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Forty-eighth Session

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTEEN HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 20 May 1981, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. GOULDING (United Kingdom)

Organization of work

Examination of the annual report of the Administering Authority for the year ended 30 September 1980: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (continued)

Examination of Petitions listed in the annex to the agenda (continued)

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81-61132

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: Before we resume the questioning of the representatives of the Administering Authority I should like to make a further statement about the organization of our work.

I understand from consultations that only one delegation will be in a position this afternoon to resume questioning of the Administering Authority, and that that delegation has only a few questions to put. It is important that the Council should make the best use of the time available to it and we must, in particular, provide adequate time for questions to the Administering Authority tomorrow, Thursday. I have therefore asked one of the petitioners who was due to be heard tomorrow, Mr. Faulkner, if he is able to advance to this afternoon the oral presentation of his petition. He has kindly agreed to do so, if that is the Council's wish.

Mr. Faulkner's request to present a petition is contained in his letter of 15 April to the President of the Trusteeship Council (T/PET.10/178). That request has already been granted, in accordance with the relevant rule of procedure.

The Council will have noted, from Mr. Faulkner's letter, that he wishes to support his oral petition by giving the Council a presentation of colour slides. A similar request has been received from Mr. Theodore R. Mitchell, Counsel to the people of Eniwetok, whose request to present a petition to the Council is contained in his letter of 8 May (T/PET.10/179/Add.1), and who has asked in his letter of 12 May (T/PET.10/184) to be allowed to support his petition with both cinema films and colour slides.

I suggest to the Council that it should respond in the following way to these requests for the use of visual aids.

In accordance with the open and liberal attitude which the Council has traditionally adopted to requests from petitioners, I propose that we should agree to allow the petitioners I have mentioned to show their films and

(The President)

slides in the Council chamber, but for practical reasons it is not possible for such visual presentations to take place while the Council is in formal session. To get round this difficulty I suggest that after the delegation concerned has completed the questions it wishes to put to the Administering Authority this afternoon, this meeting of the Council should go briefly into recess. During that recess Mr. Faulkner will be invited to show his slides in this chamber on a screen which will be lowered from immediately above my head. As soon as his slides have been shown the Council will resume its formal meeting and Mr. Faulkner will make his oral presentation in the normal way and will then be available for any questions delegations wish to put to him.

If I hear no comment I shall take it that the Council agrees that we should proceed in the manner I have described.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Unless any unforeseen difficulties arise this afternoon I shall propose a similar procedure when the Council hears the petitioners from Eniwetok.

EXAMINATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1980: TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS (T/1830; T/L.1225 and Add.1) (continued)

The PRESIDENT: Before we have the slide showing the Council will continue with the examination of conditions in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and will resume the questioning of the Administering Authority.

Mr. POUDADE (France) (interpretation from French): In the statement that he made yesterday, the Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia, Mr. Tun, pointed out to us that exploratory discussions on the economic and commercial development of the Federated States had been undertaken with Japan. Could he give us an indication of the stage those negotiations have reached and the agreements that are envisaged?

That is my first question. I shall subsequently have others.

Mr. TUN (Special Representative): At the moment, we are not engaged in any ongoing negotiations with Japan. We have concluded an agreement with Japan for economic aid, and we intend to negotiate a fisheries agreement with Japan similar to that between Japan and the Marshall Islands.

Mr. POUDADE (France) (interpretation from French): Vice-President Tun also told us of his concern with the problem of the College of Micronesia, and even said that he was disappointed at the way in which the problem was developing. Could he give us further information on that and tell us what the problems of the College are.

Mr. TUN (Special Representative): Yes, we do have problems with the College of Micronesia. The College is on probation, and has been since June of last year. It was put on probation because of the poor condition of its physical facilities - classroom buildings, dormitories. I might add here that one of the dormitories burned down several weeks ago.

Unless those facilities are improved, the College will lose its accreditation. That is one of the problems we have with the College. Another problem is that of money for operating expenses. Its operating budget was cut to \$300,000 in fiscal year 1982, from a figure of, I believe, \$1.4 million. That is one problem we have. The money will be rechannelled from other areas to make up the difference. While that is good, I can say that other programmes will in turn suffer as a result.

(Mr. Tun, Special Representative)

We also need to build new classroom buildings for the College. The present campus is located right in the centre of Kolonia, a very congested area. The College cannot be expanded; it should therefore be relocated. A site for the College has been selected, but there is no money for this project except for Architecture and Engineering next fiscal year.

If the new campus is not completed soon enough, it is likely that the College will lose its accreditation and as a result will lose its eligibility to receive Federal programme funding for its operations as well.

Those are some of the problems we are having with that institution.

Mr. POUDADE (France) (interpretation from French): The delegation of France would like to thank Vice-President Tun for his answers. Of course, we would hope that the funds necessary for relocating the College of Micronesia will be found, and we would like to receive some additional information concerning the bilateral discussions that are now going on with certain States of the region, particularly Japan.

I should now like to come to the statement by Mr. DeBrum, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands. Mr. DeBrum indicated that a fisheries agreement had been signed between the Marshall Islands and Japan and that it has been in force since 1 April. As Vice-President Tun has told us that the Federated States of Micronesia planned to conclude a similar agreement, the French delegation would like to know if that agreement is satisfactory to the Marshall Islands and what the initial results of that agreement are.

Mr. DEBRUM (Special Representative): As I stated in my opening remarks, we are proud to have been able to conclude this agreement with Japan. It is indeed the first Government-to-Government agreement outside of our agreements with the United States which the Marshall Islands has concluded in over a hundred years.

