Introduction

This book is about the five-year struggle, between 1945 and 1950, leading up to the Organic Act of Guam. It is about the Chamorros who defied the U.S. Navy in their determination to achieve the civil rights that they correctly believed were promised them when Guam was taken from Spain in 1898. It is also about the Institute of Ethnic Affairs and John Collier, its founder, his anthropologist wife, Laura Thompson, its scholarly directors, and the small staff, who worked tirelessly in support of the Guamanians.

This is the detailed story of how the Chamorros achieved United States citizenship and civilian government shortly after the end of World War II. Much of it is from the Washington perspective. While the Guam Assembly walkout in 1949 and its significance are well known to those interested in Guam's history, this is the first time the full five-year story has been told.

I am in the fortunate position of being able to tell it because I lived it. I was editor of publications for the Institute of Ethnic Affairs from June 1946 through December 1949, when most of the action took place. Located in Washington, D.C., the Institute published a total of thirty monthly News Letters devoted to articles about dependent peoples worldwide. To some extent, those newsletters chronicled the end of twentieth-century colonialism. I was there to help write and edit all but the first three and last three issues. Beginning in February 1946, the Institute published thirty-seven monthly Guam Echoes, a kind of newspaper for the people of Guam. I wrote and edited all but the last three of those as well.

In writing this book, I had the yellowed copies of those publications by my side. I hadn't read them in more than fifty years. And when I began reading them in 2004, I found they held the suspense of a mystery story. They told how the advocates of self-determination for Guam introduced the final campaign for civilian administration in the spring of 1946 and how proponents of continued military occupancy staunchly defended navy rule during the next four years.

At the invitation of Collier and Dr. Thompson, former Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes launched the campaign with a hard-hitting speech
against continued naval administration at the first annual meeting of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs in Washington, D.C., on May 29, 1946. Taken by surprise, Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal found himself in the position of having to defend half a century of naval neglect of both Guam and American Samoa. Collier and Dr. Thompson corroborated Ickes’ adverse facts, prompting Forrestal to send news reporters to the field in a doomed effort to refute them. The Hopkins Committee, the United States Congress, the United Nations, newspapers, and a few national magazines got into the act. Meanwhile, Forrestal attempted to throttle Collier with an adverse ruling from the IRS preventing the Institute from receiving tax-free contributions.

Part of the story centers around a young Chamorro named Carlos Taitano who came back to Guam in 1948 after serving with the U.S. Army in the Pacific under General MacArthur during World War II, imbued with the determination to see that his people obtained the civil rights promised when the United States took the Philippines, Cuba, and Guam from Spain at the turn of the twentieth century. Taitano was elected to the advisory Guam Assembly, the lower house of the Guam Congress; and on March 5, 1949, when that body walked out because the naval governor wouldn’t let them subpoena a stateside man perhaps illegally involved in Guam business, Taitano quietly telegraphed the AP and UPI in Hawai‘i, which spread the word to the Washington Post and other American publications. Collier and I wrote a widely distributed press release stating the significance of the walkout, and as editor of the Guam Echo I further publicized the situation through an op-ed to the Post and a letter to the New York Times. The walkout was the catalyst that finally brought the U.S. Congress around to passing the Organic Act of Guam, but the process still dragged on for seventeen months and required constant surveillance.

This was a seesaw battle fought at the very top of our government. It was a David and Goliath struggle between the military and civilian forces that President Harry Truman finally ended by signing the Organic Act of Guam on August 1, 1950. Taitano and key stateside officials were present at the signing, as is shown on this book’s cover.

The timing of the campaign was right. Hundreds of thousands of young American men (and some women) had enlisted in the armed services in the early 1940s to save democracy from the totalitarian regimes of Germany, Russia, and Japan. In 1946 they were returning home. That helped. When the plight of the Guamanians became known through the national
media, the leaders of the campaign for civilian government had support from these young veterans. For example, 200,000 American servicemen were stationed on Guam in 1944 and 1945 as the United States prepared for the final battles against Japan in World War II. When they came back to the United States they did not forget Guam. Some servicemen, like Roy James and Dick Wels, both attorneys, gave voice to the rights of the islanders they had come to know. I am hopeful this book will be of interest to anyone who has ever been to Guam—or to their descendants.

