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COMMUNICATION FROM MR. NIALL MACDERMOT, CHAIRMAN, SPECIAL NGO
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF
THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS
109, Route de Chêne, 1224 Chêne-Bougeries/Geneva,
Switzerland

Special NGO Committee on Human Rights, Geneva

7 May 1975

Dear Sir,

The Special NGO Committee on Human Rights in Geneva has received the
... enclosed memorandum from the Reverend Gyotsu N. Sato.

The Committee has instructed me to make inquiries as to the views of
the United Nations Trusteeship Council on the points raised in this
memorandum.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Niall MACDERMOT
Chairman,

Special NGO Committee on Human Rights

The Chairman
Trusteeship Council
United Nations
New York, N.Y. 10017
U.S.A.

Memorandum to the Special NGO Committee on Human Rights

From the Reverend Gyotsu N. Sato, Japan Council Against A and H bombs

I have been asked to come to Geneva by the Conference for a Nuclear Free Pacific held in Suva, Fiji from 1 to 6 April 1975. This Conference is also sending a delegation to the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

I wish to discuss the question of the future status of Micronesia.

On Friday, 2 May I addressed the meeting of the Geneva Special NGO Committee on Disarmament. The Committee was interested in what I had to say but did not believe itself to be the appropriate forum for this question and it was suggested during the meeting that I come to the Committee on Human Rights.

The problem consists of two aspects: the future of Micronesia as a whole; and the particular issue of the future of the Northern Marianas. Unfortunately, Micronesia is very much cut off from the rest of the world but it is evident from the information that has recently become available that the people of Micronesia as a whole are being confronted with a grave threat to their human rights.

What I would like to do is:

1. Explain the background to the present situation; and
2. List some of the features which are very troubling and which I hope that this Committee will follow up so as to see what precisely is going on.

1. Micronesia is one of three big island groups in the Pacific Ocean. It consists of three chains of islands: the Carolinas, Marshalls, and Marianas, totalling 2,300 islands, of which 97 are populated. Micronesia lies to the east of the Philippines, and to the north-west of New Guinea and Australia. The Mariana group lies in the northern part of the area.

The official name for Micronesia is the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The area has been administered by the United States of America since the surrender of Japan in 1945. The basis of that administration is the 1946 agreement between the United States and the United Nations and the United States is obliged under that agreement to develop Micronesia towards independence.

In the last few years there has been a rapid increase in local feeling in favour of independence. The United States is therefore having to make arrangements to leave the Territory. However, the Territory is of great strategic importance to the United States and the United States is trying to retain some control over the military aspects of the Territory.

/...

The United States is trying to solve this problem in two ways. First, it is separating the Northern Marianas from the rest of the Territory; second, it is proposing different arrangements for the future of each area. I should like to deal first with Micronesia excepting the Northern Marianas.

The Congress of Micronesia has been negotiating with the United States since 1969 for a new political status. The proposals (in part) are that the Micronesians would be granted free association as a commonwealth territory of the United States (i.e., become a part of the United States) and financial assistance. Since 1969, objections to these proposals have been increasing and they have now been rejected outright.

The proposals also contained the following points:

(a) The United States would have full responsibility for foreign affairs and defence. It would have exclusive rights to build military bases.

(b) Micronesia would have full control over internal affairs but in the case of conflict with the "international obligations" of the United States, United States demands would have priority.

(c) The United States would continue to occupy the Kwajalein missile range, parts of Bikini, Eniwetok and 28 per cent of Palau.

Turning now to the particular aspect of the Northern Marianas which have special strategic significance to the United States, e.g., one island - Tinian - is to become a B¹ (new strategic) bomber base. The United States wants to negotiate a special arrangement covering this part of Micronesia to ensure greater control over this area than the rest of Micronesia.

2. There are several disquieting aspects which I would like this Committee to follow up by writing to the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

A. There is to be a National Constitutional Convention in Micronesia in July 1975.

Questions: What does the United Nations Trusteeship Council think of this Convention?

Does the United Nations regard it as a decisive stage in the self-government of Micronesia?

B. The Northern Marianas. The United States is planning to hold a plebiscite to see if these islands are willing to become a part of the United States as a commonwealth territory. This plebiscite will be held on 21 June 1975, one month before the Constitutional Convention.

Questions: What is the attitude of the Trusteeship Council to this proposal?

What suggestions has the Trusteeship Council made regarding the holding of the plebiscite, bearing in mind that the voters may not be adequately informed of all the issues involved for them to make a well-informed decision?