It lays down the basis for an understanding between Japan and the Marshall Islands concerning access to our fishing grounds and sets up a régime for the control management of our resources.

(Mr. DeBrum, Special Representative)

As representatives know, Japan is by far the most advanced fishing country in our area and has exploited our fish resources for many years. This marks the first time that an agreement has been reached whereby we have something substantial to say about the management of that resource and under which we can receive some compensation for its provision.

To answer the question more specifically, it is satisfactory inasmuch as this time it seems to us a most reasonable arrangement; but the implication of its conclusion, the fact that we have indeed concluded a Government-to-Government agreement, has far more value to us than the monetary and administrative provisions that it contains.

Mr. POUDADE (France) (interpretation from French): I have one last question. Mr. DeBrum said in his statement that modern medical and radiological surveys had been promised but that they had not yet been carried out. Indeed, persons in Eniwetok and Bikini were to be tested. I should like some information on that subject, because I think this claim by the authorities of the Marshall Islands was made last year, if I recall correctly. I may be wrong - and please correct me if that is not the case - but I think this question has already been raised.

Mr. DeBRUM (Special Representative): That is indeed the case: we brought up the problem in this Council last year, and the previous year, and the year before that as well. For the past six years I do not believe that I have appeared before this Council without bringing up the matter.

We are encouraged that there is movement, as I said yesterday, in the direction of resolving many of the outstanding problems stemming from the nuclear tests that were conducted in the Marshalls. We appreciate what the Administering Authority has done to correct some of those outstanding problems.

(Mr. DeBrum, Special Representative)

However, as I have said, many, many more promises have been made on this issue but they have not been kept. We had originally asked the United States to conduct scientific surveys of areas of the Marshall Islands other than the Eniwetok and Bikini sites, which we all know were directly impacted, to determine the level of radiation contamination which remains 30 years after the fact. In the case of Bikini, those requests were positively heard by the United States only when a lawsuit was filed in support of them. In recent months, private groups have filed lawsuits against the United States seeking compensation for damage done to them during the nuclear-testing period.

But the Government of the Marshalls has always maintained the position that the United States owes us the highest levels of scientific proof that other islands in the Marshalls are not contaminated.

We have expressed fears that the occurrence of certain medical problems in the Marshalls may be the result of lingering low-level radiation. We cannot be assured until all the information for which we have asked has been provided. That information was promised to us in 1978. Last week when I was in Washington, I am glad to report, I finally received a smattering of some of the basic data observation stemming from a radiological survey of the Northern Marshalls conducted in the fall of 1978.

It has taken the Administering Authority a long, long time to respond to this problem. We realize that there are many, many technical and scientific impediments, but we hope that the Administering Authority recognizes the importance that we place on this particular issue.

Medical programmes to deal with the problem have been promised; specifically there have been congressional acts that have attempted to deal with the problem, but these also have run into much more serious problems of administration, jurisdiction and others that have precluded the actual administration of medical care to people whom we feel must have the attention of high-level medical authorities.

(Mr. DeBrum, Special Representative)

It could be that at the end of all these scientific surveys we might discover there was really no problem. But during this period when we see problems we cannot yet rule out the possibility that there is indeed lingering radiation problems in the Marshalls. It is not only a medical problem; to us it goes much deeper than that. It presents great social problems and psychological distress to all the peoples of the Marshall Islands, not only those on the atolls that I have named.

I understand that sufficient data have now been provided for Eniwetok and Bikini to satisfy some scientists, but not all; certainly, in the case of Bikini, not their own independent assessors. We encourage the Administering Authority to do all it can to solve this particular problem.

Mr. HIGH (Special Representative): I believe that the area touched on by the representative of France is one which is receiving a great deal of attention, especially at this point in time.

The Council earlier at this session heard the statements regarding the need for an independent survey on behalf of the people of Bikini, as presented by Senator Henchi Balos. I think that the answers and statements made to that presentation are part of this over-all picture. Apparently there will be an independent assessment. We have advanced that cause during meetings since we have been here in New York, and I think that it looks very favourable for the not too distant future.

The over-all picture involving the health problems, the radiation factors with regard to the people in the Marshalls is the subject of Public Law 96-205, which is on the books and has been given to the Department of the Interior along with other federal agencies for implementation.

There has been a report submitted to the United States Congress by the Secretary of Interior on 7 January this year, which presented a preliminary view and report of the health programme called for by this particular legislation. We are not as far down the line as we had hoped to be. There was some desire to have the programme implemented by now, but that has not worked out. There is some confusion and question in Washington, as I understand it, over which people will be affected by this health plan -whether it is the people who live on the islands directly affected or people who have since moved to population centres such as Majuro, Ebeye and so on.

So those matters are currently under review in Washington, but I know that the intent and desire exist to see the provisions of Public Law 96-205 fully complied with in the very near future, and they are working towards that goal. I think that that about exhausts my knowledge of this particular area. It is not one with which I have dealt closely myself, but I do know from meetings last week in Washington that the things I have told the Council are true.

Mr. POUDADE (France) (interpretation from French): I wish to thank the representatives for their answers. I have no further questions to put for the moment.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes this phase of the questioning of the representatives of the Administering Authority.

As we agreed just now, the Council will now recess briefly to give an opportunity to Mr. Faulkner to show us his slides. Immediately thereafter, the Bureau will return to the rostrum and the Council will resume its formal meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.05 p.m.

