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A MARSHALLESE NATION EMERGES FROM THE POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION OF AMERICAN MICRONESIA

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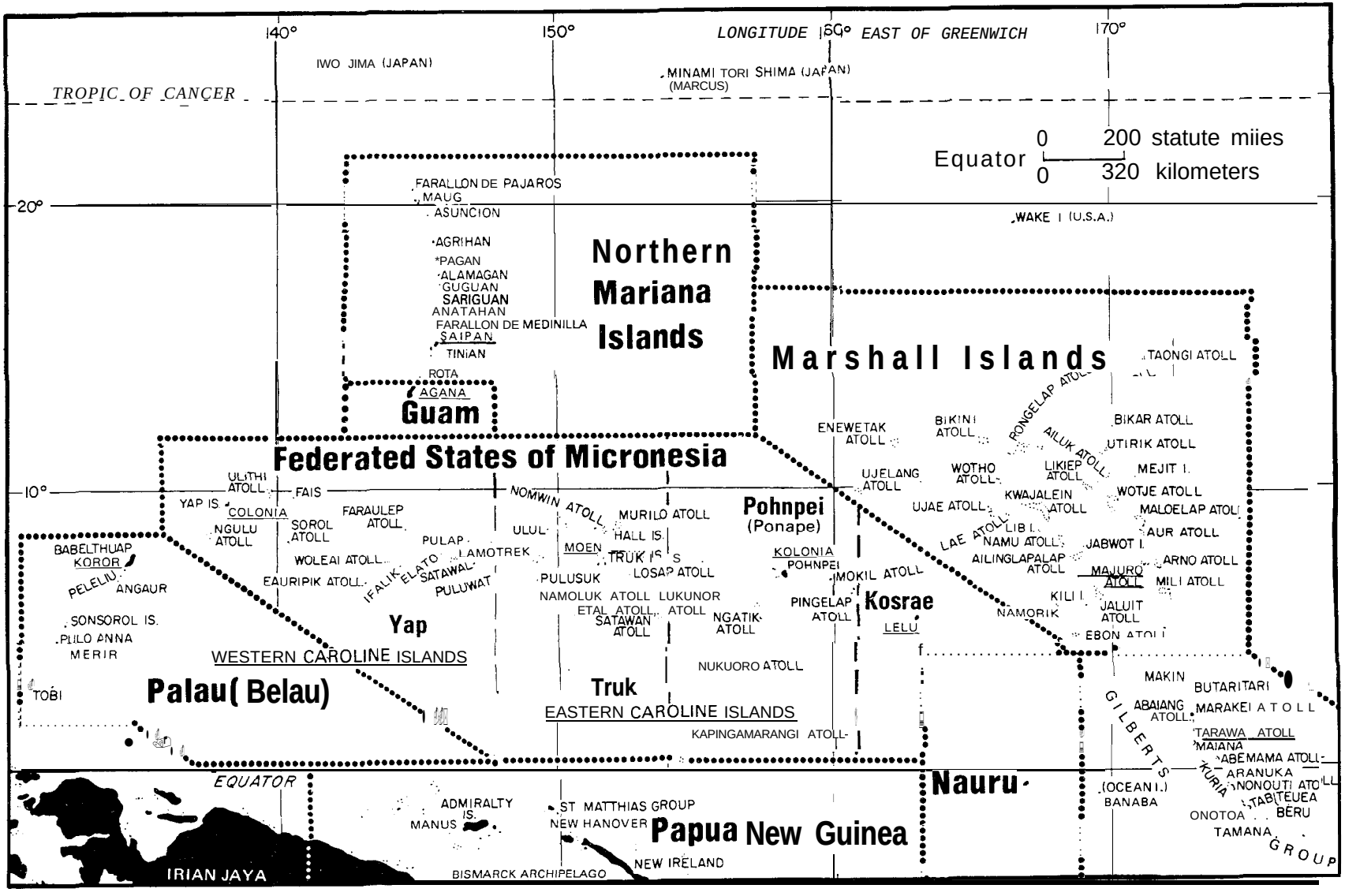
Introduction

Prior to World War II, the sole colonial holding by the United States in Micronesia was Guam, largest of the Mariana Islands, which had been annexed after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and was administered by the US Navy Department as a strategic facility. In 1944, American military forces began their occupation of other parts of Micronesia by invading the Marshall Islands. They gained control of the remaining Japanese-mandated islands in 1945 upon the surrender of Japan. These islands, not including Guam, were designated a strategic trust territory in 1947 by the United Nations Security Council. The United States was appointed administrator and charged with fostering self-government or independence according to the wishes of the Micronesian islanders.

In this essay, I have chosen to focus on the Marshall Islands, easternmost in American Micronesia, as but one of the several ethnic and geographic groups in the trust area that have emerged as self-governing states after more than forty years of administrative relations with the United States. To understand the issues that now face the Marshallese people and their government it is necessary, first, to recount the wider historical context in which all of the peoples under trusteeship, including the Marshallese, have responded to the changing administrative policies and political interests of the United States since World War II. My choice of the Marshalls as a case study of change in Micronesia, in the second part of this essay, is based on personal research and observa-



tion in that area from 1946 to the present. Frequent visits to other parts of the trust area have enabled me to view the larger picture as well, although other observers are more qualified to engage in detailed examinations of what is emerging politically and otherwise in the new states of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of Belau.

It would be equally useful to compare the Micronesian experiences of political and social change with those of other Pacific Island peoples, south of the equator, who have achieved independence or other self-government during the decolonization in former British, Australian, and New Zealand territories since the 1960s. Suffice it to say, though, that the new Micronesian entities are envied by their island cousins to the south for the affluence afforded by federal grants under free or close association with America. At the same time, however, doubts about the sovereignty claimed by Micronesians are not easily dispelled, for US strategic interests continue to dominate the scene. A more important concern is the considerable economic dependency that has been engendered in the Micronesian states, where productive resources are scarce. But even in the island states to the south, a viable life-style continues to be notably dependent on various kinds of foreign aid provided by interested metropolitan powers.

PART I
America's Trust in Postwar Micronesia

Micronesians Recover from World War II

My first encounter with a Micronesian people, the Marshall Islanders, was in April 1946 when I lived among them for five months as a researcher with the Economic Survey of Micronesia, conducted by the United States Commercial Company (USCC) to assist the US naval military government in its responsibility for administering the islands (Oliver 1951). The war had ended seven months earlier with Japan's surrender. My previous knowledge about the Marshallese and other Micronesians was based on intelligence work with the US war effort and was limited to reports and publications from Japanese and German sources dating back to the late 1800s.

In the early months of my 1946 fieldwork I lived on Kwajalein Atoll. The main island was then being used by the US Navy as a support facility for military air traffic between Hawaii and Guam. About four hundred Marshallese, recruited from the outer islands, lived near the air-

strip in the Kwajalein Labor Camp, working on short-term contracts as maintenance personnel. At that time no Marshallese lived on nearby Ebeye Island, where the USCC agent resided and directed trade operations with communities on the outlying atolls. I myself lived in a tent on Ebeye and came to know the few Marshallese who worked for USCC, and also the Navy personnel in the seaplane squadron based there in support of the atomic weapons test program on Bikini Atoll, about two hundred miles north.

My first contact with the Bikini Marshallese was on Rongerik Atoll, where they had been resettled from Bikini by the US Navy a month or two earlier (Mason 1950). I had hitched a ride on a logistics flight from Ebeye to Rongerik and Bikini. Other islands that I came to know throughout the Marshalls in the ensuing months were visited by Navy sea and air transport and by Marshallese sailboats and outrigger sailing canoes. On these visits I worked closely with Marshallese interpreters as I attempted to learn what I could about economic conditions prevailing in the immediate postwar period. All trade and ship transport had come to a complete stop during the war years. The copra industry was now barely being restored and handicraft production for sale to servicemen on Kwajalein Island provided the main source of cash other than that from employment in the Navy's administration centers on Kwajalein and Majuro. Of necessity, the subsistence economy had been revived to some extent in the outer islands.

