

as a transit base for nuclear submarines and warships.

In late 1972, more than fifty traditional and elected leaders went on record opposing the U.S. scheme: "The people of Palau have no desire to have military installations and personnel in Palauan land in the future because this could result in suffering for human beings within and without Palau."

Discontent built in the islands until in 1979 a popularly elected constitutional convention drew up a charter banning the storage, transit and use of nuclear weapons and waste and other hazardous materials "without the express approval of not less than 3/4 of the votes cast in a referendum submitted on this specific question." That proposed Constitution also barred the government from using eminent-domain powers for the benefit of a "foreign entity," a provision clearly aimed at blocking the United States from using land for military purposes.

The State Department reacted quickly, asserting the nuclear ban "would create problems of the utmost gravity for the U.S." It demanded that the Constitution be modified. Under pressure, the Palau legislature voted to void the Constitution and cancel a referendum on it.

A grass-roots group of constitutional convention members, teachers, students and traditional leaders then formed the Peoples Committee for the Palau Constitution to press for the original document. In defiance of the legislature, it carried out the referendum with U.N. supervision, and the Constitution was ratified by a majority of 92 percent.

Despite the vote, the American chief justice of the trust territory upheld the legislature's nullification of the Constitution. The legislature then appointed nine people to redraft the Constitution, deleting all provisions objectionable to the United States, and promilitary businessmen and U.S.-supported legislators led a well-funded campaign to win popular support for the revised document. But in that October's referendum, 70 percent of the voters rejected it. The original Constitution was brought back for a vote the next year and 78 percent of the islanders approved it.

Nevertheless, ignoring this clear mandate, the United States continued negotiations—which have spanned four Washington Administrations—on the Compact of Free Association. This August it won its terms at last. The Constitution is without effect.

The United States is sure the compact will be approved next year, and Pentagon officials have even surveyed sites for future bases. But it may not be so easy—grass-roots opposition is strong. One writer gives this example: "Aichi Kumangai, the village magistrate of Ngardmau, told me how he was visited by military officials in 1980. His clan owns half the land that the Pentagon has designated for munitions storage. The officials explained their plan for fencing off the area they wanted. They also warned the villagers that they would have to stay at least three miles away whenever munitions were being loaded or unloaded. Kumangai told me that the people of Ngardmau objected immediately and that they remain opposed to the plan."

Indeed they do. "We lived through World War II," said an elderly woman in Ngardmau, "and we don't want any

form of military to come. What's wrong with our life today? We go fishing and to our garden and get food and cook it. If you need some money you take your vegetables to market. What's the matter with this?" Another summed it up succinctly: "The military plans for Palau are very threatening to us."

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## Erving Goffman

**T**he end of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, a book as excruciating in its dissection of the ruses and gambits for self-presentation in our time as Balzac's *Lost Illusions* was in his, contains a characteristic Erving Goffman gesture. Throughout the book he has been courting an elaborate theatrical metaphor for human behavior. He now empties that metaphor to comment on his use of it: "And so here the language and mask of the stage will be dropped. Scaffolds, after all, are to build other things with and should be erected with an eye to taking them down."

Goffman's death last month threatens to remove an important scaffold for those of us who have relied heavily upon his work for our vision of the world: it allows us to consider the possibility of relapse, of retreat into a world of more digestible explanations of human motivation, whether they be historical, political, psychological or ethical. For the fact is that Goffman lived so close to the discomforts of his truths that even his most avid readers might welcome the chance to embrace perspectives that offer something at once more easeful and more systematic.

And yet for all its ruthlessness there is something inspiring, even arresting, in Goffman's accomplishment. His procedure was the essence of humility—no rigid methodology, no pronouncements, no self-aggrandizement. And that procedure was matched by a prose style almost beautiful for its absence of rhetorical tricks.

Goffman's single-minded, penetrating, even loving exposure of what we do to and with one another never strayed into any of the seductive avenues which invited him to instant fame and accessibility. He knew only the need and the possibility of tracking down our deepest stratagems, of answering, without invoking metaphysics or ideology, our most profound questions of who and what and how we are.

Nontherapeutic in an age of therapy, noncreedal in an age of creeds, nonmethodological in an age of methods, Goffman created for our age one of the few significant testimonies to the meaning and value of being human.

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