EXAMINATION OF PETITIONS LISTED IN THE ANNEX TO THE AGENDA (T/1828/Add.1)
(continued)

The PRESIDENT: The Council will now hear the oral petition presented by Mr. Faulkner and I invite him to take his place at the petitioners' table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Faulkner took his place at the petitioners' table.

Mr. FAULKNER: I am grateful for this opportunity to speak today. It is reassuring to know that nations and individuals alike are provided with a forum before this Council. I firmly believe that freedom of speech - the freedom to speak out - is neither a gift nor a right, but rather a thing exercised, the sometimes unpleasant homework of the human spirit. Freedoms given to us at birth are easily eroded through lack of exercise in the face of frightening powers. Yet to remain silent before oppression is to encourage and strengthen it.

I petition this Council today, to voice my grave concerns over a possible United States military presence in the Islands of Belau. The needs of the military are set forth in the Compact of Free Association and the Agreement Regarding the Military Use and Operating Rights of the United States in Palau. Both documents are initialled by President Haruo I. Remeliik of Belau and Peter R. Rosenblatt, former President Carter's personal representative.

I imagine a large yet delicate coral reef community encircling and intermingling with 160 square miles of volcanic and limestone-formed islands. Most of these islands are clothed in jungle, of great beauty, but unsuitable for sizeable human communities. All the smaller islands together - including Peleliu, Angaur and Koror - total less than 30 square miles. The balance, somewhat less than 130 square miles, is Babeldaob, Belau's largest island, in acreage a little over 82,000.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Of that modest heritage allotted the people of Belau, the United States Government wants 2,530 exclusive acres for military requirements and 30,000 non-exclusive acres for various marine guerrilla warfare manoeuvres with adjoining mangrove areas for landing craft operations.

To better understand the magnitude of the military's request, imagine this parallel: the island of Manhattan is 22.7 square miles in area, in acreage, 14,500, a sizable chunk of real estate by any human standard. And yet the United States military considers it necessary to request, not 22.7 square miles, but rather 50 square miles of valuable property from the Palauans.

Among those needs are: 65 exclusive acres for aircraft parking at the Babelthup airport, 40 acres of dredged and filled lands in Malakal Harbour, still more land requirements on Angaur, more blasting and dredging in Belau's environmentally rich lagoons and passes, compounded by extensive dock and road construction. Once the marines have landed the military establishment will definitely be there to stay for a minimum of 100 years if they are handed the land use rights they want.

I am not an expert, by any standards, on trusteeship or decolonization matters, but for 14 years I have watched United States administrators knowingly contribute to a garbage dump of aluminium cans, to pot-holed roads graded for 30 years with coral rock, less rough to ride on only until the next rain, roads best traversed with a hovercraft. These few miles of road on Koror are hastily being surfaced with asphalt instead of cement, which has been a less expensive material for at least the past year. Cement roads have lasted over 30 years on Koror. The new asphalt surface is already flaking away. It would appear that the United States is building a maintenance factor into the road - the benefit to itself being the continued need to remain a part of Belau's future.

Ten years ago I bounced along Koror's main road with my Palauan friend, John Kochi - my diving buddy. Out of discomfort and annoyance, I said to John, "Do you know when these roads will be paved?" - one of those leading questions. "No," he said. "When the United States military wants to use them, that's when they'll pave them," I replied.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Judging by the military's current schedule, they are right on time. The \$8 million bridge is complete, the main road from Malakal to the bridge is surfaced, the runway extension is hastily under way. The road from the Airai bridge to various areas of southern Babelthuap is moving quickly and will continue to northern Babelthuap. Overnight more than 30 years of actual neglect is seemingly being rectified but, as one Palauan succinctly summed it up, "The bridge is not for us. We know it was not built for us."

In October 1967 I first journeyed to Belau. For me it was love at first sight. Fourteen years and nearly 20 trips later I am still in love. Most professional photographers, myself included, would go broke attempting to stay married to one place half a world away for so long. I speak from experience. Yet I have remained passionately devoted because, aside from Koror, Belau is one of the most beautiful sights on the face of the earth. Nowhere else have I attained a state of perfect joy. My presentation of photographs from Belau bears this out. The reefs and jungle-covered islands are a wonderland from the air. Most ironically, the United States military is quite familiar with this view. Their helicopters, coastguard and cargo planes, their reconnaissance aircraft, have surveyed it, yet their grand master plan reveals an incredible lack of sensitivity to the obvious beauty before them.

Any one of the tiny villages along the shores of Babelthuap is better managed, far more livable, than is Koror, Belau's district centre. The town of Koror is overcrowded and almost impossible to govern properly. More than foreign observers, the people of Belau are painfully aware of the contrast between Koror and Babelthuap.

Koror's 8,000 residents have strong family ties with their home villages. Traditional customs and obligations require frequent boat trips back and forth. Babelthuap's 82,000 acres of land are still a vital heritage of 14,000 people. In the long range future of their republic, every acre of field, jungle or shoreline is necessary to the health and happiness of their children and great-grandchildren. The United States military base would irrevocably destroy what culture remains to these people. If nothing else, it would delay their future 100 years. At the worst, it would create an oily "pit stop" in a high-powered race not of their choosing, not of their winning.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Already the United States dollar is rampant in Palauan society. This curse of too much money, the centralized system of Government jobs and schools, has created attendant animosities from the pressures of crowding. Young men have already jumped from the \$3 million bridge and killed themselves. An unending river of alcohol - provided by the overflow of United States dollars - has tumbled the social barriers necessary to a harmonious society, releasing the frustrations and violence created by their "no-win" situation.

