

**Micronesia:**

# America's Unkept Promise

## U.S. Uses 'Ad Agency Approach' on Islands

WHEN President John F. Kennedy learned one day early in his administration that a serious outbreak of polio had occurred in Micronesia, he reacted quickly and strongly.

Robert Mangans, an Interior Department official at the time, recalls:

"We had been trying to get a better health program going in Micronesia. When we brought the polio outbreak to the President's attention, he demanded an ex-

planation why these conditions were allowed. And he wanted to know what was going to happen TOMORROW—not sometime in the future.

"The Bureau of the Budget became as soft-hearted as the Salvation Army."

At that point, began a long-delayed buildup in economic assistance, coupled with an equally delayed program to develop—on the American model—the skills of self-government among

deriving now was an intention to induce the Micronesians to vote to affiliate with the United States. Permitted a free choice for independence or alliance with some other country, alternatives implicitly provided for in the trust agreement, have never been seriously contemplated in Washington.

Kennedy's reaction to the polio outbreak undoubtedly arose from sympathy for the stricken islanders. At the same time, he could not

have been unaware that the United States faced dissatisfaction in the islands and was receiving increased criticism from the U.N. for failure to do the job it had promised to do.

"A paramount consideration of President Kennedy's was to keep our ideals in the forefront of the world," recalls Stewart Utali, then secretary of the Interior. "So we didn't want people pointing to Micronesia."

The effort thus began, leading to a decade of calculated benevolence, has brought a measure of American-style progress to the territory. It has blunted effective criticism of the United States as a colonial power.

Yet increasingly, Micronesians have grown doubtful about casting their lot with the United States and from time to time representatives of the Soviet Union or some other country has deplored the American performance in speeches at the U.N.

But America has continued to send more dollars and more experts to the territory

feeling of economic dormancy.

The report said that there should be coupled with this an introduction of limited self-government. Through the combination, it suggested, the United States would meet its obligations to the Micronesians and to the United Nations—and achieve its goal of affiliation.

Much of the report was never implemented, but its basic theory squares closely with American policy then and since.

THE PLEBISCITE recommended in the report and again later by President Johnson was never held. But the proposals for increased spending were adopted. The flow of money swelled from \$1.1 million in 1961 to \$16 million last year. By comparison, it costs about \$115 million a year to operate the nuclear carrier Enterprise.

Udall, noting that the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had run the Territory on a "caretaker" basis, explains why the Kennedy administration decided on

an expanded effort:

"It was clear to us at Interior, and at the State Department, too, that the United States was on the line, that we would be judged and compared with other countries that had trusteeships. We got the budget up from about \$3 million to a \$30 million ceiling, began building the infrastructure to help the people, more so that the Micronesians would realize they had not been short-changed and the United Nations would see we were doing a good job."

Here is a peculiar facet of many of the interviews conducted by the writers of this series. Over and over, there were repeated references by top officials to what either nations might "see," to being "judged and compared," to "demonstrating" intent and "showing" concern. Many officials seemed preoccupied as preoccupied with appearances as with substance. Few spoke of fulfilling an obligation

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Nolan

Twenty-five years ago the United States promised the United Nations to prepare Micronesia for self-government and permit it to make a free choice of political destiny, including independence. The promise remains unkept.

To trace the history of America's adventure in modern-day strategic colonialism in the Pacific, Gardner B. Jones, editor of Pacific News Service, and Webster K. Nolan, features editor of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, interviewed scores of officials in the Trust Territory and Washington. The result is this five-part series which started in Monday's Star-Bulletin.

Pacific News Service is a subsidiary of the Star-Bulletin, specializing in interpretative reporting of Pacific affairs.

Jones

# But Money (Wow!) Isn't Everything

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simply because the obligation existed.

**ASKED ABOUT** the charge that the United States was trying to buy the loyalty of the Micronesians, Udall said:

"What if we didn't build the schools? What if we didn't build the hospitals? What if we didn't improve their lot? Then we would be faced with another charge: the United States doesn't care."

The point is more than valid but it is not the complete explanation. The larger truth is that the motivation to this day remains mixed. The United States did not expand economic aid to Micronesia solely because of the U.N. obligation or out of human concern.

The money began flowing and kept flowing from a mixture of overdue human sympathy (Kennedy), fear of criticism (Kennedy and Johnson) and the underlying intent to persuade the Micronesians to vote for affiliation with the U.S. (Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon).

**REGARDLESS OF** the reasons, the money did flow: —In 1963 the U.S. contributed \$263,000 to education. Last year the figure was \$6.8 million.

—In 1968, Washington provided \$933,000 for health projects. Last year the figure was \$4.3 million.

—In 1963, \$905,000, went to construction, including schools. Last year, the government provided \$21 million for building classrooms, roads, power facilities and other public projects.

