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BOOK REVIEW

Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer (2000) *National Security and Self Determination. United States Policy in Micronesia (1961 - 1972)*. Westport, CT and London: : Praeger Publishers
x + 312pp. ISBN 0275969142

reviewed by

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The years 1961 to 1972 include some of the major benchmark events in history of the trust territory. These include the Solomon report under President John F. Kennedy, which was compiled under the direction of Secretary of the treasury Anthony Solomon following a very critical report on United Nations Trusteeship Council Visiting Mission. Up until this time, the trust territory was largely taken for granted as being under American hegemony for as long as it was considered necessary for American purposes. The Solomon report burst this bubble and reminded the government that it was actually a Trusteeship under the aegis of the Trusteeship Council. Included in this understanding was United States signed the trusteeship agreement guaranteeing that eventually the people of Micronesia, the trust territory, would eventually have a right to self determination.

The capital of the trust territory was moved from Guam to Saipan following determination of the CIA project in the Northern Marianas he trained Chinese nationalists to fight against the Chinese Communists. It was soon followed by the creation of the Congress of Micronesia

which brought some of the best Micronesian minds in the territory to Saipan where they're able to compare notes and come to the conclusion that self determination leading to determination of the trusteeship and establishment of the political status of their own choosing was guaranteed. This led to the creation of the Joint Committee on Future Status which brought Free Association to the forefront as the primary option chosen by majority of Micronesians. The people the Northern Marianas however, had always wanted a closer association with United States, initially through reunification with Guam. One thing led to another culminating in separate negotiations between the Northern Mariana Islands and United States government for the creation of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. These negotiations began to 1972 and ended in 1975.

Mr. Willens and Ms. Siemer have written a very scholarly and comprehensive accounts of the details of the events, policies, the positions and conflicts which shaped negotiations leading to the final document approved by the

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people in the Marianas on June 17th, 1975. The book relies heavily on the experiences of the authors during this period when Mr. Willens was legal adviser to the Marianas Political Status Commission. In addition, they conducted numerous interviews of the players on both sides, federal administration and leadership of the Mariana Islands as well as officials of the Trust Territory Government who were involved or observers in the events.

The book is very well documented and covers about every aspect leading up to the opening of negotiations. Having been present myself, as a Trust Territory participant in the political education program during most of this period, I can attest to thoroughness of their research (which included extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act in search of formerly classified documents in Washington).

This volume introduced a great deal of previously unpublished and unavailable material as well as unique perspective of the authors to the understanding of the political process in Micronesia in general and the Northern

Marianas in particular as well as the evolution of federal policies and positions relating to strategic values and political interests in the region. In combination with its sequel, *An Honorable Accord*, an account of the actual negotiations leading to the Covenant to establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the authors have made an incalculable and invaluable contribution to the very sparse collection of information available to the public. These books cover both the political process and how the Northern Marianas came to be the only population in American history made up totally indigenous people to voluntarily give up their potential sovereignty and, in a United Nations observed plebiscite, freely vote overwhelmingly to become the Commonwealth (which they negotiated as equals with United States government) under the distinct definition contained in the Covenant. Every academic library and agency dealing with Pacific studies and

American territories should have these volumes on their shelves.