issue of Micronesian unity. I have, with as much care as possible, attempted to be objective where objectivity is required.

My purpose in writing this book is to provide a basis for discussion of Micronesia's future by presenting one point of view of the range of problems facing Micronesia in her struggle to gain a new status, a new way of life, and a new freedom. Certainly, no attempt is made to advance final solutions. There are suggestions and expressions of political ideology to be considered. Micronesians themselves must ultimately find the real solution.

Throughout this book, I have taken the position that the only realistic political course for Micronesia is to enter into a state of free association with the United States. However, as a Micronesian, I am colonized, and perhaps my feelings may have been colored by my own experiences. I have also lived in the United States. I do not minimize at all the attraction of the richness, the variety, the humor, the liveliness, the sheer vitality that are contained within the American society. I am conscious, too, of the large number of Americans who are appalled by the social ills that are damaging the United States both at home and abroad. These social ills are slowly, but surely, coming to Micronesia too.

The Micronesian colonial experience took a different form six years ago when the Congress of Micronesia came into existence. It is during this six-year period that Micronesians began for the first time to confront the administering authority.