In 1950 I was to learn much more about the postwar situation in all aspects of Micronesian society when I traveled for a month from one district center to another (Majuro, Kwajalein, Ponape, Truk, Yap, Koror, and Saipan) as a member of the Management Survey of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) government, conducted by the US Department of the Interior. Following the 1947 proclamation of the UN Trust Territory, the US Navy had continued in control of the occupied islands but changed its administrative structure from a military government to a civilian administration. In mid-1951, by executive order of the US president, the Interior Department would take over that responsibility.

Our four-man survey team reviewed Navy accomplishments in encouraging a system of municipal government, extending elementary and intermediate education throughout the TTPI, and establishing a network of district hospitals and outer-island dispensaries. We made recommendations in other areas as well, including administrative structures and personnel, economic development, interisland shipping and

communication, and traditional organization and cultural resource concerns (Taylor et al. 1951).

In 1950 the US Navy had moved the Marshallese labor corps from Kwajalein Island to adjacent Ebeye Island, constructing housing and providing daily boat transport between the two islands for the commuting laborers. Two years earlier the Bikinians had been resettled again, to Kili Island in the southern Marshalls, after a disastrous experience trying to support themselves on Rongerik Atoll. And, in 1947, the entire community of Enewetak Atoll had been forcibly removed to Ujelang Atoll to make way for additional testing of nuclear weapons, which still continued on Bikini Atoll.

In the course of the Management Survey we observed the operation of district legislatures, which brought together representatives from elected municipal councils. The first legislature, formed with aid from the Navy administration, was convened in Majuro in 1950. Koror, in the Palau District, had been the administrative capital of the entire Japanese-mandated area between the two world wars. When we met with the Palauan Council in Koror we gained an appreciation for the linguistic problems that existed in the region. We found that its members knew almost no English but were quite fluent in Japanese. We had to resort to aid from a nisei from Hawaii to translate our questions to the Palauan councillors into Japanese. They then discussed the issues among themselves in Palauan and finally answered in Japanese through the interpreter. In the Marshalls and in Ponape and Truk, where American missionaries had operated schools from the 1850s, sufficient numbers of local officials could communicate with us in English. After an experimental year on Guam, the US naval administration's Pacific Islands Teacher Training School (PITTS) was transferred in 1948 to Truk, to further improve instruction in the territory's schools, including facility with the English language. Eventually, English replaced Japanese as the lingua franca for American Micronesia.

The 1950s--Cultural Conservation or Cultural Imperialism?

During the first decade after the change of TTPI administration in 1951 from the Navy to the Interior Department, little control was evident from the headquarters in Washington. The presidentially appointed high commissioner of the Trust Territory and his staff had virtual autonomy. Considerable freedom was given to district and department heads in development of programs. Also, there was very little money to spend,

the TTPI budget averaging about US$6 million annually during this period. Some observers have charged that the US government followed an "ethnological zoo" policy, whereby economic development was held to a minimum in order to protect and conserve Micronesian cultures. In fact, no conscious plan existed. Events during this time were influenced largely by the individual personalities and values of the American administrators.

The differences in language, culture, and colonial history among the eight or ten Micronesian ethnic groups were as important then as they proved to be in the 1970s and 1980s when political fragmentation of the TTPI shattered any dream that regional unity might be preserved. I have tried to document these differences (Marshallese, Kosraen, Pohnpeian, Trukese, Belauan, Yapese, and Chamorro, for example) in an article on the ethnology of Micronesia (Mason 1968). In another article, I have written about the "many faces" of Micronesia that resulted from the concentration of services in the district centers, which led to an increasing migration of outer-island Micronesians to the developing urban sites (Mason 1975). This migration began in the 1950s and became the basis for adopting a Western cultural orientation that threatened the perpetuation of their traditional heritages.

Two American administrators stand out in my recollection of programs developed to resolve the dilemma of cultural conservation versus cultural imperialism after the Interior Department took over in 1951. One was Dr. Robert E. Gibson, the first director of education, who served from 1951 to 1964. The other was Dr. Homer G. Barnett, staff anthropologist in the first term of the Interior administration. Both men had the high commissioner's support in their attempts to create programs that met the needs of Micronesians in each district. Although they followed general policies inherited from the Navy in the areas of education and political organization, they developed new strategies.

Gibson began his tenure with a system of elementary and intermediate schools, grades one through nine, and the teacher training program (PITTS) in Truk. American educators were in charge of the intermediate schools and PITTS, while Micronesians served as school principals and teachers at the elementary level. Gibson, working with his district educational administrators, gave a more island-oriented emphasis to the curriculum. Instruction in the first four grades was conducted only in the vernacular, after which English was taught as a second language. He encouraged involvement of local communities in program development and support. Elementary teachers were paid from local taxes. More teaching materials were prepared that related to local custom.

PITTS was reorganized as the Pacific Islands Central School (PICS) and served as the only public secondary school in Micronesia. The other principal secondary facility was Xavier High School, maintained by the Catholic diocese. Some graduates from PICS and Xavier were able to go on to tertiary institutions in Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines. In sum, Gibson's efforts in Micronesian educational development were his answer to the dilemma of "education for what?" He built from a cultural and community base in the lower grades and provided opportunity in the higher grades for those few students who chose to learn more about the world beyond the district center (Gibson 1959; Peacock 1985).

Like Gibson, Homer Barnett inherited a program initiated by the Navy administration in its final years. A cadre of American anthropologists had been appointed at both staff and district levels. In 1951, when Barnett took on the staff anthropologist post for two years while on leave from the University of Oregon, he directed the work of the anthropologists at the district level, most of whom were carryovers from the Navy period. Their duties were more research-oriented than administrative. They served as intermediaries between the Micronesians and the government. As experts on local custom they made recommendations to either assist or caution the administrators on particular courses of action, especially in political and economic affairs. Some district anthropologists were won over to the Micronesians' side by their academic interests in cultural conservation. This apparent bias in their recommendations sometimes resulted in rejection of their advice by district administrators. By the mid-1950s, as the administrators gained knowledge of local tradition, they felt they no longer needed the research function of the anthropologists, and many of those posts were phased out or left unfilled as the incumbents returned to academia. However, Barnett's example of pursuing anthropological inquiry relating to practical questions facing the administration was influential. Micronesians were eventually to benefit from an increasing awareness of the dilemma posed by the ever-present confrontation of Micronesian identity by the imposition of Western values (Barnett 1956; Mason 1985).

The 1960s--The US Government Moves to Americanize the Islands

A portent of the changes ahead came upon the transfer of PICS in 1959 from Truk to Ponape, where the high commissioner decreed a more American curriculum in this sole public high school in the TTPI. At PICS the cultural backgrounds of the students were now minimized and

a basis for Micronesian unity was created by a common educational experience. In early 1961 the Kennedy administration took over from the Republicans in Washington, and a new era in TTPI policies was launched from the nation's capital. The UN Trusteeship Council in mid-1961 released the findings of its first visiting mission to Micronesia since 1947. The report was very critical of the United States as trustee, citing delay in economic development and negligence in preparing the islanders for self-government. In that year Kennedy had established the US Peace Corps to export humanitarian service by sending volunteers overseas, but Micronesia was excluded from the program as not being a "foreign" country; not until 1966 was this decision changed to allow Peace Corps representatives to serve in the trust area.

In 1962 the territory's annual budget of $7.5 million was increased by the US Congress to $17.5 million to support more aggressive changes in the islands. By 1970 that figure had escalated to $50 million. In Washington an interagency task force was formed to coordinate departmental programs for Micronesia. A survey team was recruited, headed by Anthony Solomon, business administration professor at Harvard University. The mission was directed to identify island needs that could be alleviated by program funding to persuade islanders to accept a more permanent association with the United States, which had long-term security and defense interests in the region. The survey group visited all six districts in mid-1963 and submitted its report only weeks before President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963. The Solomon report recommended further political and economic development and identified education as the prime medium for creating a more American identity among the people (Gale 1979). There is no evidence, however, that the Solomon report was ever implemented as a grand plan for the Americanization of Micronesians. During the succeeding Johnson administration, some parts of the report were reflected in departmental programs whose authors had already espoused such courses of action to bring the islanders into the US security net (Nevin 1977).

