

# That Other TT: 'Ready'!

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Papua New Guinean Minister for Defense and Foreign Relations Albert Maori Kiki, here for the 13th South Pacific Conference, is optimistic about his country's forthcoming independence.

"Australia is willing to assist us and we are quite happy about being on our own," Kiki said in an interview.

Papua is actually an Australian territory and New Guinea a Trust Territory of the United Nations.

But the government is virtually self-governing—Papua New Guinea is being administered by its own people more and more — and will formally assume independence on December 1. The case is of interest here because it is the last of the U.N. - administered TTs — save one, the one here.

"Australia will then only be responsible for defense and foreign affairs matters," Kiki said, and quickly added, "but any policy changes in these areas must first be approved by us."

Papua New Guinea forms the eastern half of the large island generally known as New Guinea. The western half of the island, formerly Dutch New Guinea and now called Irian, is a province of Indonesia.

Covering approximately 46 million hectares, Papua New Guinea embraces over 600 islands, ranging in size from tiny coral atolls to the large islands of New Britain and New Ireland in the Bismark Archipelago and Bougainville in the Solomon's Group.

The estimated population of the country in July, 1972, was 2,520,000, made up of 2,470,000 indigenous persons and 50,000 non-indigenous persons.

Independence for this country is quite a jump from 30 years ago, when a substantial portion of the population was as primitive as the peoples on

"We could be independent now if we wanted," Kiki added. "It is we who are holding back, not Australia."

There is some speculation on the local government's ability to deal with the primitive highlanders' disregard for a western-style system of law and order. Papua New Guineans traditionally have been warriors—and some "outsiders" say — little has happened educationally or socially to change that tradition.

Kiki vehemently disagrees: "The tribal disputes we have among indigenous persons in the Highlands are mainly over land. When there is a concentration of population, disputes are bound to occur, and despite occasional deaths, the violence is no worse than that in New York City. The disputes here are mainly between clans and our police are capable of subduing them when they arise."

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The ranking diplomatic officer told the conference in one of its sessions last week that the first delegates from Papua New Guinea had to be instructed in the use of knives and forks, and also wore shoes for the first time in their lives.

Kiki, whose mother is from New Guinea and father from Papua, said that the Highlanders' reaction to government has been changing in the last five years.

"Younger persons are going to universities and teachers' college—the youth are bringing the message home and therefore what was a feeling of resistance is now changing to one of acceptance.

"Education is not yet compulsory," Kiki explained, "because the country cannot afford it at this stage."

"A lot of parents are complaining because some children can only go to primary schools, and not secondary schools, which have a limited enrollment and are considerably

Kiki also said his attitude toward his children's education is quite different than that of his parents toward his education—yet another sign of the changing times in Papua New Guinea. Kiki did not begin his formal schooling until he was 21; his parents were satisfied with a knowledge of the outdoors, hunting, fishing—basically survival in nature. The political framework of Papua New Guinea is expanding from the jungle to an awareness of other places in the world and how to get along with them.

"Independence will not be a problem—Australia has promised to give us aid when it is needed," Kiki said.

Some changes taking place under the local government are a reduction of civil servants in order to cut down on expense and Papua New Guineans assuming more and more of the administrative positions in the government, especially the district commissioner posts.

"We hope to find a new name, but unfortunately we cannot decide on that until December," Kiki added.

"I think Australians and United Nations representatives tended to fear the local people when they expressed a desire to govern themselves—they thought we would nationalize businesses once we got in," Kiki said. "They have been proven wrong."

Foreign investors are beginning to realize the vast opportunity in Papua New Guinea for development of natural resources, mineral and agricultural.

"The Japanese interest in our country is great, they are coming so fast," Kiki said. "We welcome outside interests as long as they understand that they come under our terms—we are the boss of our own land."

Japanese are investing in timber, rubber, coffee, fishing and hotels. They are also negotiating with us to build a hydroelectric plant. It will be

"Americans are also negotiating with us for mining and processing rights in the copper industry in Papua New Guinea," he added.

The country's own national airline begins operations in November. Air Niugini will fly from Port Moresby to Hon Kong and Tokyo. Kiki is hopeful the airline will obtain approval for a route to Tokyo via Guam as well.

The preservation of arts and crafts of Papua New Guinea will become a strong link in a chain that is binding the country into one people a one nation.

The government is building a Center for Creative Arts in Port Moresby. Australia has already

allocated \$1 million out of a total of \$5 million to be given over a five-year period.

"We are preparing now what we know is going to happen," Kiki said, "so by December 1 we will have embassies offices opened in Washington, New York, Fiji and Canberra; not long after that in Tokyo, Bangkok and Amsterdam."

Kiki, wearing an island shirt and a lava lava, appears to have successfully retained cherished parts of his traditional culture while simultaneously meeting head-on the challenge of independence in a small and smaller world.