RIGHTING CIVIL WRONGS:
GUAM CONGRESS WALKOUT OF 1949

By Anne Perez Hattori

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Guam received its Organic Act in 1950, after half a century of U.S. naval occupation. It was not a benevolent gift from a generous colonizer or a prize awarded to the Chamorro people for their loyalty throughout a brutal wartime experience. Rather, its long overdue passage in an era of decolonization is attributable to various factors, including a half-century of Chamorro resistance climaxing with a walkout by the Guam Congress in 1949. The walkout generated intense national publicity and friends of Guam residing in the United States stepped up their lobbying efforts, using the walkout to illustrate graphically Chamorro dissatisfaction with US naval rule.

In a recent interview, former member of the Guam Congress, Carlos Taitano disclosed, “We knew something had to happen. We had to tell the American public. Martial law was really horrible and we had to create an incident which would bring publicity to Guam” (Carlos Taitano, personal communication, November 29, 1993). Taitano revealed that several months prior to the Assembly walkout, two news correspondents - one representing the Associated Press and the other the United Press - visited Guam to report on military affairs. Taitano entertained the newsmen at his home in Mangilao and narrated to them a brief history of Guam under the oppressive naval government. Taitano and the newsmen agreed that if the Chamorro people's desire for self-government was to be heard, an incident of substantial magnitude had to occur, great enough to warrant major coverage in the newspapers. Taitano agreed that such an incident unfold, he would personally inform the two reporters by radiogram.

Details of the congress’ walkout were reported in newspapers throughout the United States. A few of the 1949 headlines read:

- The New York Times, March 6, 1949: Guam Assembly Quits Protests What It Calls a Navy Move to Limit Its Power
- Washington Post, March 6, 1949: Navy Action Protested by Guam Assembly
- Washington Post, April 3, 1949: Guam Rebels at New Navy ‘Rule’

Despite the publicity generated by the 1949 Guam Congress walkout, authors of Guam history have paid scant attention to the protest. Charles Beardsley (1944), Earl Forumy (1951), and Frederick Weber (1970) completely disregard it in their studies, while others devote thin paragraphs to the incident. Michael Dean Zener (1989, p. 79) remarks that the Congressmen acted “bustily” and reduces the walkout to an act of “political immaturity.” Richard Roy Griffith (1978, p. 171) remarks that the Chamorro people “vehemently expressed satisfaction with their ousted elected representatives” (p. 174). In a one-paragraph summary of the walkout, Paul Carano and Pedro Sanchez (1964, p. 348) refer to it as “an unpleasant incident... which resulted in increased agitation for transferring Guam to the control of a civilian department of the federal government and for the passage of an organic act.” In Sanchez’s later, independent work (Guahan Guam, 1988, p. 299), he maintains that walkout occurred because members of the Guam Congress “felt betrayed by the Governor.”

House of Assembly Speaker Antonio B. Won Pat emphasized, “the Assembly action was not based upon any single incident, but upon a series of actions” (“Mr. Won Pat...,” p. 1). Written accounts, however, have focused primarily on one incident—the vetoed subpoena bill of the House of Assembly—as the cause of the walkout. A closer examination of the issues and events leading up to the walkout exposes a battery of unresolved issues, each one of which added to the frustration of
disempowered legislators. From the beginning of U.S. rule in 1899, and intensifying after World War II, the Chamorro people suffered through land alienation, civil rights violations, discrimination, arbitrary naval rule, and the lack of self-government. In its articulation of political inadequacies, the war became a significant episode in the movement for U.S. citizenship by the Chamorros that continued along with the Civilian Act of 1947.

What were the issues driving the Guam Congress 1942 act of defiance? What are the “sinews of war” referred to by Speaker Won Pat? What does the war without show about Chamorros views and understanding of U.S. citizenship? An examination of the Ninth Guam Congress proceedings provides a glimpse into the political and social circumstances prevailing at the March 5 walkout.