An accelerated education program, begun in 1962, emphasized the teaching of English as a second language and universal education through the eighth grade. A four-year construction effort added over four hundred elementary school classrooms throughout the territory. In the same period, American short-term contract teachers were recruited in a crash program to enhance the instruction of English on the outlying islands as well as in the district centers. In 1962, PICS on Ponape had been replaced by four-year high schools in five of the TTPI district centers. By 1965, the same level of education was available in Yap, Ulithi,

and Kusaie (now called Kosrae). This centralization of secondary schooling in the urban centers made it possible to accept more eighth-grade graduates, but still fell far short of accommodating the number of students desiring to continue in high school. Micronesians teaching grades nine through twelve badly needed more education themselves, and in 1962 the Micronesian Teacher Education Center (MTEC) was established on the old PICS site in Ponape, to upgrade instructors in teaching methods and remedial high school education.

The centralization of secondary education in the district centers also contributed to an increasing migration of outer islanders to the urbanized centers. High schools were commonly boarding institutions, or students were accompanied by their families, adding to the already crowded populations. The new policy received support from a 1965 economic planning study commissioned by the TTPI administration. The report viewed the rise of the urban centers with favor and recommended that the full range of government services be limited to these centers and that the outer islands be given only minimal services as a cost-effective strategy. It urged vocational education in the high schools to increase the number and the competency of the labor force needed for full economic capability in Micronesia (Nathan Associates 1967). Tertiary education for high school graduates was possible with the aid of scholarship programs by the government, district legislatures, religious bodies, and others, which would prepare the recipients to take jobs in specialized and professional areas of TTPI administration. By the end of the decade, nearly five hundred students were enrolled in tertiary institutions, primarily in Guam, Hawaii, and the US mainland.

A Peace Corps/Micronesia program, originally proposed in 1962 and reiterated in the 1963 Solomon report, was finally approved by Washington officials and by Micronesian legislatures in early 1966. The recruitment campaign stressed the desire to do “good” through the personal contributions of service by young Americans in educational, health, and economic programs for Micronesians. Nearly four hundred volunteers arrived in the TTPI in October 1966, after training in Florida and Hawaii in vernacular languages, teaching of English as a second language (TESL), and public health care. By 1968, there were over nine hundred volunteers in the field in this crash program, about one to every hundred Micronesians. Almost every island had its own volunteer. Peace Corps radio equipment provided valuable assistance in the outer islands through two-way communication with district center agencies.

Most Peace Corps volunteers were well received by the Micronesian people and many became spokesmen and champions for the cultural

entities they came to identify with. By the early 1970s, when their number had stabilized at two to three hundred, more than 15 percent of the expatriate TTPI staffers were former Peace Corps volunteers who liked the islands well enough to continue their association. Many of them married Micronesians. The outer islands benefited as much as, or even more than, the district centers, owing to their increased visibility through Peace Corps activity. Micronesians in general had gained a new advocacy for their resistance to Americanization policies. At the same time the corps' contribution to education and local learning of English enabled more Micronesians to qualify for government jobs, indirectly moving them closer to accepting a formal association with the United States that provided job funding (Severance 1985).

As early as 1956, the TTPI high commissioner had convened an inter-district conference of Micronesian leaders to more fully inform them of the administration's objectives and to gain a better awareness of district and local needs. The Micronesians saw this as a means to join forces to advocate action on their territorial problems. In 1958 they named their group the Inter-District Advisory Committee to the High Commissioner and in 1961 renamed it the Council of Micronesia. As a formal parliamentary body, they chose Dwight Heine as their chairman. He had already distinguished himself as president of the Marshall Islands Congress and had been the first Micronesian to pursue a college career (in Hawaii in 1949). Finally, in 1964, the council recommended and the US Interior secretary ordered the creation of the Congress of Micronesia (Meller 1969).

The first session opened in July 1965. Both houses joined in a resolution to rename the House of Delegates as the Senate and the General Assembly as the House of Representatives, as in the US Congress. Tosiwo Nakayama of Truk was elected Senate president. Dwight Heine was named speaker of the House; however, he resigned in October to become the first Micronesian to be a district administrator and Ekpap Silk of the Marshalls replaced him, Amata Kabua, one of the two senators from the Marshalls, was later elected president of that body in 1969.

Congressional business, of necessity, was conducted in English. Most members were relatively young, college educated, less respectful than their elders of traditional authority in their own districts, and more ready as a new generation to engage in confrontational exchanges among themselves as well as with the high commissioner and his staff. An east-west split among the district representatives had already surfaced. The eastern group controlled all of the top posts in the two houses at the start. Here, then, the seed was sown that would grow in the 1970s

to a forthright expression by Micronesians of their political aspirations. A seeking of unity within the territory and a recognition of fiscal dependence on the US treasury were at odds with an undercurrent of interdistrict disagreement and a general opposition to any political takeover by the United States.

In August 1967 the Congress of Micronesia established the Future Political Status Commission to explore options available to Micronesians for a greater degree of self-government as decreed by the UN charter. Six congressmen from the six districts then spent two years researching the experience of other Pacific Island states in adopting self-government or independence. In July 1969 the commission recommended that the Congress negotiate with the US government for some form of free association that guaranteed indigenous control of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of its authority or, failing that, choose independence as the only other realistic alternative. In response the Congress created the Micronesian Political Status Delegation, co-chaired by Lazarus Salii of Palau and Ekpap Silk of the Marshalls, to negotiate with the US executive branch. The first round of talks was held in Washington in September 1969 with officials from the US State, Defense, and Interior departments. The delegation presented eleven topics for informal discussion, including federal services, war claims, foreign affairs, financial aid, and a constitution for Micronesia.

The 1970s--Separatist Forces in Micronesia Explode the Myth of Unity

To understand the changes that occurred in the 1970s is to recall the wide range of opposing cultural identities among Micronesians, rooted in ecology, tradition, and colonial history. Their feeling about themselves as groups distinct one from the other is a reality that diminishes the meaning of the term “Micronesian.”

The ecology of the “high” islands (Marianas, Yap, and Palau in the west, and Truk, Ponape, and Kusaie [Kosrae] in the east) offers an advantage in natural resources that is not available on the “low” islands or atolls (in the central and eastern Carolines and the Marshalls). Inhabitants of the first category are *land*-oriented in their subsistence economy whereas those of the second category are *sea*-oriented. The languages of the westernmost islands (Belauan, Yapese, and Chamorro in the Marianas) are aligned historically with the speech of Filipinos and Indonesians, while those in the central and easternmost islands (Ulithian, Trukese, Pohnpeian, Kosraen, and Marshallese) are more

closely related to eastern Melanesian and Polynesian languages. In any case, all of the languages noted are mutually unintelligible.

Other aspects of culture and society vary just as much--in family and clan organization, village structure, land tenure, class distinctions, political authority, religion, and the arts. In general, populations in the high islands are larger and support more complex sociopolitical systems. Finally, the vagaries of history--the Spanish domination of the Marianas before 1898, the trade and land policies of the Germans in the Carolines and the Marshalls until 1914, the colonization of the northern Marianas and Palau by Japanese immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s, and the strategic interests of the US military in Palau, Tinian, and the Marshalls (Bikini, Enewetak, and Kwajalein)--have in varying combinations altered the precontact ethnicity of Micronesian groups and their views of the world beyond their shores (Mason 1974). Each cultural entity, whether in the urban center or in the rural outer islands, has serious questions about what the future offers in the quality of life and the nature of relationships within Micronesia and with nations in the Asia-Pacific sphere.

