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PETITION FROM FATHER BERNARD JAKUBCO, M.S.C., OF THE CATHOLIC MISSION  
IN KAVIENG CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF NEW GUINEA

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Missionaires of the Sacred Heart  
P.O. Kavieng - New Ireland  
Territory of Papua, New Guinea  
(T.P.N.G.)

21 December 1966

U Thant  
Secretary General  
United Nations  
New York, N.Y.  
U.S.A.

Dear Sir:

True, the world is beset by problems and troubles. But the United Nations, it seems, doesn't realize how good we do have it in New Guinea.

It's incomprehensible, the "mystery of iniquity". When things are going fairly well, mankind is still not satisfied to leave it be.

Australia is, without doubt, working towards establishing independence here. But you can't make up for 3,000 years in just a few. You don't have to force Australia. I'm sure that many of its more involved personnel would be glad to give up the Territory. But what about the indigenous. They are the ones that matter in this issue. Australia is not trying to subject them. Australia is not putting obstacles on the road to self-government. But you can't get blood out of a rock. Self-government has to be achieved - and achieved by the indigenous themselves. Neither Australia nor the U.N. can glue it onto them. If they do, the last state will be worse than the first.

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It's a slow, arduous task. The Missions have dedicated themselves to helping the people establish themselves as a people, because they realize that comes before establishing them as a Church. Our social welfare programmes are most extensive; but we've just made a start. We have taught a few to carry on some of the work themselves, for instance, teachers and nurses. Our aim is that they assume full responsibility; but they are not ready yet.

(My work is on New Hanover. One of my problems is the L.B. Johnson Cult. It is realized that religion cannot thrive if the people don't sit down well. But the people don't have much of an idea of the processes of local government or central government. We are working hard to get the people to realize the processes of government on the most basic level, the local government. But it's a slow process. We've had some success. This year many more agreed to pay the local government tax. Otherwise they spend half a year in jail!)

We do whatever is possible to teach them about the U.N.'s objectives here: by mass media and by personal contact. But the most basic level of government is not well established. Our representative from our District of New Ireland, Nicholas Brokam, can tell you that. He has visited the U.N. and is still in New York to my knowledge.

The whole social structure of organization and authority that the people had before, centred in their village chiefs, is broken down. But the new style of government hasn't been established well enough to take its place. That's a problem. Independence is not the solution yet.

I really believe that Australia itself is going too fast. They are accelerating the pace; and some indigenous are holding positions for which they are not competent. (Note that the number of indigenous clergy for the Roman Catholic Church is small, very small. We demand competence: quality - only then can the Church be truly established here. We surely are working for the establishment of the Church here. That's a basic missiological principle. But we have to do it at the indigenous' own pace. I would like you to make a comparison with other branches of social service, even though it may not be strictly valid. If there are not many competent Roman Catholic clergyman, how can there be enough competent in other fields?

We will get there. But it takes time. It takes education, for one thing. It takes a better economy. If the indigenous have the full burden of government soon, I hope the U.N. has some ideas for maintaining the economy. The people can find food for themselves. But they cannot support social services and projects. They do not support their own educational system nor their medical services, just as they don't support their own Church.

I hope the Australians stay on to keep the country going.

Port Moresby has problems. But most of the villagers have it good. The irony is: perhaps we have it too good. As Mr. Eastman from Africa, a member of the 1965 U.N. Mission to the Territory, said on New Ireland: our people are overly taken care of. They look to Australia as to a mama and papa. His point is probably correct. His conclusion is absurd. We are working to break that down, so that they can stand up on their own and assume responsibility. But the maturing process takes time. Granting Mr. Eastman's point, we need time to work this out. Early independence is not the answer. You can't tell a baby to walk before he can stand up. And you can't tell him to work before he can walk. And he can't assume full responsibility until he has some experience in the work.

What is the hurry?

(Signed) Father Bernard F. Jakubco, M.S.G.  
(from the U.S.A.)

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