When I was last photographing in Belau, during February and March, Palauan friends invited me on a weekend trip to Ngchesar. Before the boat departed at 1 p.m. from Koror, a number of the young men were drunk. The party was still eight hours away. As we rode the boat to Ngchesar, one inebriated youth said to me, "I hate your money. Your dollar has destroyed us. We never needed your money before." For this young man there is no future. His roots, his selfhood, his dignity have been taken from him.

An example of Belau's basic dilemma is evident in the split personality of their language. "Belau" is their name for their islands. Yet decision-makers decided on the "Republic of Palau" to accommodate maps and outside interests.

In their assigned "freedom", Palauans still live in the overbearing shadow of the United States. The fulfilment of the Solomon report's recommendations, commissioned by the Kennedy Administration, ensures that Belau and other Micronesian districts are locked in economic and emotional bondage to the United States. Whether it is still true or not I do not know, but at one time Palauan children devoted more school hours to the study of American history than to their own, to learning America's weather conditions rather than developing a better understanding of their own. If the study of American presidents was at all relevant to their lives, perhaps it was from America's heroes that they gained a measure of courage in dealing with their absentee landlord.

Each succeeding United States administration might have learned from the mistakes of its predecessors, but no quantum leap in a positive direction seems to have been accomplished. Only individuals within Palauan society have seen the cancer and tried to cure it. Concerned Americans like myself have acted as an alarm clock and as prods to that end. So-called neutral observers might forgive the United States Government by saying America has had

(Mr. Faulkner)

little practice as a colonial Power. But why then should Micronesians be subjected to the outrage of having their atolls vaporized or turned into runways? If America is still learning how to govern a colony, should we not practise at home first? Should we not spare the Micronesians the dubious benefits of our mistakes? Should the United Nations not elect Britain or Australia to the delicate midwife's task of severing the umbilical cord so that parent and child might live on their own?

If the United States military succeeds in dropping one more concrete "big apple" on top of another Eden, is my Government not clear-sighted enough to realize that each administration thereafter will have to contend with 14,000 and more angry Palauans?

(Mr. Faulkner)

It is sickening to think what our "free association" charges will do when they see tanks and troops and landing craft again. Palauan villagers living near the airfield complain already of the arrival and departure of three Air Micronesia flights a week. What will they make of perhaps 100 or more flights a week? Will they submit to noise pollution like that suffered by the Kaneohe Bay residents who must abide the United States naval base in Hawaii? What will the villagers do when they see their ecologically valuable mangrove areas destroyed by landing craft or massive docks constructed across their reefs? How will Palauan fishermen react when they witness their reefs dredged to accommodate warships and Triton missile submarines? Are United States officials so insensitive as to imagine the people of Belau will remain passive in the face of this? Do officials believe that such acts of destruction to the environment of Belau will be greeted with celebration and shouts of joy? Is there anyone who might believe these people will not suffer psychic damage, provoking violence turned outward or inward?

The United States is offering dollars as compensation for all human and environmental casualties of the 100-year military occupation. But, in light of the above already-evident truths, how do you compensate a destroyed human being, a destroyed jungle, a destroyed vegetable garden? How do you share 30,000 acres on a non-exclusive basis with villages and gardens and people - and not do damage of an irreparable nature? My Government and the military show an extreme disregard for these environmental and social problems, for human beings, for 14,000 men, women and children.

During my recent trip to Belau, I spoke with not one person who intended to vote for the military base in a yet-to-be-scheduled referendum. Men and women alike vehemently opposed it. I was elated by their convictions because 75 per cent of the voting Palauans would have to agree to a military presence before the Marines could storm their beaches. Opposition to the Compact and the Military Use Agreement is already well under way. At the request of several leaders, I have made my photographs available for their use in educating the villagers of the needs and consequences of a military presence.

(Mr. Faulkner)

A farmer will better understand why his cucumber garden will need to be exclusively his. Women will understand quite well that their taro plants grow better when one more cement runway is in Guam's master plan -- and not theirs. Years ago Dr. Roland Force wrote a book based on his anthropological studies of the Palauan culture. Its title was Just One House. Assuming the military compensates the Palauans for the wood and nails to rebuild the damage, who then will compensate them for the loss of their home?

Knowing of my past opposition to the proposed super-tanker project, many Palauans trusted me enough not only to voice their opposition but to ask for my help - not a very Palauan trait. An older man from Ngchesar village asked me, "You must help us fight the military." He told me Ngchesar and Melekeok would block the channel in front of their villages to stop any military use of the waters. "The military", he said, "plans to construct a huge dock in front of Ngchesar."

The super-tanker port was a new concept in the minds of Palauans. Major oil spills were not on their list of past mistakes. The smell of big money turned many heads. Fortunately, the Save Palau Organization, composed of hardworking Palauans and led by Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons, gradually educated the people to the massive dangers of the project. This finally led to its defeat. Others, like myself, also helped. But the most effective cure for the disease had to be administered to Palauans from within.

In formulating a decision, Palauans had little environmental help from the United States Government - only indifference or oblique opposition. If I seem to dwell on the super-port battle more than is necessary, relevant to the military issue before us now, please keep in mind that many of those past experiences are still valid from an environmental view, a social view and a view of how chess is played in Micronesia.

