



The Secret Guam Study: How President Ford's approval of the commonwealth was blocked by federal officials, Howard P Willens & Dirk A Ballendorf, Richard Flores Taitano Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Historic Preservation, Saipan, 2004. 239 pp. ISBN 1-878-453-77-7 (Available from MARC, the Faith Bookstore and Bestseller, at USD10.00.)

As the title indicates, the focus of this book is on a secret Guam study carried out in 1973–74 by a federal interagency working group and sent on to the President. The study was commissioned and completed at a time when the United States was negotiating commonwealth status with the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) and there was dissatisfaction in Guam with its own territorial status position. Views in Guam were mixed as to what its own status position should be and whether, if possible, Guam should unify with the NMI. That idea had been put forth in a referendum, which was accepted by the NMI but then rejected by Guam, partly because of the role the NMI had played in facilitating the Japanese occupation of Guam during World War II.

From the point of view of the federal government, it seemed clear some status change would have to occur in Guam. The secret 196-page study that is the subject of this review was an effort to be ready. Significantly, the report supported a commonwealth status, reflecting the fact the NMI was negotiating such a status. In doing so, the report appeared to meet the varying positions of the Guamanians and the federal government, particularly the US defence needs.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sent the report forward to President Ford. Kissinger made it clear that the President agreed with the recommendations and he instructed an Under Secretaries Committee to 'seek agreement with Guamanian representatives on a commonwealth arrangement no less favorable than that which we are negotiating with the Northern Marianas. If, however, Guamanian representatives prefer a modified unincorporated territorial status, we will be willing to accept such an arrangement.' This memorandum and the back-up study, all of which are included in the book as appendices, are the breakthrough items produced by Willens and Ballendorf.





As Willens and Ballendorf tell it, the Department of the Interior, protective of its own bureaucratic position, thwarted the President's policy desire. It left Guam to try to reach a result similar to that for the NMI, if that was what Guam chose, without any support from the federal government except resistance from time to time. The Department of the Interior did not notify the newly elected Governor of Guam of the study and of the support in the US Government for a commonwealth, although the President's directive required them to do so.

The Department of the Interior was able to hold to its position because the point man in the Congress, Congressman Burton, opposed all status negotiations, more desirous that territorial officials come to him on a continuing basis and let him work it out via legislation. Status negotiations, therefore, foundered and Guam had to labour to organise a special commission on the political status of Guam, which placed various alternatives before the voters.

The efforts that Guam undertook to reach a consensus are painful to reflect upon given the Willens/Ballendorf study. Guam proceeded to draft a constitution that was subsequently rejected by the Guam populace. Guam created a Commission on Self-Determination in 1980, which established commonwealth status as its goal. The issues in what became a complicated Guam statute never obtained full consensus in Guam, perhaps because the Guam leadership never felt confident of unambiguous success, no matter what it obtained. Thus, the failure of the federal government to advise Guam as to the new policy direction may have been critical.

As the authors say, in recent years the economy has weighed Guam down to such an extent that Guam status issues have faded. At least at this point, given the kind of energy required to change political status without strong support from the federal government, it does not appear that status change is likely. Of course, it is here that the authors are making their major contribution. It is their view that the Presidential directive of 1975 should not be regarded as a dead letter, that it could even at this late date be regarded as a magic talisman to create a consensus within Guam if it were given a supportive directive from the federal government.

That may not be pie in the sky politics but it is a hard outcome to envision. To accomplish the status change to that of commonwealth would require a consensus on the part of Guam, willingness on the part



of the Guam leadership, to rally behind that directive and the status issues that are implied therein.

Ballendorf and Willens have written an important book in that it gives the Guam leadership a rare opportunity when all hope, indeed, appeared dead and gone, all avenues closed.

*Arnold H Leibowitz
Counselor at Law
Washington, DC*

Confrontation in the Pacific: The Guam Teachers' Strike of 1981, Bruce G Karolle, David Becker, Honoka'a, HI, 2005. Spiral bound, 130 pp., photos, index, bibliography, US\$30.00.

(Copies available on request from the publisher, David Becker, Printer, Illuminations, Box 1800, Honoka'a, HI 96727.)

This book describes and explains, from one insider's vantage point, an important and unprecedented event that occurred some twenty-four years ago: the Guam teachers' strike. Not quite half of Guam's unionised teachers clashed with the Government of Guam (GovGuam) in a bitter struggle over salaries and wages. The strike began on 12 January and ran until 10 March 1981. The immediate cause of the confrontation was a newly passed law that raised the salaries of members of the GovGuam elite: legislators, executive branch officials, judges and agency heads. The estimated cost for doing this was in excess of \$2M.

For many weeks, this conflict divided families and set friends against one another. Political parties and church groups found themselves split down the middle. Never before had a Guam issue torn the island's socioeconomic-political fabric as did this 1981 teachers' strike.

While the Governor at the time, Paul M Calvo, had vetoed the bill that was the source of the controversy in mid-December 1980, the majority