INTRODUCTION TO U.S. COLONIALISM

Thirteen months after the United States seized Guam from Spain, the first appointed governor arrived, on August 10, 1899. Accompanied by U.S. marine and navy troops, Captain Richard Leary occupied the occupation of Guam, the southernmost islands. In one of the few written accounts of Chamorro experience, all the time during this period, visiting brigadier general Joseph Wheeler (1900, p. 16) reminisced that the indigenous people “seemed very desirous of establishing the kind...and expected great advantages from it; government by American rule.” Indeed, from village to village, Wheeler and other visiting American newcomers were generally greeted warmly and hospitably by Chamorros.

Governor Leary established a system and style of government that changed the model for future Naval go-

Beck to the men and women of Guam, to the people of the Chamorro people. The Chamorros themselves were generally well-disposed to the military presence. On the eve of entering both the Senate and the House of Representatives; the Chamorros, however, had just moved to the forefront of a political movement to secure U.S. citizenship for the Chamorros. Governor Roy Smith, the Guam Congress which was comprised of individuals who had little or no experience in politics, the Chamorro Congress was created in 1919 primarily as a result of national dissatisfaction with the policies of the state government. It was a response to members who were appointed by the government, and were elected in a nearly arbitrary manner. Despite their motives, they had not yet reached a stage of development commensurate with their personal independence, obligations, and responsibilities of the Chamorro Congress. It was believed that such a change of status at this time would be most harmful to the Chamoro people. The Chamorro Congress met three times in the year 1920 to discuss the implications of the Chamorro Congress. In 1920, the Guam Congress held its first meeting, and the Chamorros fewer permanent guarantees of liberty and property

visiting American dignitaries and used those opportuni-
ties to relay their wishes. Despite supportive and en-
couraging messages from nearly every visiting U.S. Con-
gress member or cabinet-level visitor, numerous bills in-
truded into the U.S. Congress failed to gain passage. Be-
cause of this history of failed legislation, Chamorro po-
tical leaders decided that direct contact with Wash-
ington, D.C. legislators would be necessary to further the Chamorro cause.

In July 1906, eight months after a Guam by election between George H. Dorn, the Guam Congress, and the selected two of its members, Ballester P. Ballester, and Frank

Felipe B. Leon Guerrero, to travel to Washington, D.C. and lobby the U.S. Congress in the capital on behalf of the Chamorro people. After the naval governor of Guam refused financial assistance for the trip, colleagues in the Guam Congress began a fund-raising drive. Jeff Tamagoto Ballesteros, one of the three members of the Fifth through Ninth Guam Con-
gresses, recalled stories shared by his father about these hopeful fund-raising efforts. Jeff reminisced:

FQ. Sanchez was in the House of Council, and Jesus Quintal, also from Umatac, was in the House of Assembly. The two were able to raise money with village kids carrying blankets. They'd walk the villages with their blankets spread out across the road and people would throw their coins or dollars into the blankets. That was the beginning of the fund-raising. (Jeff. T. Ballesteros, personal commu-
nication, October 30, 1993)

The islandwide fund drive for Leon Guerrero and Bordallo raised over $6,000, capital sufficient for the trip to Washington, D.C. There the two met with President Franklin Roosevelt and testified before Congress. Bills concerning citizenship on the indigenous inhabitants of Guam were introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives; the Chamorros, however, had just moved to the forefront of a political movement to secure U.S. citizenship for the Chamorros. Governor Roy Smith, the Guam Congress which was comprised of individuals who had little or no experience in politics, the Chamorro Congress was created in 1919 primarily as a result of national dissatisfaction with the policies of the state government. It was a response to

members who were appointed by the government, and were elected in a nearly arbitrary manner. Despite their motives, they had not yet reached a stage of development commensurate with their personal independence, obligations, and responsibilities of the Chamorro Congress. It was believed that such a change of status at this time would be most harmful to the Chamoro people. The Chamorro Congress met three times in the year 1920 to discuss the implications of the Chamorro Congress. In 1920, the Guam Congress held its first meeting, and the Chamorros fewer permanent guarantees of liberty and property

prevailed. Neither bill was acted upon during that ses-
sion of Congress, and both Bordallo and Leon Guerrero would remain prominent figures in Guam's political scene.