In the second round of political status talks, on Saipan in May 1970, the Americans proposed a commonwealth association similar to that linking Puerto Rico to the United States, The Micronesians rejected this outright, as not assuring sufficient local autonomy. The island delegation, in its report to the Congress, urged adoption of four nonnegotiable rights in any compact with the United States. These rights, considered essential for the viability of a future Micronesian state, were sovereignty, self-determination, a Micronesian constitution, and unilateral termination of any compact if either party wished. The Congress agreed and enlarged the delegation to a more permanent Joint Committee on Future Status to continue negotiations as long as needed. Salii and Silk were retained as co-chairmen. President Nixon, in early 1971, appointed F. Haydn Williams as his personal representative with the rank of ambassador to lead the US delegation. An Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations was set up in Washington. Four more rounds of talks were held between October 1971 and September 1972 in Hawaii, Palau, Washington, and again Hawaii. It was at this time that separatist demands surfaced from the Marianas, Marshalls, and Palau.

As early as the 1950s, the Marianas District Legislature had considered some type of permanent association with the United States. Once it had become obvious that the other five districts were not of this mind, a formal request was made to Ambassador Williams in April 1972 to begin separate negotiations. In May the Marianas legislature estab-

lished its own Political Status Commission. A second dissenting voice was heard in February 1972 when the Marshalls proposed to the Congress of Micronesia that each district should have the right to negotiate its future status separately with the United States. The issue here was economic. The Marshallese resented contribution of all tax proceeds to the Congress--its income tax revenue alone, mainly from Marshallese and American workers at the Kwajalein missile range, was more than that of the other five districts combined. The Congress rejected the proposal. In April 1973 the Marshalls legislature formed its own Political Status Commission to seek separate negotiations with the US delegation. Almost immediately Palau followed suit, establishing a Select Committee on Political and Economic Development to study the issues involved in future status. The US government had earlier noted its desire to lease certain Palauan lands for military use. But, first, the Palauans wanted to have all "public lands" (taken from them by foreign governments in pre-World War II years) returned to their rightful owners before Palau would negotiate a compact that included a land-lease arrangement for the US military. It should be noted that both Salii of Palau and Silk of the Marshalls, as co-chairmen of the Joint Committee of the Congress, pleaded with their own constituents to delay any further separatist action until the draft of the planned compact was completed, hopefully by the end of 1973.

In the Marianas, after some delay, the US delegation headed by Ambassador Williams recognized the Political Status Commission established by the legislature in May 1972. Five negotiating sessions were held on Saipan between December 1972 and February 1975, when agreement was finally reached on the "Covenant Establishing a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands [CNMI] in Political Union with the United States." In a referendum held in June, 79 percent of the electorate voted in favor of the covenant. The US Congress and President Ford approved it in March 1976. Seven months later a constitutional convention was convened on Saipan and a draft was approved by a majority of the delegates in December. A constitutional referendum was held in March 1977 with favorable results. President Carter gave his approval in October, and a new government was elected in December. The constitution was designed to conform with the covenant. Most of its provisions were put into effect when the new CNMI government was formally installed in January 1978. However, it was understood that the CNMI technically would remain as part of the TTPI until the trusteeship agreement could be terminated for all of the territory (McPhetres 1983).

While Ambassador Williams was negotiating the Marianas covenant, he met several times with the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia in attempts to resolve issues posed in the drafting of the compact of free association. By then, the US delegation had accepted the statement of basic rights presented in 1970 by the Micronesian Political Status Commission. In the years between 1972 and 1975, the Congress was plagued by its own problems associated with the continued separatist threats by Palau and the Marshalls. Williams held firm in his refusal to negotiate separately with these two districts, hoping that political unity of the five districts remaining after the withdrawal of the Marianas could be realized in the compact. In Washington, meanwhile, President Nixon had resigned and Gerald Ford finished out Nixon's term through 1976. In the eighth round of negotiations since 1969, Williams and the Joint Committee finally succeeded in producing a draft compact that was initialed by both sides in June 1976. Shortly thereafter Williams resigned and was succeeded by his deputy, Ambassador Philip Manhard. In Micronesia, the Congress replaced the Joint Committee with a new Commission on Future Political Status and Transition to work with the US Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations toward finalizing the compact (US Department of State 1972-1976).

In July 1975, a year earlier, the Congress had convened a constitutional convention on Saipan, Elected delegates from each of the districts and traditional chiefs from the Carolines worked together, debating one issue after the other, until they succeeded in November in completing a draft constitution for the Federated States of Micronesia. The document provided for a unified national government in which the rights of member states in the Carolines and the Marshalls were recognized and traditional authority and cultural diversity were respected. A unicameral congress would be elected on a mixed basis of state equality and population size. A president and vice-president would be elected from the congress by a majority vote of that body. A judiciary would include a supreme court and lesser courts at state and local levels. A vigorous program of education for self-government was planned to explain the constitution to all Micronesians in the districts.

Ratification of the constitution (a referendum was planned for 1977) would require a majority approval in two-thirds of the districts. If Palau and the Marshalls voted "no" as was expected, the draft was doomed. Ponape, Truk, and Yap would not meet the requirement of four districts to ratify. Kusaie Island, part of Ponape District, had for some time asked to become a separate district in its own right. With the

TTPI high commissioner's approval in March 1976, Kusaie was granted equal status and was legally established as Kosrae District in January 1977. When the constitutional referendum was finally held in July 1978 in all six districts, the outcome was as expected. Palau and the Marshalls voted "no" but Yap, Truk, Ponape, and Kosrae all voted "yes." The Federated States of Micronesia, as a new government, had been launched in those four states (Meller 1985). The Congress of Micronesia, which had moved its operational base from Saipan to Ponape back in mid-1977, was dissolved after the 1978 constitutional referendum.

Meantime, while the road to passage of the draft constitution was being paved, Ambassador Manhard scheduled "round-table" talks in May 1977 in Honolulu and again in July on Guam, with the status commissions from the Marshalls, Palau, and the still-functioning Congress of Micronesia. In Palau (September 1976) and in the Marshalls (July 1977), referenda had been held in which the voters favored separation from the rest of Micronesia and separate negotiations with the United States, In August 1977 the Marshallese conducted their own constitutional convention as evidence of their political stance. The US delegation, during the Guam talks, proposed a new "two-tier" approach in which the special demands of each commission would be considered while negotiating with Micronesians generally on issues of universal concern. In this first year of his administration, President Carter was determined to end the trusteeship by 1981. In August 1977 his personal representative in the status discussions, Peter Rosenblatt, was confirmed by the US Senate. When Rosenblatt toured Micronesia in September, he stressed the goal of free association to be achieved through multilateral and bilateral negotiations in the months ahead.

Formal talks were resumed in October 1977 and culminated in April 1978 at Hilo, Hawaii, in an agreement on eight principles defining the meaning of free association with the United States. Included were full internal self-government, freedom in foreign affairs, unilateral termination, compatibility of Micronesian constitutions with the compact, US security and defense responsibilities, and US economic assistance, The drafting of appropriate language in the compact to accord with those principles was delayed until after the FSM constitutional referendum was held in July 1978. Bilateral meetings with the three status commissions were then scheduled to plan the transition to some form of self-government and thence to free association and the termination of UN trusteeship.

In 1979 events moved rapidly in Micronesia at the district level. We have already seen that a draft constitution for the Federated States of

Micronesia was approved by the required majority of four districts (Yap, Truk, Ponape, and Kosrae) in the 1978 referendum. Election of senators to the FSM Congress took place in March 1979, and the new government was inaugurated in May at the capital in Ponape. Trukese Senator Tosiwo Nakayama was elected the federation's first president. In the Marshall Islands, work had been completed on a draft constitution for a parliamentary form of government. It was approved in a referendum in March 1979. Members of the parliament (the Nitijela) were elected in April, and the new government was installed in May at the capital in Majuro under President Amata Kabua. In Palau, after months of bitter factional debate, a draft was produced at the constitutional convention that in some respects was inconsistent with terms of the proposed compact as espoused by the US delegation. Nevertheless, the draft was approved in a July referendum. But resistance continued in the Palau legislature, most of whose members supported the US position, and a revised draft was sent to the voters in October. It was rejected. The original draft was resubmitted to Palauans in July 1980 and passed again, by an overwhelming majority. A general election was held in November for members of the bicameral legislature (the Olbiil Era Kelulau) and for the executive leadership. The new president was Haruo Remeliik, former constitutional convention head and a strong supporter of the constitution. Inauguration of the new Republic of Palau occurred in January 1981 at its capital on Koror Island (Crocombe and Ali 1983).