In contrast with the get-rich-quick oil dream with no prior precedent, Palauans vividly recall their war experiences caught as they were between Japan and America. Peleliu was incinerated to the ground and pockmarked with explosions. By war's end many Palauans were dead and many starving. The United States Navy provided for the survivors, who became wards of the State, orphans of the war,

(Mr. Faulkner)

so to speak, directed towards a future not of their own choosing. The older Palauans know what war is like, and the younger ones are of the peace generation. No hard-sell salesman need convince them of the dangers a military presence would pose to their islands. When Japan illegally fortified Belau, all were vulnerable to destruction from bombs, bullets and fire. Palauan fishermen were strafed by American planes or denied their food crops by hungry Japanese soldiers. If a hard-sell salesman is required, the United States military will be his employer.

When Micronesia was designated a strategic trust under the United Nations Charter a third of a century ago, the people of these Pacific islands were not a party to the signing of a future directed by others. If, in the Palauan experience, freedom is to be more than Madison Avenue mascara, the United States can do no less than seriously assume its assigned responsibility as set forth in the United Nations Charter.

(Mr. Faulkner)

The United States must no longer blackmail the Palauans with threats to withhold needed economic and infrastructure support if United States needs are not met. The United States cannot abdicate its responsibility as trustee if Palauans choose a nuclear-free zone to be a part of their future.

A hard-sell fact sheet, prepared in July 1980 by Peter R. Rosenblatt and staff at the Office of the Status Negotiations, Washington D.C., is ominously self-explanatory. I quote from part I, paragraph 2:

"Certain other provisions of the draft constitution would seriously impair the defence functions of the United States as envisioned under the Hilo Agreements by prohibiting the introduction of nuclear and other types of weapons or materials, including nuclear-powered ships into Palauan territory.

"The Palauan people have the right to declare their land, air and sea space 'nuclear free'. However, they cannot exercise this right and simultaneously opt for a relationship of free association with the United States. They have been negotiating this future political status with the U.S. for almost three years and predecessor status commissions have been doing so for over a decade. Under free association the United States would be solely responsible for defense matters in Palau. The U.S. is not in a position to assume such responsibility subject to the limitations of a 'nuclear free' zone. Since it appears that the Palauan people desire free association with the United States, we believe that they will, of their own free will and accord, negotiate agreements with us which will permit us to discharge our defense functions."

When President Remeliik, Chairman of the Palau Political Status Commission, became aware of the fact sheet in August 1980, he sent a telegram to Peter Rosenblatt as follows:

"Please advise by whom and for what purpose the 'fact sheet' from your office dated 7/18/80 was prepared. This document is of grave concern to Palau and does not accurately reflect the understanding of the Guam negotiations. Signed/Haruo I. Remeliik."

A monopoly player with all the hotels; a chess player negotiating with flesh-and-blood pawns. Knights and bishops of ivory may be put in a box, but kings and queens with eyes and feet may walk off the designated squares.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Several years ago Roman Tmetuchl, then Senator to the Congress of Micronesia, discussed Belau's dilemma with me. I asked him if it was difficult to deal with the United States. "Nearly impossible," he answered. "Worse than David and Goliath?" I offered. "More like an ant and an elephant," he replied.

In early March 1976 I gained new insight into this undeclared war. While waiting at the Babelthuap airport to continue my aerial photography, I spoke with Commander David Leete Burt. He was the newly-appointed United States Naval Liaison Officer to Micronesia. The Commander and his entourage were visiting Belau to look at the military and superport sites and to monitor the Palauan interest in both.

Burt knew of me prior to our introduction because of my photographic work and my anti-military and conservationist reputation. But before he knew me personally, Burt commented to the aerial-mapping photographer sitting next to me that they would "kick the Peace Corps types right out of the Navy". I commented and walked away.

Burt inquired of the mapping photographer as to my identity and learned the troublemaker he had heard about was none other than myself. He hurried after me to apologize and, looking sheepish, said he certainly had put his foot in his mouth.

To ease his embarrassment I told the Commander I could well understand and sympathize with the Navy's logistical problems in the Pacific. On hearing this, he relaxed and said - countryman to countryman - "You realize that there are millions of people in Japan and only 14,000 people in Palau; we may have to sacrifice those 14,000 people."

This was said in the context of the supertanker port for storage and trans-shipment of oil to Japan. Five years later those to be sacrificed on the altar of United States defence needs are the same 14,000 people. In a world conflict Palauans were caught in a cross-fire of Japanese and American bullets. Later they were caught between America helping Japan and America helping the world. Must Palauans wait until 2081 to qualify for marine guerrilla-warfare relief? Or must their future wait until the United States decides the world is safe for democracy - whichever occurs first?

(Mr. Faulkner)

When Commander Burt visited Belau in 1976 he gave the two High Chiefs a plane ride over Kossol Reef and south to Angaur for refreshments at the Coast Guard station. Burt asked Ibedul Gibbons his views concerning the military and superport plans. Ibedul explained that both would have a disastrous impact on his people and islands and informed Burt that he was firmly opposed, as he had previously stated. Like the three famous monkeys the Navy appears to be deaf, dumb and blind.

(Mr. Faulkner)

The Palauans are generally not enamoured of Americans. If we could depart, and they kept only our dollars, Palauans might be free to work out of doors again. They might escape from the tyranny of cement walls, fluorescent lights, and air conditioners - extravagantly subsidized by every United States taxpayer's dollar. On Koror, sunlight and fresh air are walled out of prison-like houses. Electric bills run roughly \$10,000 a year for each air conditioner - times 400 or 500 air conditioners. That is deaf, dumb and blind architecture, the "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" result of United States subsidies.