DESTRUCTION, DISPOSSESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

Chamorro concerns remained unaddressed by the U.S. Congress at the time of Japan's attack on Guam on December 10, 1941. On December 11, the Guam Congress met in session. After endorsing the Guam Congress resolution asking the United States to recognize the Chamorro people, the Congress then asked that the Chamorros be allowed to occupy this foreign
government for nearly three years, and the Chamorros suffered tremendous atrocities at the hands of the Japa
nese military. In the last months before U.S. recapture, the Chamorros were herded out of their villages and moved to concentration camps where they were forced to pro-
vide labor and food for the Japanese military popula-
tion. Men, women, and children were made to work on huge agricultural projects and on military construction projects, such as building airfields, bunkers and gun em-
placements. Executions, beatings, and rapes were bleak aspects of the war experience that became embedded in the Chamorro memory.

Unforgettable also was the U.S. campaign to depopu-
late Guam. When the recapture campaign for Guam's liberation was concluded, the island's villages were dev-
astated by the effects of American bombardment. All

across Guam, about 80 percent of the island's homes, buildings, and permanent structures were destroyed (Halea, D. 1941). The capital of Agana, home to over half the Chamorro population before the war, was al-
most completely destroyed by the bombardment; by 1950, the population of Agana had decreased from its prewar peak of over 10,000 to only 760 residents (Sanchez, J. 1979, p. 268). Surely, the second largest village with a popula-
tion of over 1,900 prior to the war, was completely con-
demned for use by the military (Sanchez, p. 269).

Over 200,000 military personnel were stationed on Guam for the remaining battles of the war. Within a year, 25 military bases were constructed on Guam (Underwood, 1967, pp. 93-95). By 1946, only seven miles, about one-third of Guam's land, remained in native own-
ership. Under pressure from the U.S. military, the Chamorros were forced to grant the U.S. military usage of their land and homes in exchange for military policy (Maga, 1988, p. 197). Adding insult to injury, Chamorros who had lost their land and homes due to military policy were forced to work on U.S. military owned property (Shelburne, p. 125). In 1947, 1,300 families on the island were no longer farm laborers. They were forced to become "landless, tenant sharecroppers" (Coller, P. 2). Ironically, even Chamorros entering into the service of the U.S. military faced discrimination: Chamorro men entering the Navy were allowed admission only as Mess Attendants, regardless of educational background.
Although issues such as discriminatory practices and unsatisfactory political practices for U.S. citizenship and civil government plagued Chammoro, military land grabbing was the critical issue of the postwar Chamorro population. The appropriation of land by the military touched Chammoro lives unlike any other imposition of the U.S. government. The military wanted bases in order to complete their war effort, and lands were taken without regard for the Chammoro land tenure system. In Agana and Tumon alone, approximately 11,000 acres of the island's 20,000 inhabitants were displaced (Sanchez, pp. 159, 266).Though these were the two villages most totally hit by military land grabbing, other Chammoros in different areas all over the island suffered the same fate. To provide shelter for these thousands of displaced Chammores, the military government Public Works department constructed small frame dwellings and tent frame structures for approximately 1,400 families. These were built in the new or enlarged villages of Dededo, Barrigada, Sinajana, Yona, Asan, Santa Rita, and Agat ("Housing..." p. 1).

By 1946, the naval administration was condemning lands almost exclusively for the recreational use of military dependents. In Agana, roughly 90% of the land was displaced when 82 lots were condemned for a park ("Condemnation...p. 3) and in Tumon, 60 hectares of Tumon Beach were condemned for a military recreational center (Guam Congress House of Assembly (GCHA), November 1946, p. 16-17). Chammores were further permitted to see their lands seized for grazing livestock, being tilled for crops or being used for other military purposes. A military commander who believed the people was the seemingly arbitrary nature of many land sales, wrote in 1948 that the Navy's action in condemning lands was not evident in the surrounding areas. The feeling of insecurity surfaced in the citizenship debates as the words of Council member Francisco Sanchez of Unwaste, Chammoro typical of his people, reminded us all of the function of American citizenship to the Chamorro people: "Remember the railroad, that is all this thing, and that is the form of insecurity. The government is here to protect the railroad, and the railroad is very important to the United States. It extends protection not only to individuals, but also to their property." (Sanchez, Francisco, "Citizenship..."
p. 2).

