

*Then, Bodin's rebuttal of Oberdorfer. He doesn't mention who built
the roads on Yap!
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TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Office of the High Commissioner
Saipan, Mariana Islands
96950

March 17, 1964

Mr. Clay Blair, Jr., Editor
The Saturday Evening Post
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Blair:

"America's Neglected Colonial Paradise," a report on Micronesia in your issue of February 29 is unfortunately so slanted as to damage the prestige of our administration of this important island area. The caption stating that "Today our island domain is a scandalous mess and a serious threat to our international prestige." set the tone for a seriously misleading report, built on half-truths. It is unfortunate that the author, Mr. Oberdorfer, chose to play down our accomplishments of today - the real story of the here and now. The story of past neglect and inadequacies which is related is true in large part, albeit overstated. It is a story which has been told and retold, and is thus a classic example of "beating a dead horse." In fact the Saturday Evening Post first ran a piece of this theme by Robert Sherrod in the December 20 issue of 1952 - over 11 years ago.

The article missed the real story in Micronesia today - what has been done, and what is now being done to overcome the inadequacies of the past. I would be the last to assert that money in the form of appropriations is the whole story. But it is a mighty important part of it. For over ten years the funds available for administration averaged less than \$6 million per annum, appropriated under a statutory authorization of \$7,500,000. The first job I faced in the summer of 1961 was to secure legislation setting a new ceiling and to initiate a greatly increased budget program. A new ceiling of \$17.5 million was fixed by Congress by the end of the first year. Under this new authorization appropriations for the 1963 and 1964 fiscal years were more than doubled. The legislative and appropriation committees in both House and Senate have for the past two and a half years responded without fail in meeting the requests of the Administration and our obligations to the area under the Trusteeship Agreement. In fact, in this area of questioning and curtailment of appropriations for almost all overseas programs of the United States, we have been uniquely fortunate in that the Congress has allowed every cent that has been requested for the administration of the Trust Territory. The only setback we have encountered was the failure of the FY 1963 supplemental bill to be enacted in October 1962, which delayed the receipt of the first major increment of our increased funding until late May of 1963.

I must at the outset protest the flat statement in the first paragraph of the article that "as administrator of a United Nations trust, the U. S. has failed to fulfil its treaty obligations." This is irresponsible journalism. The United Nations Trusteeship Council monitors our administration most meticulously. It sends visiting missions to the area every two to three years. Our government reports annually in great detail (a volume of 300 printed pages) and is questioned extensively in open annual sessions of the Council at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. I have had the privilege of serving as the "Special Representative" of the United States at the 1961, 1962 and 1963 sessions. Despite a lively and thorough examination, no representative on the Council, except that of the Soviet Union, has seriously suggested a failure of the United States to fulfil its obligations under the Trusteeship Agreement. Criticism of various aspects of our administration has been voiced and many such criticisms have been valid. Further, we make every effort to respond to criticism not only in the Council but by adopting and implementing measures which will meet all such valid and constructive criticisms. The same is true of the recommendations carried in the reports of the periodic Visiting Missions. Although the report of the 1961 Mission was critical of our administration in a number of important areas, it was quite laudatory in others and it was by no means a great embarrassment to the Administration, as stated in this article. Our accomplishments in carrying out the recommendations of that Mission have brought far more praise than criticism in the two subsequent sessions of the Council.

Space does not permit a complete itemization of all of the examples that could be cited of distorted presentation of the current situation in Micronesia. One specific example is the photograph of the coral-encrusted tanks at Saipan on the first page of the story. This photo and the text gives the impression that these tanks had been lying on the beach or in the tidewater since the end of the war. The fact is that they had only recently been excavated from an earth-filled dump by an enterprising scrap dealer to cut up for the Japanese market. It is true that there is a number of areas too much debris remaining from the war - material that was not profitable to move in the salvage operations that shortly followed the war. There are no harbors "blocked" with landing craft as the article states, nor is the statement true that "in many places fertile farmland is withheld from its owners because live artillery, ammunition, hand grenades and mortar shells are strewn everywhere." (underlining supplied). There is a single area on Saipan, composed of between 500 to 1000 acres, mentioned in the text, a former ammunition dump that was burned, scattered and ineffectively decontaminated after the war, where such a condition exists. It is government and not private land and exclusion from the area surrounding the dump for most of the period following the war was due to the conduct by our military of classified training operations in the area in question. We know of no farmers being kept from their land for the reason stated or for any other.

Perhaps the situation in the Yap District where much of the report is centered, both in text and in the excellent photography illustrating it, is the best example of the extent of distortion in the article's presentation. It might be noted that eleven photos out of twenty, including the cover, were taken in that district. Four pictures are from the Yap Islands proper and seven from Ulithi Atoll. Yap is, as the article states, the most tradition-conscious district in the Trust Territory and with a population of 6,000 is the least populous of six districts in the Trust Territory which has a total population of 85,000. There are 3,500 people on the Yap Islands proper, 500 on four islets in the Ulithi Atoll, and the remaining 2,000 are on the other scattered "outer islands."