The educational system, which included only one public high school in the entire Territory in 1961, also benefited from the assignment of Peace Corps Volunteers to teaching jobs.

And university study, a rarity in pre-Kennedy days, has increased dramatically: 499 Micronesians received college or graduate school scholarships last year.

**THIS OUTPOURING** of public funds, however, contrasts with the American record with respect to development of a private economy. Japanese business, it is widely believed, has long been interested in returning to the area once adminis-

tered colonially by Japan.

However, under the "most favored nation" clause of the trust agreement, the United States has not permitted this. Under the clause, if one U.N. member is accorded such a privilege then the same privilege must be granted to any other U.N. member.

The U.S. position until now has been that if the Japanese were allowed in, then the door would be opened for the Soviet Union, and for military reasons the U.S. has not wanted Russian agents, posing as businessmen, running around the territory. There is some talk that the United States may be getting ready to relax this policy.

But until now, Micronesian economic wellbeing has in a sense been held down for reasons of American military security.

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton recently discussed the Micronesian situation with Pacific News Service.

"I think," he said, "there should be a great deal of compassion and a great investment in their security. We have a very specific obligation. And we like them."

**ASKED TO DEFINE** U.S. policy, the secretary said:

"The main thing is to develop the economic and social structure through the development of education and health so there can be a viable act of self-determination. We cannot expect people to make a viable act unless they have the alternatives available."

Thus, almost 25 years after assuming control of Micronesia, U.S. policy still postulates economic and political development as prior conditions for self-determination.

On the political front, the United States in 1965 created the "Congress of Micronesia" and some of its powers have been gradually increased. Ed Johnston, the current high commissioner, has done much in this area during the past two years. A subordinate says:

"He has more willingly abdicated responsibilities to the Congress. He has made them a vital part of the budgetary process. He has consulted them on major appointments. He has encouraged them to give opinions on many policy decisions."

However, says this offi-

cial, "two things screw this up."

"First," he said, "the Congress still feels this is an arbitrary thing by the high commissioner and that he can revoke it at any time. So they begrudge him what he's doing."

**"SECOND,** Congress many times doesn't have its ducks in order and doesn't follow through. It is so easy to criticize rather than to share the responsibility."

"We have no organic act. The closest thing to it is a secretarial order (by the secretary of Interior). A secretarial order created the Congress and a secretarial order could abolish it."

In other words, after 25 years, the Micronesians enjoy only that self-government extended them by the secretary of the Interior as that may or may not amplified by an American high commissioner.

The political independence of the Micronesians thus depends in large measure on whatever individuals may be in office at a given time.

The picture is not entirely negative. The United States can point to a robust list of economic and political accomplishments during the past 10 years:

—Construction of schools, roads, medical facilities, power and sewage outlets.

—Appointment of more Micronesians to more important jobs, including four of the six district administrators and all six deputy district administrators.

—IMPROVEMENTS in government salaries and the introduction of a territorial social security system.

—Substantial improvements in communications and transportation. Almost all districts are now linked by radio-telephone. Air and sea traffic, while still inadequate, have greatly expanded.

—Dramatic growth in the educational system. Last year, 25,064 students attended classes from kindergarten through high school. Also, more than a thousand Micronesians now hold teaching degrees.

—Increased consultation between U.S. officials and Micronesian leaders on expenditure of funds, programming of public projects and appointments to jobs.

On the other hand, the Micronesians can point to ma-

for unresolved problems:

—Military takeover of certain lands and the ever present possibility of future takeovers. Compensation has been made for the use of lands but the Micronesians say it has been insufficient.

—Inordinate delay by the United States in making good on war claims arising from damage done by invading and occupying troops during and after World War II. The U.S. Congress only recently authorized settlement of the claims. It still must appropriate the money.

—Failure to settle land ownership disputes. An extensive land survey program is under-way.

—Denial of irrevocable powers of self-government.

**THERE ARE** many Americans in Micronesia, from High Commissioner Johnston on down, who are doing their utmost to meet the terms of the trust agreement. But they do not make policy.

Policy is made in Washington, and part of the problem, possibly, lies in the policymakers not knowing how to deal with an unsophisticated, nonindustrial society. Operating successfully across cultural boundaries, as American officials have been, discovering around the world, is no simple matter—and money is often not the answer. Culturally speaking, one has to learn at least two languages: all too often the men in Washington speak only Washingtonese.

The current restiveness, the mounting demands for more independence by the Micronesians, indicates an uncertain future for the money-equals-friendship program. But beyond that lies a far more important question: Even if Washington eventually wins the loyalty of the Territory through its purchasing power, is it good for the Micronesians?

**TOMORROW:** Micronesia's future; a Chinese puzzle.