For his part, Governor Pownall defended the appropriation of lands for recreational use as an "investment fund" for the United States in the event that the Federal government was prosecuting the war (Pownall, April 14, 1945). Such was the attitude of the Department of the Interior, as the case of beachfront property in Tumon, requested by the Chamorros, was denied by the commanding general, Marinas forces based on Guam. Pownall rationalized that "[t]he armed forces on Guam is of direct concern to your local Government in effecting laws and order, safety, and morale" (Pownall, April 26, 1945).

Despite their insistent overtones, legislators attempted different strategies to alleviate the situation. When the army moved to condemn 60 hectares of Tumon Beach in 1946, members of Congress held conferences with the governor and with the officer in charge of the Land and Claims Commission. Council member Bordallo reported to the Guam Congress that the naval officers (the governor and the Land and Claims Commission officer) felt that "they didn't have the power to reduce the area acquired by the Army because they had a direct directive from high authorities in Washington, D.C." (GCHA, September 11, 1946, pp. 2-5). This prompted a September 30, 1946, cauterogy to Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal from members of the House of Council. Testimony from the Fourth Regular Session of Council read:

TO THE HONORABLE JAMES FERRELL, SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

REQUEST KIND CONSIDERATION OF U.S. ARMY RECREATION BEACH AT TUMON AREA NOT TO INCLUDE THE HOMES OF NINE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN. FAMILIES URGENTLY REQUEST TO REMAIN IN PRESENT HOMES AND PROPERTIES INHERITED FROM PARENTS (GCHA, September 11, 1946, p. 2).

In debate on the floor of the Council, members questioned whether it was necessary to seek the intervention of the Secretary of Defense. The cauterogy was agreed upon after members debated a large volume of land cases requiring the attention of the Secretary of Defense. Council member Simon Sanchez, who argued that "All of them [evicted families] have been moved from the soil and the soil has been taken from their parents and these poor people have a strong sentiment for the soil. It is my belief that this is our last appeal and whether he will consider it favorably or not, it is worth trying." (GCHA, September 11, 1946, p. 3). Nonetheless it failed to save the Tumon land from military bulldozers.

Another congressional tactic intended to alleviate the land crisis was legislation to abolish the Superior Court. Prior to World War II, land cases were heard in the Island Court and appeals of those decisions went to the Court of Appeals on Guam. Following the war, an important element in the court system changed with the creation of the Superior Court of Guam. The Superior Court was given jurisdiction over all civil cases in which the naval government or the United States was a party, while the island court retained jurisdiction over land condemnation cases. Under this new court system, Chamorros dissatisfied with compensation terms set by the Land and Claims Commission were directed to take their case to the Superior Court, whose judge was appointed by the Secretary of the Navy. Appeals of Superior Court decisions were sent to the secretary for final deliberation. In the Congresses's view, the Land and Claims Commission, the Superior Court, and the appeal process to the Secretary of the Navy initially favored military interests and effectively prohibited Chamorros from formally contesting the decisions of the Land and Claims Commission. In the House of Assembly's December 11, 1948, session, Judiciary Committee member Joseph C. Perez stated:

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY maintains his office, shall we say, nine thousand miles away, and it is very obvious that a party desiring to appeal cannot economically be present at a hearing...A man is entitled to present his case the best possible manner. A man is entitled to present his case face-to-face. Robbing a man of that privilege is certainly robbing him of a portion of the justice due him (GCHA, December 11, 1948, p. A7).

Council member Perez interviewed Island Court judges who conceded that the Island Court was willing to and capable of handling the Superior Court cases (GCHA, December 11, 1948, p. A15). Congressional legislation to abolish the Superior Court was vetoed on January 3, 1949, by Governor Pownall, who stated in a letter to the Guam Congress that "the Superior Court fulfills a definite need in the judicial structure for Guam...There is absolutely no need to eliminate the Island Court or to consolidate Island Court jurisdiction with the Superior Court" (Pownall, April 14, 1945). The controversial appeal process to the Secretary of the Navy was not re-examined until over a year later when Guam was transferred to the Department of Interior in 1950.

