

Helen Cleveland's statement  
before House Subcommittee (O'Brien)  
on June 15, 1968

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Mr. Cleveland

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ERNEST K. LINDLEY

At an earlier session of this Committee several members expressed concern with certain aspects of discussions in the United Nations concerning the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the U.S. three non-self-governing territories of Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. We always welcome the opportunity to share our thoughts and problems with the Congress -- and with this Committee in particular -- for our two branches of government work together to fulfill a shared task, to insure the well-being of the inhabitants of those areas for which the United States is responsible and for which the United States has accepted solemn international legal and moral obligations.

The international obligations which we undertook in 1945 when the United States ratified the United Nations Charter and for the development of "self-government or independence"

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in the case of the Trust Territory and simply "self-government" in the case of the non-self-governing territories. At the present time we have not developed a precise policy to recommend to you on the future status of any of these territories beyond the broad obligations to promote the well-being of the inhabitants outlined in Chapter XI of the UN Charter, although steps have been taken to move the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands into a new and lasting relationship to the United States within our political framework.

Because you have expressed concern in this Committee and because we and, I am sure, the Departments of Defense and Interior are also concerned over certain developments of the last year, I want to take this opportunity to discuss quite frankly the nature and extent of questions immediately facing

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us and questions which will face us in the near future. I know there is strong sentiment in some quarters that whereas the United Nations has every right to closely scrutinize our administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, it has no right to cast equal scrutiny on our non-self-governing territories, the inhabitants of which are United States citizens or United States nationals. In many ways this feeling is quite understandable.

At the outset, however, I think it is necessary to recognize the close relationship between the Trust Territory and the non-self-governing territories and the need to develop a coordinated approach to all four areas.

Since 1945 the United States has submitted information on the non-self-governing territories to the United Nations in

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fulfillment of obligations undertaken under Article 73 of the UN Charter. We have also submitted information on the Trust Territory in accordance with the procedure described in the Charter and the procedure prescribed under the Trusteeship Agreement.

During this period the number of former non-self-governing territories which have reached independence has increased at a rapid pace. ~~After all,~~ the UN now has 114 members, many of which were not very long ago in dependent status. There remain only three of 11 trust territories, and the number of non-self-governing territories outside Southern Africa has dwindled to the point where focus has now turned to the so-called "bits and pieces". Consequently, political, economic, social, and educational developments within our territories attract more attention than ever before.

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~~In a very real sense~~ the Congress has responded to this change by greatly increasing financial support for the development of political, economic, social, and educational programs. Nevertheless, extended discussion of United States territories and of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in various United Nations bodies and the prospect of even closer scrutiny as the hard-core colonial problems are solved, coupled with the expanded membership of the United Nations and the new strength of the Afro-Asians, pose for the United States complex problems, in dimensions heretofore unprecedented, of both immediate and potential impact on the international political and military posture of this country.

Admiral Blouin will be discussing the increased importance of the territories and of insular areas in general for present

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and potential military use and the need to insure their continued political stability and availability. I should like to discuss two other aspects of the problem.

The first aspect is increased international interest, manifested by Afro-Asian and Communist initiatives, in directing attention to United States territories and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Notwithstanding the freedom and extensive self-government traditionally present in American territories, the absence of a desire for independence on the part of inhabitants of American territories, and the fact that the United States has been one of the foremost advocates of decolonization and the right of self-determination, American territories were this past year the subject of extensive discussion in the United Nations.

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The authority for this discussion is derived under provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement. Article 73 of the Charter provides that members responsible for non-self-governing territories undertake, inter alia, (a) to insure political, economic, and social advancement, (b) to develop self-government, taking due account of the political aspirations of the people, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its people and their various stages of development; and, finally, (c) to transmit information on economic, social, and educational conditions.

Article 73 provides no basis for determining whether a territory is non-self-governing; nor does it set forth criteria under

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under which members are to cease transmitting information.

Guam and the Virgin Islands have been largely self-governing

for some

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time, but they and American Samoa and the TTPI are still non-self-governing in both American and international eyes.

The Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement set forth comparable obligations for ~~trust~~ trust territories, although, as I indicated earlier in discussing a trust territory's future political status, the Charter mentions "self-government or independence" as alternatives.

Most of the United Nations discussion is carried on under the provisions of Article 73 of the Charter and the provisions of the Colonialism Declaration of 1960. That Declaration, whose principles the United States supported but whose language and implications the United States opposed, stated that immediate steps shall be taken "in trust and non-self-governing territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely

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expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or color, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom".

As you can see, the Colonialism Declaration was heavily weighted toward complete independence, irrespective of political and economic realities, and virtually ignored the Charter provision for "self-government" of dependent areas, possible within a larger political framework.

Although the overwhelming majority of United Nations members insists that given a choice, a people will invariably select sovereign independence, the same General Assembly which adopted the Colonialism Declaration also adopted a resolution which defined three ways in which a dependent territory could reach self-government: (a) emergence of a sovereign independent state as in the case of the Philippines, (b) free association with an independent state, as in the case of Puerto Rico; and (c)

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integration with an independent state (as in the cases of Hawaii and Alaska). The United States has endorsed some of the principles of this resolution because of <sup>our</sup> its recognition of ~~the right~~ <sup>that</sup> of the people <sup>to have a right</sup> to choose a status other than sovereign independence and because it provides the necessary flexibility to fit different cases.