The 1980s--Four Governments Negotiate a Compact of Free Association

With the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands now firmly on course in its covenant of close association with the United States, it remained for the US government to wrap up its deliberations with the Government of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau in a compact of free association with the United States. Ambassador Rosenblatt spent the final three years of the Carter administration in talks with the three island delegations, both multilaterally and bilaterally, to resolve general issues in the compact itself and to draft subsidiary agreements to meet the special demands of the new governments. By November 1980 all documents had been initialed by Rosenblatt and the three delegations. The next step would be to place the results before the voters in separate plebiscites. But President Carter was not to realize his goal to end the trusteeship by 1981. In

the US elections that fall Ronald Reagan was declared victor and the presidency would be returned to Republican control. The final phase of the status negotiations was about to begin.

The new administration in Washington decided to review the policies on which the compact and subsidiary agreements had been negotiated. An Interdepartmental Group was formed with representatives from more than twenty US departments and agencies with interests in Micronesia and the US Congress. For six months the group labored, and in October the compact negotiations were resumed on Maui in Hawaii. Former Interior Department official Fred Zeder took over the reins as ambassador and head of the US delegation. Conclusions of the policy review group, presented at the Maui meeting, favored the prompt termination of trusteeship and approval of the free association principle. It was noted that many details in the subsidiary agreements remained to be worked out in multilateral and bilateral discussions. A US-funded political education program was to be developed by political leaders in each jurisdiction for the benefit of voters in plebiscites that would follow, Then formal approval by the Micronesian legislatures and the US Congress would be necessary before the final documents were forwarded to the United Nations to end the trust relationship.

During the twelve months following the Maui discussions, Ambassador Zeder met frequently with the three delegations to clarify certain technical matters. The new constitutional governments moved quickly to consolidate their internal structures, specifically, to develop constitutions for the four member states of the FSM and for the sixteen states in Palau. In the Marshalls, charters were drawn up by twenty-six local governments as authorized by the Nitijela in 1980. At the same time the governments worked to achieve cooperative arrangements with a number of regional and international organizations, thus validating their new independence in foreign affairs. At TTPI headquarters on Saipan, a reduction in personnel was initiated as responsibilities began to be transferred to the three national entities.

By October 1982 the US representative and each of the three Micronesian negotiators had signified their approval of the draft compact and its related subsidiary agreements. UN-observed plebiscites in the three territories followed in 1983. In the Marshalls, a 60 percent majority was achieved despite opposition from dissenting groups that had urged independence as an alternative. In the FSM, a 79 percent majority prevailed overall, though Ponape State rejected the compact by a 51 to 49 percent vote. (Ponapeans officially changed the spelling to “Pohnpei State” when the state constitution was ratified in September

1984.) In Palau, a 61 percent majority left the contest unresolved, for the Palauan constitution required approval by 75 percent of the voters to negate a ban on the introduction of nuclear materials, including passage or port visits by nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered warships.

The status documents for the FSM and the Marshalls were approved by their respective legislatures later in 1983 and forwarded to Washington for final action by the US government. In the US House of Representatives, the review process was prolonged by months of heated debate that resulted in a series of amendments to the compact, relating to trade and taxation issues that would cater to American interests. These changes were vigorously opposed by the FSM and Marshall Islands governments; their representatives went to Washington time and again to argue for retention of the compact in its original form as approved in the Micronesian plebiscites. In the Republic of Palau, more negotiations and referenda were undertaken in a vain attempt to resolve the inconsistencies between the Palauan constitution and the draft compact.

Each of the presidents of the negotiating island governments was returned to office for a second four-year term--Amata Kabua of the Marshall Islands and Tosiwo Nakayama of the FSM, both in 1983; and Haruo Remeliik of Palau in 1984. In the United States, Ronald Reagan was inaugurated to a second term in January 1985 as the nation's chief of state. But tragedy struck in Koror on 30 June 1985 when President Remeliik was shot to death in the driveway of his home. Motive for the assassination is still a mystery. He was briefly succeeded by Vice-President Alfonso Oiterong. In an election held in August, Lazarus Salii, who had been Palau's principal negotiator on the compact, was named as the new president of Palau. Thomas Remengesau, who had served as the district administrator of Palau in the earlier TTPI years, was elected vice-president.

At long last, in 1985, the US Congress and the chief negotiators in the Marshalls and the FSM agreed on a compromise version of the compact, and in January 1986 President Reagan signed the congressional action into law. The UN Trusteeship Council, in May, approved the actions of the US administration in moving the trust islands toward self-government and urged all parties to proceed in implementing the new status agreements at an early date. Following formal approval by the two Micronesian governments, Reagan proclaimed on 3 November 1986 that they and the Northern Marianas commonwealth were no longer subject to trusteeship. The president so notified the United Nations and

his letter was circulated as an official document of the UN Security Council.

Approval of commonwealth status gave the Northern Marianas' people full US citizenship and self-government, as provided for in their constitution and the covenant. The Marshall Islands and the FSM, according to the Compact of Free Association, were granted not only self-government but also a status of sovereign statehood, including the freedom to engage in foreign affairs. The compact was terminable by either or both parties. It obligated the US government to give economic assistance for the fifteen-year life of the agreement (renegotiable for a second fifteen years) and to be responsible for the security and defense of the island states.

As of October 1988 the Republic of Palau had conducted several more plebiscites on the compact, none of which achieved the 75 percent majority required by its constitution. A special referendum was also held to amend the constitution so that a simple majority vote would be acceptable. That resulted in approval by nearly three to one, but the action was later challenged by some Palauans as not in accord with constitutional process, and the Palau Supreme Court agreed. To date, Palau continues to be administered by the US government under the UN trusteeship agreement (US Department of State 1980-1987).

President Kabua in the Marshalls was reelected in late 1987 to a third four-year term. In the FSM, President Nakayama retired in 1987 after completing his second four-year term, as required by the constitution. John Haglelgam, senator from the outer islands in Yap State, was elected as Nakayama's successor in mid-1987. In Palau, tragedy struck a second time at the presidential level. Lazarus Salii, who was approaching reelection in November 1988, shot himself on 20 August in his home, a suicide, possibly overcome by the unbearable weight of so many undecided domestic issues, both economic and political, Thomas Remengesau, his vice-president, was named to serve the remainder of Salii's term. Along with six other Palauans, Remengesau contested the presidency in the November election. All pledged their support for free association with the United States although their political preferences varied greatly on domestic matters. The winner was Ngiratkel Etpison, a businessman making his first bid for national office. A 75 percent majority is still needed to override the constitutional ban on nuclear materials when the next plebiscite is held.

As a footnote, sadly, only seventeen days after Salii's death, his former co-chairman of the old Congress of Micronesia's political status delega-

tion, Ekpap Silk of the Marshall Islands, died quite unexpectedly of a heart attack in Majuro, where he had retired a year earlier as senator in the Nitijela.

Retrospective

In the preceding summary of events from 1944 to 1988, I have tried to characterize the changing relationships between Micronesians and the US government and also, more importantly, among Micronesians themselves in their expressed concerns about the political, economic, and cultural future of their islands. We have reviewed the US naval administration's efforts to rehabilitate the islands after the defeat of Japan's occupation forces during World War II, and the well-meaning introduction of democratic government, improved health care, and expansion of public education. The United Nations in 1947 agreed to a trusteeship arrangement with the United States as the administering authority. When the US Department of the Interior took over the responsibility for administering the trust area in 1951, policies instituted by the Navy changed very little. The new high commissioner, working with a small annual budget, gave commendable attention to Micronesia's cultural diversity and Micronesian desires for conservation of their traditional values and identities.