In a memorandum to the Guam Congress, Governor Pownall chartered members of the Congress for meetings in land affairs, saying: "a mistaken idea exists in the minds of some of the members of the Guam Congress, with respect to land condemnation." (Pownall, July 20, 1948).

Pownall wrote:

The Governor appreciates the interest of the Guam Congress in such matters but believes that the proper solution of matters of this nature shonld be left to the determination of that branch of government charged with the responsibility of hearing and determining rights of individuals under law (Pownall, July 20, 1948).
THE NON-LEGISLATIVE LEGISLATURE

The first postwar election for the Guam Congress took place on July 13, 1946. Following the induction of the first postwar Congress, Guam's new naval governor, Admiral Charles Pownall, spoke encouragingly of a proposed self-government for Chamorros. Pownall, in a May 27, 1947 letter to the Chief of Naval Operations, wrote that "a great deal of the current unrest among the people of Guam has been the fact that the Governor's power is plenary and that the Guam Congress is merely an advisory body" (Pownall), and that Chamorro leaders were excited by the 1947 proclamation of Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan granting limited powers to the Guam Congress. Members of Congress looked favorably upon this proclamation as a step forward; finally, it seemed as if previous lobbying efforts for self-government were paying off.

Proclamation Granting Limited Powers to Guam Congress

Whose the citizens of the island of Guam, through the Guam Congress, have expressed a desire for American citizenship and an organic act for that island with self-government; and

Whereas the United States government repose faith, trust, and confidence in the people of Guam and desires to give to them a greater share in their own Government;

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in the Secretary of the Navy by Executive Order 9814, dated 23 December 1945, it is hereby proclaimed:

Thereafter, Congress passed a number of measures designed to improve the living conditions of Guam's people, including the Guahan Aid Act of 1947, which provided for the establishment of a Guam Aid Program to assist in the development of the island. The program was administered by the Department of the Interior, and its objectives included the provision of housing, education, and medical care for Guam's residents.

In conclusion, the Guam Congress was a step forward in the development of self-government on Guam. Although it had limitations, it paved the way for further progress in the island's political development. The Guam Congress served as a platform for the expression of local concerns and as a means for the people of Guam to participate in the governance of their island. As a result, Guam was able to move towards greater self-determination and eventual statehood.
are in a peculiar situation. We are being gov-
erned by the Navy and this interim power the Navy has given us is shaky (GCHA, February 5, 1949, p. 6).

Nine days after Goldstein's refusal to testify, the House of Assembly issued a warrant of arrest for con-
tempt of Congress. Joaquin C. Perez assured his col-
leagues, "I own, on my own, the Attorney General regarding our intended move. The Attorney General is of the same opinion that such an individual is guilty of contempt" (GCHA, February 5, 1949, p. 8). Pow nell, however, ignored the warrant and the Goldstein issue went unresolved. One week later, Assembly members debated their options and dissolved the Con-
gress were expressed. Okiyama addressed his colleagues, "If that warrant of arrest is not honored and Goldstein is made president, the laws of Guam, gentlemen, or we can do as well dissolve this Guam Congress" (GCHA, February 12, 1949, p. 9). Frank Perez added, "If it is within our jurisdiction to handle this matter, well and good. If not, we might as well fold up the Guam Congress and go home: we have failed our people. We want courtesy" (GCHA, February 12, 1949, p. 10). The Assembly mem-
bers voted that Speaker Won Fat should discuss the mat-
ter personally with Governor Powell. Won Fat met with Powell, and reported to the As-
cess that the "Guam Congress has no grounds what-
toever to act, although there are implied powers inher-
ent in the Constitution." (GCHA, October 5, 1948, p. 5). Because Goldstein was a Navy employee, the governor believed that the Guam Congress did not have jurisdiction over his ac-
s. Rather, Powell said, this was a case for the execu-
itive branch of government. Powell's response did noth-
ing to clarify the powers of the Guam Congress and the Assembly members responded in unison.