Unlike the battles those servicemen fought with their lives, this was a philosophical war in which not one bullet was fired. Instead, verbal volleys were launched and public relations strategies were employed. This battle was publicly discussed and argued out in the halls of the United States Congress. It holds lessons for the Middle and Far East conflicts in which our government finds itself in the twenty-first century. One retired naval officer who read the manuscript has suggested that this book should be in the library of every college and university that has an ROTC office.

Guamanian leaders who fought for the changes included B. J. Bordallo, F. B. Leon Guerrero, Antonio Won Pat, and Concepcion Barrett—all of whom were members of the Guam Congress—as well as Agueda Johnston, assistant superintendent of Guam schools. All visited Washington, D.C., at different times and did their part in persuading Congress that an organic act should be passed. Simon A. Sanchez, superintendent of Guam schools, well understood democracy and was a civil rights activist who encouraged Guamanians to become informed by joining the Institute of Ethnic Affairs and reading our publications. These leaders were backed by the twenty-one thousand other indigenous inhabitants. The battle could not have been won without them.

Credit for the results of this campaign must also be given Julius A. Krug, who succeeded Harold L. Ickes as Secretary of the Interior. Oscar L. Chapman followed Mr. Krug as secretary and brought the campaign to its conclusion. Roy E. James, an attorney who had spent time with the military government on Guam during the war, was their point man in the Office of Territorial Affairs at Interior. Emil J. Sady, a protégé of John Collier and a student of military government, was assigned to the Pacific Islands desk at the State Department and got the Organic Act ball rolling. Philleo Nash, a member of the board of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs, was the White House staff member in charge of issues involving minorities; he provided inestimable help. The names of many United States Congressmen appear
throughout this book and in the appendixes. I have included photographs of those my memory tells me were the most important. I apologize if I have missed some.

Eventually, even the Navy came around to supporting the necessary legislation, particularly Navy Secretary John L. Sullivan, Under Secretary W. John Kenney, and Captain Peter G. Hale, Chief of the Office of Island Governments, Navy Department, 1948–1950.

Guam’s campaign for civil rights was led by a handful of dedicated people at a cost so small it can hardly be figured. Over the five years from 1945 to 1950, many people joined in, but the hard work was done by only a few. I learned then what the anthropologist Margaret Mead has often been quoted as saying: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

I have written this book mostly for the children and grandchildren of the people of Guam who populated the island at the end of World War II. More than five hundred Guamanians were members of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs, and consequently subscribers to the *Guam Echo* when the Organic Act of Guam was finally passed. They included members of the Guam Congress, leaders of the local village councils, Catholic priests and lay leaders, business men and women, doctors, teachers, and ordinary residents of Guam. They were solidly behind the change and let the movers and shakers in Washington know that.

Washington readers of the *Guam Echo* included Navy, Interior, and State Department officials; members of the U.S. Congress; a few White House staff members; veterans of the armed services formerly stationed on Guam; magazine and newspaper reporters and editors; the board and membership of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs. This book is for them and their descendants, too.

To a lesser extent, I have written this book for the sons and daughters living in American Samoa and the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. One future governor of American Samoa, Peter Coleman, while a law school student at George Washington University, shared an office with me at Interior in 1951 and became my lifelong friend.

Last but not least, I have written this memoir to supplement other histories of those postwar years and document the end of one phase of American colonialism. I hope it will be used in high schools and colleges wherever history and government are taught. Perhaps the most important
lesson of this book is that democracy must always come from the people
to be governed; it can never be imposed from the outside. A secondary les-
son is that freedom of the press plays an important part in achieving and
sustaining true democracy. When discourse and legislation supplant guns
and missiles, humankind will have learned these lessons well.

* * *

Full sets of both the *News Letter* and the *Guam Echo* are in the collections
of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; Hamilton Library at the
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; and the Micronesian Area Research Cen-
ter at the University of Guam.