There was little commercial or industrial activity in the Yap Islands during German and Japanese administrations nor is there much today. Nevertheless there has been much solid progress in Yap during the past two years - all but un-noted in the article. Among the items which might have been mentioned was the completion last year of an airfield essential to the establishment of an adequate air service in the Territory. This was undertaken two years ago by reconstruction of a World War II Japanese strip with nearly a hundred bomb craters in it which had remained untouched since the end of the war. Mention is made only of "Zero fighter planes falling apart alongside the airfield" as part of the overpainted picture of the remaining debris of the war. The fact was that of some 200 Japanese planes destroyed in our bombing of Yap, all but a few which were overlooked in the jungle were long since removed in a salvage program. Two were uncovered in our airport construction project and I requested that they be left alongside the field as mementoes of the war.

Again, the striking photo of two Yapese high school students on a motor-bike makes a dramatic impression but fails to tell the story. Two years ago one could not travel over two miles from the District Center in anything but a four-wheel drive jeep. In the last two years over twenty miles of roads have been reconstructed and improved on the main Yap Islands and the remainder of the road system is under renovation. Mention is made of the old German canal and bridge between two of the closely adjacent islands in the words "Our contribution was to bomb the bridge in 1944." True enough, and also true that it remained out until it was replaced with a fine new concrete and steel bridge last year.

Recent months have seen the construction of new houses to accommodate the newly-hired American teachers - two of whom were shown in the excellent photographs on page 28. Not specifically mentioned were the six new elementary schools completed in the past two years and of four new schools being completed out of 11 on Yap proper. One of the schools shows in the background of the picture with teacher Paul Scott. No mention of a completely new seven building junior-senior high school plant now under construction. There is no mention of many other improvements and extensions to facilities and utilities for which funds have been allocated and planning for implementation started, such projects as power and water, expansion of agricultural station plant and equipment, a new radio broadcast station, a new hotel in the works, and improvements to supply, storage, harbor and other administrative facilities. Quite a bill for a community of 3,500

anywhere in the world - and much of it initiated and accomplished before receiving the first increment of our greatly increased appropriations in May of last year.

The article uses a heresay story on an outdated tube of eye salve and some observations concerning conditions in the Yap Hospital to highlight the inadequacies of our medical services. It mentions the three new hospitals completed in the past two years but states that supplies of drugs and equipment are still inadequate. True, we do not have everything we want in the way of public health and medical services. But with the medical budgets more than doubled in the past two years we have added additional trained personnel in all districts, set up a more comprehensive inoculation program than obtains in the States generally and brought drug and medical supplies up to a very reasonable standard. This article is quite a contrast to the observation of Milton and Margaret Silverman in the article entitled "Those Amazing Island Medics" in the April 12, 1958 issue of the Saturday Evening Post. This is what the Silvermans said at that time, "Significantly the excellent surgical and medical care rendered by practitioners is supported by excellent medical case records, good hospital equipment, modern drugs and supplies of some of the best medical journals." With annual medical service expenditures rising from \$600,000 in 1962 to \$935,000 in 1963, and again increasing to \$1,350,000 in the present or 1964 fiscal year, we are given the impression of stalemate in our medical program!

To complete the story of the present situation in the Yap District we should mention Ulithi - the atoll community of 500 people on 4 small islets. A typhoon swept over the atoll in December 1960 - nearly denuding the small islands. Subsequently a coconut replanting and rehabilitation program has been completed. A major "community development" program was undertaken to rid the islands of debris and junk - the sanitary environment greatly improved with campaigns against rats and flies - and new elementary schools erected on each islet and a new "outer island junior high school" constructed on Asor because of the aversion of the people to sending their children to the "alien" environment on Yap. The devotion and dedication of Jim Boykin and of Mrs. Stahl, the first American educational personnel to be stationed on any of the "outer islands" has made a great impression and I am happy that it is recognized in the illustrations. The trip to Ulithi by Photographer Fields was made when the Outer-Island Junior High School was dedicated.

I realize that Mr. Oberdorfer and the editors perhaps felt that stressing shortcomings of the past could well arouse public interest and redound to the benefit of our programs and administration. I am sure, however, that the over-all presentation has destroyed much of value of the article. Certainly, it is not fair to the many dedicated people, Micronesian and American, who are working in the area, nor is it fair to our many friends in the U. S. Congress who have given unstinting support to increase our funds to enable us to move forward on all fronts in carrying out our obligations to the people of Micronesia under the Trusteeship Agreement.

Sincerely,

Signed: M. W. Goding
High Commissioner