On the floor of the Assembly, Congress members responded,

Frank D. Perez: I am of the honest opinion that it would be best for us to adjourn until such time as we can do some good for Guam and our people and the government. Let us not hide behind doors, but let us come right out and tell our people that we cannot do things they wish, because we have somebody to tell us what to do. I don't know about the other members but I am of the opinion that it is time to adjourn until we can be of service to our Guam people and to the government.

Charles P. Taotao: I think the gist of the whole thing was this. We had been given to believe

that we had certain powers and we went ahead and put it to a test. We found that we haven't got those powers... The embarrassing thing about this, which I pointed out at the Council Meeting, is that in the beginning, the Executive Branch encouraged the members of the Com-
merce and Trade Committee to continue on with their investigation held and then, at the crucial moment, when we decided to issue a Warrant of Arrest, the Attorney General gave us his bless-
ings. Then, everything was stopped short and we are left hanging on a limb. The Execu-
tive Branch pulled away and left us dangling. I can't see that this Congress is anything more than an advisory body.

Conception Barrett: How can one man be the supreme Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Power? What kind of government is that? (GCHA, March 5, 1949, pp. 6-10)

Before adjourning from their March 5, 1949 session, members of the Assembly voted unanimously on "The Bill to Provide an Organic Act and Civil Government for the Island of Guam" (GCHA, March 5, 1949, p. 10) to be transmitted to the U.S. Congress. In passing their own version of an organic act for Guam, the members of the Guam Congress sought to identify clearly the walkout as a call for U.S. citizenship and civil government rather than as a rejection of the American presence. Following its passage, Antonio C. Cruz introduced the walkout mo-
tion:

I move that the House of Assembly adjourn at this time and not to reconvene until such time as this body receives a reply or the action of the Congress of the United States relative to the Organic Act for Guam as passed by both Houses of the Guam Congress. (GCHA, March 5, 1949, p. 14) Cruz's motion passed unanimously, be-
ginning the walkout.
there is now a clear understanding of the legislative powers and responsibilities of this Congress (GCNC, March 12, 1949, pp. 4-6).

Following Powell’s address, Council member Francisco B. Leon Guerrero commented:

...this unusual occasion has recently occurred which could have very well been avoided if our land and people had received the attention of the Congress of the United States. I am citing basic principles and facts. We are now in the second half century period since the signing of that treaty which has caused the transfer of the Island of Guam from the sovereignty of Spain that of the United States...the fact remains that without organic legislation there is no security for ourselves and our property (GCNC, March 12, 1949, p. 18).

Following a lengthy debate that raised issues similar to those the Assembly had raised prior to adjourning, the Council members voted to recess until resolution of the Assembly walkout.

WALKOUT REVITALIZES CITIZENSHIP DRIVE

Whether or not Powell understood that the walkout was more than a protest of the suppression of the Chamarro legislators, the subpoena issue was only a superficial catalyst in their protest. As stated, Powell expressed the views of the protesting Council members.

It must be emphasized that the Assembly action was not directed upon any single incident, but upon a series of actions which have occurred with increasing frequency since the issuance of the Proclamations of August 4, 1947. Definition of the scope of its powers has become, in the opinion of the Assembly, a matter of increasing concern and interpretation of individual actions of the Congress by the Executive Branch of the Government without observance of any uniform rule. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty as to the result of which the Assembly does not believe that such similar feeling of insecurity exists to the minds of the people concerning the stability of the Congress. The members of the House of Assembly consider that the powers of the three branches of government must be defined ("Mr. Won Pat," p. 1).

Assembly member Taitano expressed his belief that the walkout emerged out of "three major grievances: (1) Arbitrary rule by the Naval government; (2) Lack of constitutional guarantees of civil and personal rights, and (3) Lack of court of appeals beyond the Secretary of the Navy ("Taitano," p. 135). Taitano’s experience of naval rule on Guam had given him the suffering and discrepancies between American democracy and arbitrary rule.