Then, in the 1960s, the mood changed in the US capital and new programs, funded by a rapidly escalating budget, were instituted to win over the islanders to acceptance of a more permanent tie with the United States. The Congress of Micronesia became the kingpin of a mutual goal to establish a unitary political entity in association with the United States. But this was not destined to be, for separatist forces within Micronesia during the next decade rejected the unity concept as embodied in the draft constitution for a Federated States of Micronesia. By the end of the 1970s, four fledgling governments had emerged in the course of negotiations with the US government. In the Northern Marianas a covenant provided for a close association with the United States, while a draft compact would establish a status of free association for the Marshalls, the four-state FSM, and Palau, The 1980s have seen approval and implementation of the compact in the Marshalls and the FSM, although delays have prevented final agreement in Palau owing to a constitutional conflict, which--hopefully--will be resolved in 1989. The US president, by proclamation in 1986, unilaterally declared the trusteeship as ended, except in Palau.

In writing this article, I have depended on published sources to refresh my memory on dates, places, and persons involved in the status negotiations. Especially useful are the US annual reports to the UN Trusteeship Council (US Department of State 1972-1987). More than any other person, Norman Meller has worked with and written about constitutionalism in Micronesia (1969, 1985). Two collections of articles on Micronesian politics, published by the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Pacific Studies, are indispensable for understanding the internal dynamics of political change in each of the several parts of Micronesia, including Guam (Crocombe and Ali 1983; Crocombe et al. 1988).

However, as I look back on the political and cultural changes that have taken place since my first visit to the islands in 1946, I find that I depend a great deal more on my personal knowledge gained from twenty-three trips to the TTPI and Guam over a forty-three-year period and from my personal contacts with both Micronesians and Americans who contributed to those changes. My acquaintance with Americans in the administration dates back to the Navy period. From that time, I have personally known all of the TTPI high commissioners and many of the headquarters staff as that office moved from Honolulu to Guam and finally to Saipan. I also had frequent contacts with both Americans and Micronesians at the district level in education, health, community affairs, land and resources, and social services. Many of the Micronesians had been my students at the University of Hawaii, which I joined in 1947.

In 1969, the same year that the US-Micronesian negotiations on future status got under way, I took early retirement from the university in order to apply my research experience to investigating the problems of contemporary change in the islands. Most of my previous fieldwork had been in the Marshalls, and I continued that interest, but I became better acquainted with the other districts as my travels took in all of the TTPI. Since 1971 I have averaged about one trip every year to some or all of the urban centers in Micronesia, on consulting assignments in education, resettlement, land rights, youth and elderly affairs, and administrative change. I kept abreast of the political status talks through my personal ties with the chief Micronesian negotiators and with the US representatives in meetings in Honolulu, Guam, and Washington. In New York, I knew several UN Trusteeship Council staff members who regularly accompanied UN visiting missions to Micronesia. Presidents Kabua, Nakayama, Salii, Remengesau, and Haglelgam were friends I

had first known from their years of college study in Hawaii. Dwight Heine of the Marshalls I had worked with on my first field trip to his islands in 1946. Another old friend, Ekpap Silk, lunched with me in Majuro in August 1988, shortly before his death, and we talked about the island politics in which he had made a name for himself over the years. The old-timers who engineered the course of Micronesian politics over nearly half a century are now yielding their place to a younger generation of Micronesians, like President John Haglelgam of the FSM, and a new chapter in island history is being written.

While reviewing the relentless change in political status (I hesitate to call this political "development") over the past four decades, I have focused mainly on the formal relationships of Micronesian entities to each other and to the US government. Little have I touched on the internal or domestic adaptations that the island populations have had to make during the same period. Of course, long before the end of World War II, Micronesians had already departed in varying degrees from their traditional ways of living in their use of local resources, in their systems of family and community organization, in their exercise of land rights and chiefly authority, in the enculturation of their children, in their respect for supernatural forces, and in their views of themselves as small, culturally distinctive isolates. But, despite the impact of foreign traders, proselyting missionaries, colonial reformists, and the destruction and dislocation suffered during the war, the basic imperatives of their traditional societies have survived remarkably intact.

To understand the complexities of island styles in the 1980s, one is well advised to look beyond the materialistic trappings of Westernized dress, food, housing, transport, and entertainment in the urban concentrations of Chamorros and Carolinians in Saipan, of Palauans in Koror, of Yapese in Colonia, of Trukese in Moen, of Pohnpeians in Kolonia, of Kosraens in Lelu, and of Marshallese in Ebeye and Majuro. Behind those facades exist non-Western systems of social perceptions and values that, in their continuing viability, can help island groups to find some resolution of their domestic needs and to confront the rest of the world with self-redeeming ethnic identities.

To examine these internal dilemmas in each of Micronesia's culturally discrete entities would take more space than is allowed in this article. In what follows, I intend to generalize for the Carolines and the Marshalls. The Northern Marianas is a case apart that demands separate analysis, for the Chamorro culture had already been decimated by Spanish impositions prior to 1898 and the Carolinian immigration in the nineteenth

century has largely been absorbed today in what may be called the Saipanese community. In recent years, since the 1978 covenant adoption, Saipan has been transformed into a tourist haven for Japanese with local landholdings leased for hotel and recreation use, It has also become an offshore base for Asian garment factories with mainly Filipino workers, resulting in a surfeit of aliens and consequent intermarriage to the point where the cultural identity of the Saipanese community is almost impossible to define.

Today's Dilemmas

In the Carolines and the Marshalls, each island population today faces common domestic issues that the people alone can solve. They are all concerned about migration to the urban centers and the consequent depletion of human resources in the rural hinterland. They need more adequate health care, more training in nutrition to better judge their consumption of imported foods, and more attention to family planning to offset the frightening increase in population. The elderly despair about the loss of respect for their advanced years and their accumulated wisdom and experience. Youth wander aimlessly in the towns with little to occupy themselves and nowhere to spend their time, many ending up as barflies, runaways, and delinquents. The extended family is being decimated with the rise in popularity of the values of individualism and the nuclear family. Parents and teachers alike disagree on the current worth of public (and private) school curricular models, whether these should be American-oriented or bilingual and bicultural. High school graduates who have pursued higher education overseas return home with altered behavior and personal values, unsure of how to rejoin the island communities from which they came. The basic features of traditional authority have been attacked and replaced with "democratic" systems that many feel are not at all democratic in action. Traditional literary and artistic styles have been despoiled and the mediocrity of introduced substitutes leaves many islanders unhappy. Family disputes over land and title rights have crowded the courts, where American-based legal procedures deal inadequately with matters concerning island custom.

Without a doubt the biggest single problem in the domestic sector is the excessive dependency, especially in the urban centers, on US government funding from the compact, selected federal programs, and capital improvement project aid. Micronesians increasingly seek money to pay

for the goods and services they have learned to want--imported food, beverages and tobacco, clothing, household equipment, vehicles and the fuel to operate them, housing (urban residents must rent if they immigrated from the outer islands), entertainment, and travel by ship or plane interisland or overseas. Where does this purchasing power come from? Wage employment holds first place, mostly with the government or less so in the private sector, which is consumer-oriented for the most part. Families with land to lease for government or military use are considered fortunate, as are those who receive payments for war claims or nuclear-related damages. Production of copra, fish, or handicraft brings in only moderate income. The standard of living has risen--no question of that--but a constant supply of cash is essential to support it. This fact of dependency is the Achilles' heel for urban Micronesians. Should present levels of US funding decline as US strategic interests change, these people will face a crisis. Residents in the hinterland do have a subsistence economy that is still operable and they still have the know-how to survive on that basis, but the life-styles of urban dwellers will be shattered if the money stops coming for whatever reason.