With the Colonialism Declaration as its primary mandate, the UN Special Committee on Colonialism (the Committee of 24) last year began an extended discussion of United States territories. ~~While~~ <sup>The</sup> the Special Committee's approach to U.S.

territories and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

*did not single us out for special attention*  
~~was generally~~ sympathetic,

there was ~~an~~ of certain

*a good deal of critical attention*  
aspects *about*

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aspects of U.S. administration, particularly alleged lack of political development. Moreover, the Special Committee, quite <sup>oblivious</sup> to the facts our representatives presented, insisted on including American territories in its determined push towards the ending of political dependency as soon as possible.

In each of its reports on U.S.-administered

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territories, the Committee (a) reaffirmed the right of the peoples of the area to self-determination and independence as asserted in the Colonialism Declaration, (b) urged the United States to undertake immediate measures to implement the Colonialism Declaration, and (c) called for visiting missions to the territories

During the Committee's deliberations, the Soviet Bloc systematically attempted to exploit the strong ~~anti~~ anti-colonialist sentiment in the UN and enjoyed some success in getting reports phrased in more doctrinaire terms. However, the Soviets failed in their efforts to eliminate from the Committee's reports all references to the wide range of alternatives to sovereign independence."

I need not tell you that the Committee's conclusions and recommendations regarding our territories stimulated substantial press comment, both in the United States and in the territories. Frankly, we do not believe that the Committee's actions were

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proportionate to the notoriety they received. At the same time, unless significant signs of political change in the ter- appear in the next year or two, we can reasonably expect the discussion in the United Nations to sharpen

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to the point where it will be a bigger problem for the United States in the United Nations, domestically, and abroad. This is particularly true if Afro-Asians, egged on by the Soviet Bloc, should attempt to use the United States territories as a bargaining means to produce changes in the U.S. policy in the major colonial areas, <sup>of Africa;</sup> or if inhabitants of the territories begin to come to the forum the United Nations provides to voice their desires for increased measures of self-government.

It is the desires of the inhabitants of the territories which constitute the second aspect of the problem immediately facing us. Although a survey of public opinion among the islanders

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islanders would almost certainly show that their present wish is for even closer ties with the United States, it would also show an increasingly strong desire for self-government and for clarification of the relationship between the islands and the United States.

We all are familiar with the expressions for political change emanating from the Virgin Islands and from Guam.

Admittedly, these expressions have not reached the point of potential political embarrassment to the United States, nor need they <sup>to that point</sup>. However, they can increase in intensity, especially as other small territories (such as the Cook Islands and Western Samoa) succeed in getting their political status more clearly defined and achieve a greater degree of self-government.

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So long as the United States territories are non-self-governing, it is possible ~~that the~~ inhabitants will take advantage of the United Nations forum to express their grievances. A case in point--and a case with which I think the members of this Committee are familiar--is the publicly announced intention of several Guamanian legislators to present to the United Nations their case for removal of the Governor of Guam if they should fail in getting satisfaction in Washington. If this case reveals nothing else, it should serve to warn us that, while we can reject as dogmatic propaganda United Nations and Communist calls for immediate independence for American territories, there are likely to emerge in U.S. territories post-war insular nationalists or political adventurers

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adventurers whose taste for gambling has not been dulled by experience, and who will demand redefinition of their political status.

These then are the dimensions of the problem. When added to pressing strategic and military requirements they present a problem which calls for immediate solution.

The range for possible action by the United States is relatively small. We can do nothing and ignore the political pressures building up within American territories and the international problems they may evoke. We can continue to recognize the non-self-governing status of the territories, but at the same time decide in principle to move them toward some new relationship with the United States without regard

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for possible repercussions in the United Nations and the territories resulting from the absence of a specific program. Or, we can begin now to draw up a coordinated plan which will remove the non-self-governing label and culminate in a clear definition of the relationship of the territories to the United States and which will effectively terminate the international obligations of the United States relative to their administration.

The second and third alternatives are not mutually exclusive. The third simply calls for an immediate coordinated approach which will take into full account political and military realities and pertinent international obligations.

I think the conclusion is irresistible that the political

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and military factors and the international obligations which I have described inescapably lead to the third alternative--that is, we should begin now to draw up and implement a coordinated program which effectively removes the non-self-governing label and clearly defines the relationship of the territories to the United States. In doing so, we ought at the outset to acknowledge that the difficulties are formidable. We ought also to acknowledge that if we start now we start from a position of strength. The pressures for movement in our territories are mounting, but they have not reached the point where the U.S. has lost flexibility or where our ability to act is limited by any outside forces. This favorable situation will not, however, continue to exist indefinitely.

As you can see, my purpose here is not to provide a

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will continue to make every effort to assure that any  
discussion takes into proper account the true facts  
about our territories.

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