United States tax dollars pay nearly 75 per cent of the electric bill for the business and private sectors and 100 per cent for all government facilities, including government housing. The average modest-sized government building has 8 to 10 window or wall air conditioners. Even the government contract homes have eight air conditioners. An American friend, not employed by the Government, has only one air conditioner in his office. He shuts it off at night now to cut his previous electric bill of \$180 per month, even though he only pays six cents out of every 21 cents per kilowatt hour of actual cost. United States taxpayers dig into their pockets for the remainder.

I do not advocate dropping the Palauans like a piece of fire coral. Rather, I suggest that money spent be redirected to less costly and more productive projects, such as town planning with an eye to beauty, roads that will last, schools, hospitals, farming projects, fishing, and conservation of marine resources. One may imagine that all those projects are in the works. If so, why is a Palauan friend in charge of conservation staring at a wall? Lack of funds, pure and simple. Pull the plug on 10 air conditioners and he might be able to function. Pull the plug on 10 more and 10 more and I think you see what I mean.

Serving such delectables to a Third World culture is comparable to allowing a death-row prisoner steak, lobster, or caviar as a last meal before his walk to the gallows - metaphor and pun intended. Many Palauans are quite aware of their death-row walk, although perhaps it is more keenly understood by those who knotted the noose from which the Palauans are hanging.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Friendships exist between Palauans and Americans, but more often than not they exist out of a love and trust in their common need to preserve what there is of Belau. They share the need to ease Belau more gently into the future. They resist those who would use those lovely islands as stepping stones to other purposes, rather than to rest by a stream - to stop, look, and listen.

Many Americans devoted to Belau are offended by United States policy. But even those in sympathy with Palauan aspirations are sometimes stiff-armed. Certain Palauans prefer to play chess unassisted. Some find it difficult to give up their extra allotment of coconuts in return for seeming to play along with the United States, or for eagerly playing along with Japanese business interests. Others simply slide into paranoia. When Palauans discover that I am photographing their reefs and islands from the air for a new book, some jokingly accuse me of working for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). If I had the CIA's money to rent a fancy car, stay at the Continental Hotel, and hand out money where it was needed, I would never be questioned.

Such fears among my friends are not unwarranted. This small town society is caught in an unhealthy web of suspicion. Palauans know the United States Government is monitoring their thoughts and activities. Yet United States officials claim the United States has not tried to influence or disrupt Palauan politics.

Near the end of 1974 or early in 1975 a Mr. Robert Wiecha, reportedly working for naval intelligence in Guam or for the CIA, offered Ibedul Gibbons a "military retainer". Ibedul declined the offer but met with Wiecha on and off for over a year. Ibedul eventually permitted me to report Wiecha to the press. My vehicle was a letter to the then High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, Edward E. Johnston.

Prior to my letter of 22 February 1976, a reporter for the Pacific Daily News, Ruth Gilliam, had been offered money by Wiecha to spy on the Palauans. Wiecha told her:

"The Navy never knew what the Palauan people were thinking All we want to know is whether or not the Palauan people are going to be receptive to future military interests in Palau."

This is taken from the Pacific Daily News, volume 7, no. 35, 7 March 1976.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Ruth Gilliam's story at first went unpublished because she was frightened by the magnitude of Wiecha's offer of \$500 a month salary from the United States Navy to spy on Palauans. But as soon as the Guam newspaper received a copy of my letter to the High Commissioner, Weicha's activities were exposed. He threatened to sue the paper, but shortly thereafter he disappeared from Guam. Although he may be retired or snooping elsewhere, Palauans know that his replacements are on the scene. Palauan fears are not unfounded.

I have explained to my Palauan friends that the CIA can show up with cameras, recorders, and notebooks. They may touch, look, and listen. They can ask questions and take individual and collective blood pressures and pulse rates. They may come by plane, by ship, or by rubber raft to offer Palauans cheques, money orders, or cash. But I remind them that only the people of Belau can sell or sign away their lands and reefs. "In your mind," I have said, "you should have a thought that is like an ironwood tree. On this tree you should carve 'Belau - not for sale or lease.'"

(Mr. Faulkner)

When he was High Commissioner, Edward Johnston signed his name to a South Sea-style introduction to a visitor's guide to Micronesia. He -- or, more likely, the advertising agency ghost writer -- exclaimed:

"Dear Visitor,

"If you have ever fancied your own special enchanted island, somewhere that's ideal for an enriching vacation experience, we're sure you'll find it here in Micronesia ... where more than 2,000 idyllic islands and islets are sprinkled across 3 million square miles of Western Pacific tropics. One of them must be your make-believe island. Is your dream island a glistening emerald set in bands of white sand and palms ... or a volcanic fern-covered peak with cascading jungle waterfalls and natural swimming pools? Does it have a seldom visited beach with a coral reef sheltering a lagoon of every shade of blue? And is there an underwater world of spectacular reef life and sunken vessels? If so, come and discover yours in our collection of special islands."

Despite its advertising agency hyperbole and postcard palms, the images evoke for me a world of beauty and sadness. It seems a world past and passing. The more accurate world of High Commissioner Johnston was and may be a popcorn cotton-candy paradise. For the Belau he "administered" was scheduled for super-ports, massive industrial complexes self-evident in the Mitre report of October 1974 and in the very present military.