Having generalized about domestic issues for the several cultural entities in the Carolines and the Marshalls, I now want to embark in Part II of this article on an in-depth view of the Marshalls, with which I am most familiar. It so happened that in 1988 I was able to visit the area twice for about ten days each time. In March I was invited by the Bikinians to be a guest at the annual commemoration of their forced departure from their home atoll in 1946. This was in remembrance of my investigation of their plight on Rongerik Atoll in early 1948, after which the Navy relocated them to Kwajalein Island, where they decided to settle finally on Kili Island in the southern Marshalls. I spent four days with them on Kili after the formal ceremonies on the first day, to which government officials from Majuro had also been invited. I then stayed five more days on Majuro, where I interviewed a number of Marshallese to update my information on developments since my previous visit. In August I went to Majuro again, for ten days, specifically to sample local leaders' opinions on major issues, as part of an assignment from the US Information Agency in Washington with special reference to external relations of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In the course of that research I learned much about domestic issues while talking with prominent Marshallese, including elected officials of the Nitijela, public service administrators, traditional chiefs, business leaders, church officials, educators, and members of the media, women's groups, and youth organizations. From these two trips in 1988 I gained new insights

into the contemporary affairs of the Marshallese. In Part II, I want to share these perceptions as a specific example of the concerns of one Micronesian ethnic group that has gained political independence in free association with the United States. How do these islanders view their present domestic situation and what do they expect from the years that lie ahead? What resources--for example, community organizations and forums--do they have for finding solutions to their present problems in addition to the deliberations of their elected officials in the national government?

PART II
Marshall Islanders in Crisis

General Introduction

The Marshalls archipelago consists of twenty-nine coral atolls and five single islands, none more than twenty feet above sea level. Land area is seventy square miles but lagoon area amounts to forty-three thousand square miles. Thus, land is scarce for agriculture and residence but the wealth of marine resources favors a sea orientation. The total population, almost entirely Marshallese with a single language and culture, was nearly thirty-one thousand in 1980 and rose to over forty-three thousand in 1988.

The national government was established in 1979 under its own constitution, The parliamentary system includes an elected unicameral legislature, the Nitijela. The president of the republic is elected by the Nitijela from its own membership, and he appoints the Cabinet ministers from the same body. Local government is conducted by an elected mayor and council. The judiciary follows the American legal model. Traditional authority is represented in two entities, which are advisory to the Nitijela and the High Court. Land is the indigenous basis for social identity. Rights to land are shared within a matrilineage *(bwij),* headed by an elder male *(alab),* with succession in the female line. The two-class system consists of the *iroij* (members of a chief's lineage) and the *kajur* (members of subordinate land-using *bwij* or workers on the land). Traditionally the *iroij* held absolute power over the land and the people living there even though use rights were inherited by the *kajur* lineages. The latter were expected to provide the *iroij* with goods and services. This system still survives but the *iroij* have had to moderate their demands as colonial administrations allowed the *kajur* to improve their socioeconomic status.

On the outer islands the extended-family household is the work unit, its members sharing in both production and consumption. Men fish, collect crop produce, make copra, build houses and canoes, and represent the group in community discussions. Women preside over the household, preparing daily meals, caring for the children, doing the laundry, and making handicraft for domestic or export use. Children grow up learning the skills expected of them in adulthood. Elders, both men and women, are respected for their mature years. Church attendance has become an integral part of the indigenous culture.

Life is not quite the same in the urban centers on Ebeye and Majuro. Land is dear, housing is crowded, the nuclear family prevails, law and order suffer from inadequate parental control, food and other essentials are imported, and the work ethic is based on employment in government or involvement in consumer services either as worker or entrepreneur. Electricity, water, and phone services are available. Public radio and a private weekly newspaper keep residents abreast of local and world news. Television and videotapes are popular in the home. Elsewhere, movie theaters, bars, and restaurants abound for leisure-time entertainment. Churches, Protestant and Catholic and a variety of fundamentalist sects, serve the communities' spiritual needs.

In the following discourse on domestic issues that confront Marshallese people today, it will become readily apparent that they are dramatically interrelated. Consideration of one problem, as identified in the section heading, leads immediately to the recognition of linkages with others. Attempts by the government to program a solution to a single problem have often proved ineffectual. Planning officers now recognize the need for a coordinated approach by the several ministries to a set of problems demanding attention in their respective areas of responsibility (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1987a). At the same time, people in the urban centers and on the outlying islands are seeking a larger voice in defining their needs and in the planning as well as the implementation of remedial action.

Population Explosion

The total population of the Marshall Islands, as enumerated in the November 1988 census, was 43,335, an increase of 40.4 percent since the last census in 1980 (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1988b). The annual growth rate in that period was 4.24 percent. High fertility, lowered mortality, a disproportionate number of children, and an imbalance between urban and rural populations characterize the present

demographic problem. Marshallese living in Majuro Atoll numbered 19,695, or 45.5 percent of the nation's total population. Of that number, 14,714 resided in D-U-D (Djarrit-Uliga-Dalap, three small and interconnected islets in the eastern part of Majuro Atoll where the administrative capital of the republic is located). There, the density of population was 28,831 per square mile. The other urban center, Ebeye Island, which lies next to Kwajalein Island where the US missile test facility is based, supported a Marshallese community of 8,277 on only seventy-eight acres of land, for a density of 59,121 per square mile! The rural population amounted to 15,363, or 35.5 percent of the total for the archipelago. In 1988, 51 percent of all Marshallese were aged fourteen years or younger.

Having large families was popular in traditional times, as it is now, but custom then provided for spacing of offspring by abstention from intercourse for one year after childbirth. Family planning programs of the Ministry of Health Services place emphasis on contraception and spacing, but custom is now ignored in regard to the latter. Modern means of prevention are either too costly or their promotion on television and radio is ill-received in a family audience owing to the customary taboo on discussion of sex among close kin. Large families are especially threatening in the urban centers, where living space is limited and where crowding breeds other social problems apart from the escalated requirements for housing, water supply, and sanitation. The increasing need for job opportunities by the young poses a critical concern economically as well as in public education, where more vocational training is in demand.

Economic Uncertainty

Two economic structures exist today in the islands. The traditional subsistence economy, in the rural hinterland, is based on production of land and sea resources. It has survived even though many of the old practices are neglected or forgotten. Cultivation of tree and root crops, supplemented by collection of shellfish on the reefs and fishing in the lagoon and the deep sea, guarantee a reasonable existence. Copra and handicraft production provides enough cash to buy some imported food and clothing. The commercial economy, in the urban centers, is dominated by foreign introductions. Money, in capital letters, is the key to a satisfying lifeway on Ebeye 'Island and in Majuro's D-U-D. All material necessities must be purchased from income earned in wage employment or from profits gained in consumer-service enterprises. A few more for-

tunate families and communities receive other income from rentals, lease of land for government use, World War II claims, and reparations for injuries or residential dislocation related to nuclear activities from 1946 to 1958, some of which were just beginning to be paid off by the US government in 1988.

Both rural and urban economies are in serious trouble at present and the future is not at all clear. In the hinterland, the coconut resource for copra production is over-age and needs replanting. The price of copra on the world market is depressed. Interisland shipping, operated by the government out of Majuro, is irregular and infrequent to the smaller and more distant atolls. The republic's planners recommend diversified agriculture, revenue-producing fisheries, and privatization of shipping, with government subsidy, to upgrade the outer-islands economy.

In the urban centers, the alarming rise in population adds hundreds of young people to the labor force each year. Jobs are just not available for them. To meet the needs of youth, who may otherwise contribute to' social unrest and disorder in their frustration, plans are underway to develop small industries and tourist accommodations in order to relieve the unemployment problem in the capital. Joint ventures between government and the private sector are being urged by the Marshall Islands Development Authority, Marshallese, under terms of the compact, are now freer to migrate to the United States, and this could relieve the employment situation and promote a flow of remittances from overseas earnings to families at home. At the same time, any large-scale drain of manpower from the Marshalls could have an adverse impact on the republic's development (Gunasekara 1988).

