

REASONS FOR REJECTING ROTAN'S ASSERTION THAT MESSRS. MAUDE AND MACDONALD  
STATED THAT RABI WOULD BE SOLD "OVER THEIR HEADS" IF THE BANABANS  
VISITED OCEAN ISLAND EITHER TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY.

1. Any such statement would have been completely contrary to our general instructions from higher authority, and to our own feelings and hopes. We both most sincerely trusted that the Banabans would choose Rabi unhesitatingly as the future homeland, though we repeatedly made it clear in the discussions that this was a matter for their decision. We should have been extremely foolish, and it might even have adversely affected our careers, if we had not followed our general instructions.
2. In his confidential letter of the 29th January, 1947, the Secretary, WPHC, sent Captain Holland a copy of Maude's printed memorandum of the 2nd September, 1946, regarding the future of the Banabans and their funds, "for your (at the present) confidential use". In paragraph 68, it was recommended that, if the Banabans decided to return to Ocean Island, Rabi should not be sold but be run by the High Commissioner as a copra estate until the Banabans decided to colonize Rabi voluntarily or the phosphate deposits were exhausted and the Banabans compelled to migrate elsewhere.
3. For Maude and I to have stated that Rabi would be sold "over their heads" if they went to Ocean Island would therefore have been a deliberate dereliction of duty, since the memorandum had been approved of by the Secretary of State.
4. Further, on the 24th February, 1947, the High Commissioner agreed that Holland -  
"should give the gist of the (Maude's) proposals to the Banabans" and Holland was so informed in the Secretary's confidential letter of the 26th March, 1947:-  
"You should now proceed to inform the Banabans in a general way of the proposed terms of settlement...You are authorized to use your discretion, in the light of local circumstances and the attitude of the Banabans towards the proposals, as to the interpretation of the words 'in a general way' - that is, that is, as to how far you should explain the details of the proposals to the Banabans".  
Although there is no record to the effect, Holland was a most conscientious officer, keenly sympathetic to the Banabans and anxious to ensure the success of his mission, and it may safely be assumed that he did so explain the proposals to the Banabans; in such case - and particularly in the light of the discussions with Maude and Macdonald in May, 1947, it is impossible to envisage how discussion on the future of Rabi could have been avoided, and they must almost certainly have been advised of the recommendation in paragraph 2 above.
5. Copies of the Statement of Intentions were "laid on the table" at the outset of the meeting held by Maude and Macdonald in Rabi in May, 1947, and Sections A and E thereof make it quite clear that what Rotan asserted was totally untrue.
6. In his opening statement at the meeting, Maude made it quite clear that the Banabans would not "lose" Ocean Island if they chose to stay on Rabi, and would not "lose" Rabi if they chose to visit Ocean Island either temporarily or permanently until the phosphate deposits had been exhausted.
7. The latter point was even more fully emphasized by Maude and Macdonald in the subsequent discussions.