My letter exposing Robert Wiecha was more directly an attack on High Commissioner Johnston, as a response to a letter he wrote to Dr. Roland Force, then Director of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. In it he criticized Force and the participants of the Thirteenth Pacific Science Congress for their resolution against the super-port complex. Johnston's letter was meant to censure and intimidate Force, but it was in bad taste and naive.

Dr. Force was also Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Pacific Science Council of the Association. Force and his colleagues covered a wide range of scientific disciplines throughout the Pacific region. Their collective abilities and powers of judgement as to the social and environmental dangers of

(Mr. Faulkner)

such a project certainly eclipsed Mr. Johnston's. Yet the High Commissioner was behaving in a typical government mode of censorship, most likely directed from above.

High Commissioner Johnston would have had Charles Darwin wait until the Church completed an evolution-proof feasibility study before the biologist might publish a more accurate biology of creation.

Continent-sized projects - proposed for island-sized environments - are the brain children of those who would prematurely act to build them. Their heads are elsewhere.

If the life of every squirrel and wild flower had to be protected, nothing larger than a dog house would ever be constructed. But when the dog house becomes too big we will be living in it, without the natural delights of squirrels and wild flowers.

Humans are free to promote this or censor that, to feed a bird with a broken wing or to squash a toad. During the heat of the super-port battle, all government employees were notified not to express an opinion on Port Pacific. The letter from Johnston to Force was circulated with an accompanying memorandum saying: "Take careful note". It could have said: "Be forewarned". Even Chief of Conservation for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Mr. Robert Owen, received those less than democratic warnings. I ask myself: are government employees fifth-class citizens? The one man in the Trust Territory Government best suited to provide a preliminary opinion is silenced by the High Commissioner. Why squander millions of dollars or yen for feasibility studies, waste man-hours and arouse hopes if the project is an obvious environmental disaster?

In my letter of 22 February to Johnston I quoted part of a letter from Fitzhugh Green of the Environmental Protection Agency to the Department of Interior which concludes:

"... This Agency can imagine few situations more rife with the dangers of serious and irreparable environmental harm than the construction and operation of a major oil transshipment facility on Palau."

(Mr. Faulkner)

Had Mr. Johnston already received a copy of Fitzhugh Green's letter? He certainly did not enclose it with the Port Pacific promotional material that he circulated to the Trust Territory department heads. This same man who led us through blue lagoons and white-sand beaches was pandering to their certain destruction backstage.

Robert Panero, Port Pacific developer, could talk up the project when and where he wished, without censorship, and had unlimited access to the various port sites. In sharp contrast, five marine scientists from the University of Guam Marine Laboratory wished to have an underwater look at Kossol Reef because it was the primary port site. The scientists received permission from Marine Resources and the District Administrator in Belau. A copy of the request and approval was sent to the High Commissioner's desk in Saipan. Before the marine scientists could leave for Kossol Reef the approval was countermanded by Johnston. Marine Resources in Saipan called Marine Resources in Belau to instruct them to cancel the trip: "Under no circumstances were the scientists to go to Kossol Reef."

Five years ago, in a speech on Guam, Fred M. Zeder, then Director of Territorial and Insular Affairs, proclaimed:

"The brightest spot I see on the horizon for Micronesia's economic development is the Palau super-port project".

I doubt High Commissioner Johnston cautioned or reprimanded his boss for extolling the project before the facts were gathered.

(Mr. Faulkner)

The above might seem redundant were it not for vivid memories of the five scientists. Looks of concern were on their faces; they were made more so when they sensed that I might report on their aborted trip to Kossol Reef. The head scientists told me that, if I caused a fuss, they might never receive a Trust Territory contract again and might never be able to do research in Palau. Here were five adult men unable to function as American citizens exercising those freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

There is no island among the hundreds in Belau where I might escape. They are haunted now by memories of political skirmishes and their beaches are made ugly by aluminium cans.

"Dear visitor, with a coral reef sheltering a lagoon of every shade of blue ..."

We live in a world of toys. Have you ever seen a bulldozer or a crane from a 30-storey window? Or from a plane? Little toys for children. A is "just like a little ship except it's bigger and stronger, presumably can weather more things than little ships and is less dangerous than a whole bunch of little ships." Robert Panero, April 1976.

The \$8 million bridge spanning Airai Channel is a toy for the military. If the toylike roads under construction on Babelthuap were not for the military, bulldozers would not now be displacing trees. If the military did not require a longer runway for jets as large as 747s, the present runway with modern aids to navigation and foul-weather use and with proper resurfacing would suffice for many years.

One might ask why military needs in Belau could not be cut in half. Would not a playing field the size of Manhattan provide enough non-exclusive jungle and foxholes for war games? Maybe a sharp naval adviser told the Navy to ask for the moon if they wanted Montana. When the American Indians sold Manhattan island for a string of beads, they still had a whole continent of which to be deprived. In contrast, Palauans are not planning to swim to the Philippines. If they arrived by jet, a less than hospitable welcome would greet those looking for a new land. Moreover, the United States military bases in the Philippines have hardly created a paradise around themselves. Ugliness, prostitution and poverty are rampant around Clark and Subic Bay.

(Mr. Faulkner)

Having been raised on the American dollar, many Palauans would go into shock if the economic umbilical cord were cut. A part of every Palauan fears this, but, when Palauans realize that it is their moon and not Montana that the military wants, they may find their courage and play midwife to their own birth. For Palauans, land is everything. One Palauan asked an American friend: "How would Americans like it if Palauans demanded half the United States for a military base?"

