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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

May 18, 1966

SUBJECT: Conversation Between Mr. George Milner, Office of Territories, Dept. of the Interior and T.C. Pinckney, G/PM, on Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

This complements my MR of May 2 which summarized conversations on the TTPI with various concerned officials in the Department and DOD.

Mr. Milner seemed somewhat reserved until I presented myself as a tyro in the subject, willing to be convinced, and appealed to his expertise. At this and with the prompting of several questions he expressed or agreed to the following viewpoints:

a. The basic difference between Interior and State concerns (1) the domestic political feasibility of granting self-government to the TTPI, and (2) the readiness of the Micronesians for self-government.

b. Interior's primary concerns are (1) protecting the US strategic interest in the TTPI and (2) properly preparing the Micronesians for economic and political advances.

c. State's primary interest is in avoiding criticism on the colonialism issue, particularly at the U.N.

d. The choices in a plebiscite should be kept few and as simple as possible. Only three should be offered: (1) independence, (2) continuing the status quo, and (3) association with the US.

e. The TTPI is far from ready to become a state or even to elect its own governor, and Congress would not approve either such action at this time.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/OSC/MR.

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FEB. 25 1966

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G/PM: TC Pinckney

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f. Using the criteria of protecting US strategic interests, Micronesian welfare, and minimizing international criticism of the US, an early plebiscite is desirable.

h. At present a vote would be overwhelmingly in favor of association with the US, but as we educate the peoples, both expectations and disenchantment will rise.

i. A crucial factor is ensuring the US will abide by the results of a plebiscite. Congress could probably be persuaded to approve an Organic Act, a la Guam, to become effective if association were approved by a plebiscite.

Comment: Although Mr. Milner occasionally betrayed what others consider as Interior's characteristic lack of a sense of urgency, I believe his judgments -- if representative of Interior's upper echelons -- provide a basis for a unified approach to the President by State, Defense, and Interior or, failing that, of a joint State/Defense approach which Interior would find acceptable. Unless otherwise instructed I will attempt to draft such a position.

TCP
T.C. Pinckney

G/PM:TCPinckney:5/19/66

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