The walkout brought the issues of citizenship in Guam, and civil rights to a head. When the Guam legislators ended the walkout and returned to their posts in the Congress on June 1, the latter’s message had already been successfully transmitted to the United States. National media coverage of the walkout, coupled with independent lobbying and public efforts by friends of Guam (such as Thompson, Calvo and Velásquez) undoubtedly contributed in bringing about the political changes on Guam within several months of the congressional incident.

On May 21, 1949, just over two months after the walkout, President Harry Truman called upon the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to begin planning immediately for Guam’s transfer from the Department of the Navy. The implication of a civilian formal government was a political development for which Chamarros had long waited and for which the great majority of Guam Congressmen were grateful. Despite hesitation from some Assemblymen who objected to Guam’s delegation to the Department of the Interior, Concerned members of the Assembly voiced their presidential realization that the Interior Department was the likely recipient of its Andersen facilities. Concerned members of the Assembly voiced their apprehension regarding the Interior Department’s political record in the Virgin Islands and on the American Indian Reservations (Bordonal, p. 22). Also see GCH, June 4, 1949, pp. 10-12. Despite the expressed reservations on congressional resolution recognizing Truman’s move to remove naval rule and requesting Chamarro participation in the administrative transfer preparations for by a majority vote.

One month later, on June 4, 1949, Governor Powel announced his retirement from office, and a U.S. civilian governor would be appointed ("Governor Powell," p. 1). That civilian would be Gerald Nye, and he would work in unison with the Congress in seeking citizenship for the Chamarro people.

CITIZENSHIP SENTIMENTS

After nearly 30 years of lobbying and petitioning for citizenship, Guam’s legislators had certain perceptions of what citizenship would mean for Guam. The events leading up to the walkout provided interesting insights into their understandings of citizenship. Some members of the Guam Congress emphasized the idea that to achieve citizenship would accord the Chamarro people a measure of equality, thus protecting them from discrimination. Many Chamarros believed that U.S. citizenship would remove many of the existing discriminatory practices. Others viewed citizenship as a means of safeguarding their land and property. Chamarros believed that the U.S. government would not arbitrarily condemn the lands of its own citizens.

In understanding the citizenship movement on Guam, it is impossible to ignore the impact of the Japanese occupation upon the Chamarros. As Robert Underwood describes it,

The experience left a psychological legacy of fear of non-American control and helped generate a relationship of gratitude and debt as far as the Chamarros were concerned. On the one hand, there was gratitude for being rescued, but there was also a debt owed them by America on whose behalf they suffered. In keeping with this, the war experience subsequently became the main rhetorical basis for the acquisition of U.S. citizenship (Underwood, 1987, p. 101).

The fears expressed by Underwood compare similarly. If more intensely, with those expressed in 1935 after the Philippines House of Representatives passed a resolution to annex Guam. The idea that Guam’s political status was so ambiguous as to invite annexation by the United States or foreign countries kindled a citizenship drive at that time as well (Bordonal, pp. 93-97). The postwar pro-American sentiments of those who endured various forms of wartime brutalization were expressed by a great majority of the population and were inevitably communicated to and by the Guam Congressmen. In the sentiments articulated in congressional sessions, the problematic issues such as land alienation, discrimination, and unfair government practices were all the more disturbing in light of a war experience so fresh and brutish.

Members of Congress shared diverse perceptions and understandings of citizenship, but despite the variety of arguments employed, they unanimously agreed that citizenship was not only desirable, but necessary.

Mariano Santos: At present, the wage scale for the Civilian government is very low. We have this Organic Act and our political status changes. I am sure a lot of things will be changed for the better too. At present again, we have the Army and the Navy here as representatives of the President of the United States. If we should have this Organic Act and our political status changes we would be dealing directly with the President of the United States and not his representatives.

Carlos Taitano: We are outside the family now. How can we demand our rights if we do not belong? We have not the right until we have been granted citizenship. After you belong, then you can demand your rights.