Sacrificing their "nuclear-free zone" for "free association" with the United States is not the only future available to Belau. Palauan businessmen know that Japan and other Asian countries would be more than willing to provide goods, economic assistance and appropriate business ventures if the United States defaulted or evaporated tomorrow. As alternatives to heavy industry or the military base, many options for future development are open to Palauans. Some will be less disruptive to the environment and culture than others. Some will be positive forces by providing basic food requirements. Some may even turn the clock back a little on the detrimental problems affecting the environment.

My concerns for Belau are environmental and directed towards protecting the islands and reefs. At the present moment, their defenders are few - fewer still among the Palauans. In the long run, the Palauans will protect or destroy their unique heritage. One man said to me: "When the dugongs are gone, we'll eat something else." The dugong is a sea mammal living in Belau with a population of less than 50 animals. The poaching rate estimated by a scientist who studied the dugongs is 20 per year. He calculates that they will be gone before the year 2000.

The first day I dived in Belau - 14 years ago - a dugong circled around me underwater. In retrospect, it is a haunting image. On my recent trips, I have circled around the last few dugongs with the plane and watched them from above - mother, father and baby swimming together. By each creature we render extinct, our spirits are impoverished.

When I speak out to save the life of islands or reefs or of a dugong, strangely it becomes a political matter - even though political arenas are distasteful to me. And a more astute photojournalist would not as a businessman be here in my shoes. All of us play out our favourite games, but the game of

(Mr. Faulkner)

Monopoly is fun to play only so long as it is still fun to win. What will the grandchildren of 14,000 Palauans be eating in 2081? With heavy industry or the military, probably not fishes or clams from the waters of their lagoons.

In closing - or as a beginning, if you wish - I want to read out the final paragraphs from the introduction and text of my book, This Living Reef, published seven years ago - memories of Belau.

(Mr. Faulkner)

"There are those who would say that some of man's actions are criminal. It is more likely that moral guilt is less a factor than certain of his genetically programmed needs that have run riot precisely because he has become so successful. Man is not the first species to supplant others and he will not be the last. Viewed in this light, it is difficult to convict him. However, having evolved in a diverse world, man needs variety. In cities where he has most eliminated diversity in the form of plants and other animals, he has created a multitude of occupations and preoccupations. Yet there are people who search out other forms of life, those willing to suffer discomfort and risk to fulfil their needs in a world that is less competitive, seemingly more benevolent. After the explorers the settlers come and as industrial man has increasingly migrated to the tropics he has upset the natural reef communities. In a sense the human species has become the greedy uvab, with a superhuman appetite, devouring the island earth.

"Primitive peoples worshipped many elements of their lives, and this resulted in a natural conservation of those things which sustained them. The primitive asked permission of the plant, apologized for eating it. A slain animal was honoured by the hunter to ensure survival of the animal's spirit. Without honour the spirit would disappear forever. Somehow we have lost this sacred relationship. However, we are no longer ignorant of the damage we are causing our environment. No longer do we ravage the earth unknowingly.

"For the moment Belau is a new world, little touched by the occupations and diversions of industrial man. The reefs and islands have survived many geologic and climatic changes but they may not be able to sustain the depredations of our unthinking carelessness. This is my only fear in bringing to light this world which I love. If we destroy this living reef, a great beauty and richness will go out of the world and out of our lives.

(Mr. Faulkner)

"Before returning to the water, I stand a moment and listen. The sunlight filters through the trees, touching a fern here, there a leaf. A slight breeze ripples the surface of the water. Little fish make silent rings on the surface as they feed. A tiny crab in the mud nibbles at my toe and I jump. A pigeon coos and cicadas converse in a humming chorus of countless numbers. The wind stirs the highest branches of the trees and raindrops fall from leaf to leaf. I look up as a leaf falls, sliding from side to side on the air. The deep blue sky is visible among the green community of leaves. John is singing a Belauan song. Tiny mosses secrete themselves in the crevices of ancient coral rocks, damp with the smell of rain. The fern is still splashed yellow-green in sunlight, and the hanging vines arc down from the silent trees. Air roots pop their heads a little above the surface of the water while trees cradle ferns in their branches. A tiny cardinal honey-eater chirps and somewhere in the distance another answers. The splash of sunlight has moved on. The fern is now in shadow but high up a spider's web has momentarily snared the light. Beads of moisture glisten and sparkle on its tenuous threads. Everywhere the sunlight dances from leaf to leaf. A starling calls and all is greenness. The air is a sweet perfume of living things. I breathe in, hold its freshness for a moment and breathe out."

The PRESIDENT: The Council will meet again at 10.30 a.m. tomorrow morning to hear the remaining petitioners on our list. They are the Focus on Micronesia Coalition of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States and, secondly, the people of Eniwetok. Thereafter the Council will resume the questioning of the representatives of the Administering Authority.

I should like to make two announcements relative to the Council's future work. First, Vice President Oiterong of Palau has been kind enough to inform me that he will be obliged to leave New York tomorrow evening in order to return to his country. After his departure Palau will be represented by Mr. Victor Ucherbelau, Special Representative of President Haruo I. Remeliik to the Micronesian status negotiations. Delegations that have still to put

(The President)

their questions to the representatives of the Administering Authority may like to bear in mind therefore that tomorrow is the last day that we shall have Vice President Oiterong with us.

Secondly, I should like to propose, if the Council agrees, that we should plan on the basis that on Friday next, that is on 22 May, we should deal with item 6 on our agenda, namely, arrangements for the dispatch of a periodic Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.