Frank Perez: Do we want to be forever wards of the United States of America - we, our children after us? Certainly we don’t want it. The definition of a ward is a person who is incapable, having no initiative but just to be led by a guiding hand, telling you face right and left. Do you want to be in that status forever? Do we want to be pushed around? You have seen all of the discrimination going on, depriving us of our rights. Do you want to let this thing go on for another century until we lose everything we have? - until we have nothing to fall back on? What will be our economic situation in the days to come? No land, no money, no home. Where is our security? Have we any accent spot anywhere on these 225 square miles? I say no.

Antonio C. Cruz: We would like to be secure in our homes and free from fear and condemnation of our property. We would like the privilege of planning our own homes... Our land is fast being condemned and there is little available land for agriculture now (Guam Congress Joint Session, December 22, 1948).

Ironically, Congress members, such as Mariano Santos, believed Guam’s representatives would deal directly with the U.S. President. Others, such as Frank Perez and Carlos Taitano, assumed that discrimination would end and civil rights would be guaranteed, and Congress members, such as Antonio Cruz, believed that land issues would be corrected.

In their sessions prior to the walkout, both Assembly and Council members questioned the authority of the naval governor. In their perception, the judicial branch of government was little more than an arm of the governor, and its appeal process to the Secretary of the Navy seemed improper and unfair to Chamarros. From
Guam Congress Walkout of 1949

their experience, it was also evident that the legislative branch lacked power; the "limited legislative powers" granted by the 1939 proclamation failed to provide them with a means of addressing the island's problems. This fundamental lack of a balanced three-branch system of government simply became unacceptable.

Plagued by critical land issues, disciplinary practices, and other problems rendering unsolvable owing to insufficient judicial and legislative leverage, the 1949 Guam Congress members challenged the U.S. government to live up to its ideological rhetoric. Finally, the U.S. Congress responded, with the appointment of a civilian governor, the termination of military rule, and the passage of an organic act for Guam with citizenship for the Chamorro people.

Carlos Tarita was privileged to attend the signing of the Organic Act by President Truman on August 1950 in Washington, D.C. After the departure from the White House, it was a major victory won for the Chamorro people. It was told, especially because the Navy desired to maintain complete control over Guam in the light of escalating conflict in Korea. White House staff and department of the Interior personnel communicated to Tarita that the Guam Congress walkout, an act of deorganization, was an embarrassment to the U.S. government and drew attention to the urgency of Guam's situation. Tarita particularly resented the words of the Secretary of the Interior who expressed in him, "the walkout did it." (Carlos Tarita, personal communication, September 29, 1984)

Just as surely as the walkout was a nationwide phenomenon, so surely was the Organic Act's passage one of multiracial causes. The influence of various Chamorro and other lobbying efforts, the impact of national publicity and international embarrassment, and the effect of the Hopkins Committee report all had various influences upon members of the Washington, D.C. executive and legislative branches. The pressure of events brought an era of deorganization, along with modifications in military operations and styles of governance. But for the members of the Guam Congress and to the people of Guam, attributing credit to any one cause was fruitless as they began immediately to seek ways of approaching the new Government of Guam.

A LEAP BACK TO THE PRESENT

Amid Guam's contemporary political struggles — in the battle for Commonwealth status and in the fight for Chamorro self-determination — the aspirations and achievements of my grandfather, Dr. Ignacio Cruz Perez, and his colleagues in the Guam Congress seem especially worthy of inquiry. While not necessarily unique, the achievements of our people have soundly achieved so much, inordinately the benefits for our previous generations — for sovereignty, self-determination, freedom from land alterations — previously lacking in Guam.

In a 1986 interview, Governor Ricardo Bordallo commented, "It was a sad day for the people of Guam when the Organic Act was signed... The Organic Act was not designed to enhance the dignity of the indigenous people. It was designed to enhance the colonial status of the United States." (Stimson, p. 4)

In another interview, Governor Bordallo's father, Guam Congressman Rolando C. Bordallo, struggled long and hard to transform Guam's political status, so too did succeeding generations in their battles in the struggle for political rights. Lest this to the deliberations and emotions articulated in the Guam Congress, I am struck by their similarity to today's political discourse. As we near our centennial as an American colony, I wonder whether, as in Guam, Chamorros, as a people in our homeland, we in the U.S. government have done and will do, as we have made of our Government of Guam.

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