Another aspect of the urban problem is the need for a more motivated and efficient work force, both in government and in private business. New skills required in computerization call for more attention to vocational training in the country's education program. Some employers are already talking about recruitment of skilled workers from Asian countries to meet this need. But such a move could well lead to serious social problems, as it already has in the Northern Marianas and other parts of the South Pacific. Foreign investment could be invited to provide needed capital for more industrial development, but small businesses run by Marshallese, often on a family basis, could be seriously jeopardized by such competition. The huge, escalating trade deficit is due to declining exports (90 percent is copra) and mounting imports because Marshallese are becoming more dependent on the cash economy and prefer packaged food and beverages from overseas. In 1985 exports amounted to $2.5 million while imports were nearly $30 million. Stra-

tegies to lower the deficit include diversification of exports, substitution of imports with locally grown food, and higher taxes on luxury items (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1987a).

It must be said that money never played any part in traditional society, and many Marshallese have yet to learn how to manage their monetary affairs successfully. Those who have done so are, unfortunately, providing the basis for a new social class system--the rich and the poor. The pursuit of "More, Bigger, and Better," as I was told by a leading churchman in Majuro, is destined to dominate the Marshallese assessment of their quality of life.

Educational Priorities

Marshallese educators are challenged in two different time dimensions. One is the heritage of forty-five years of poorly trained teachers and a disintegrating physical plant. The other is the need to provide more classrooms and better-trained teachers to cope with the rising enrollment as a consequence of the high birthrate. They also have to deal with a, widely dispersed school-age population in the outer islands and the current concentration of pupils in the two urban areas. Educators, whether public or private, face these problems with declining budgets. The principal problems may be summarized as physical infrastructure, curricular reform, and teacher performance.

Much has been accomplished in classroom rehabilitation and expansion, but pressure continues on the government to build more facilities for the rapidly expanding school-age population. In the school year 1987-1988 the total number of students in public and private institutions, grades one through twelve, was 13,491. Teachers employed full-time numbered 625 (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1987c). At the elementary level, seventy-six public schools served 9,015 pupils. The three largest of these are located in Majuro and Ebeye, with a total of 3,257 enrollees--an appalling over-registration in the urban centers. Twenty private elementary schools, mostly church-operated, reported an additional 2,566 pupils, about 85 percent of whom attended classes in Majuro and Ebeye.

At the high-school level, the shortage of classrooms is extremely critical. Only 65 percent of all eighth-graders eligible for secondary school can be accepted. There are only two public high schools, in Majuro and Jaluit atolls, with 891 students enrolled. Two more schools are planned, for Likiep Atoll and Ebeye Island. Church-operated high schools number six, all located in Majuro and Ebeye, with a total of 1,019 students.

Teaching staffs badly need improvement. Those who were recruited in the early years of the US administration are generally lacking in motivation and in the skills required in the changing educational climate. This is more true in the outer islands, and is one reason why many parents have moved to the urban centers, where better schooling can be expected for their children. In thirty-three of the outer-island schools, there are only one or two teachers to handle the entire eight grades. On the other hand, in the overcrowded urban elementary schools where teachers can be assigned grade by grade the student-teacher ratio may be as high as forty to one.

In-service training for teachers is offered by the government during the school year and in summer, as well as in classes at the Marshalls branch of the College of Micronesia in Majuro. Training focuses on English language and mathematics, a policy supported by parents. Coursework is also provided in science, social studies, health education, and the arts. Very little emphasis is given to bicultural studies, that is, Marshallese and American. However, it is recognized that children learn more quickly in their native tongue, and the early elementary grades are taught in Marshallese. English receives more emphasis in the upper grades. Peace Corps volunteers, most of whom spend their terms in the outer islands, are teaching English and health education in the local schools.

Curricular reform is high on the agenda for government educators. In 1986 a comprehensive review of school curricula (all grades) was initiated by a special task force to define educational goals in nine subject areas. More attention is being given to bicultural learning, vocational education, and college preparation for those so inclined. Basic marketable skills are needed for those intending to seek local employment. For students who want to go on to college overseas--with scholarship aid from the Marshalls government, the federal Pell Grant program, or private sources--improved high school preparation is recognized as imperative to equip them better to perform at the tertiary level than has been true in the past. The Ministry of Education in March 1989 selected a Washington, DC-based firm, the Academy for Educational Development, to conduct a thorough review of the public school system and to assist with making necessary changes.

One handicap that the school system, whether public or private, will find difficult to overcome is that the student-teacher relationship tends to be impersonal compared to that of children to their parents. Marshallese, with apparent reason, regard schooling as a foreign introduction from America that is more “theirs” than “ours.”

Sociocultural Confusion

The issues identified by my correspondents in 1988 as the most crucial of all are the changes taking place in family relations, land tenure, and chiefly authority. Traditionally the elderly have enjoyed respect based on their years of experience and their senior roles in the extended family and the landholding system. Grandparents, though physically less active in old age, served as fountains of knowledge in the enculturation of their grandchildren and as havens of refuge from the stricter, more formal relationships between parents and children (Mason 1982). Kin-group members worked together and shared in the products of their labors. Women yielded to men in matters of public concern and debate but maintained importance within the household domain. People recognized the authority of the *alab* who spoke for each matrilineage in village councils. Paramount chiefs were held in awe and were given service and produce from the land by the commoners. Church attendance became part of the island custom, and pastors and priests still provide counsel and exercise influence in family and community affairs.

While much of Marshallese traditional culture has survived in the outer islands, less remains intact in the urban centers. Schooling and materialism, coupled with a sense of individualism and a shift to nuclear-family living, have resulted in a new elitism--socially, economically, and politically. Respect for the elderly and for traditional authority has declined, especially among the young. Traditional role behavior has lost its meaning for youth. New models of behavior are being adopted from college-student returnees, from media performers on television and movie screen, and from some of the Americans in Majuro who work in government or in the private sector. The future of Marshallese youth is obscure, dimmed by their rejection of the island heritage and by their frustration in trying to achieve an American identity. Some are finding an answer by returning to their outer-island homeland, others are able to fit reasonably well into the competitive urban society. But many youth are lost: some strike back at society through delinquent acts or turn their aggression inward by threat or act of suicide; some leave the islands to seek a new identity overseas (Mason 1977).

The situation regarding land rights deserves separate consideration. The two-class system that segregated the *iroij* from the *kajur* has deteriorated in the past century owing to colonial introductions. Strangely enough, however, the system seems to have revived somewhat in recent years due to new developments during the US administration and the

recent move to self-government. Formerly, land disputes were resolved within the *iroij* family or by chiefly decisions in the case of disagreements among the *kajur.* Such cases now appear more often in the courts, American legal practices replacing the traditional dispute resolution machinery. The rights of *iroij* and *kajur* (including subcategories of the *kajur*) are now defined by Western law and are practically cast in concrete. The *iroij* class has regained some of its former power owing to court decisions about the share due them from payments for lands leased by the US government, notably at Kwajalein where US missile testing is conducted as part of the Star Wars program. Hundreds of thousands of dollars annually are paid out to each group, and money talks loudly today in determining custom (Mason 1987).

However, when we look again at the attitudes of modern-day youth, it is important to note that their lack of respect for traditional practices may spell the demise of the *iroij* system in the next decade or two. Some Marshallese have told me that land reform will signal a complete turnabout in the assignment of property rights. By legal action the land may well be committed to individual ownership in the American manner. The *iroij* could still be accorded a ceremonial status but would no longer have any control over the land or the people living on it.

Governance and the Public Trust

The distribution of power in the present system of Marshall Islands governance reflects salient features of the traditional political order and the democratic parliamentary model. The latter evolved from the legislative experience gained by the Marshallese in the Nitijela prior to 1979, when the executive branch was controlled by the TTPI administration. Some *iroij* leaders were elected to the new parliament, including future president Kabua, and this combined authoritative influence from both systems. However, the parliamentary approach adopted in the 1979 constitution, while it bespoke a more internationally recognized model, does not allow for the separation of legislative and executive powers that the Marshallese had come to expect from their experience with the US system. Furthermore, the parliamentary form, to be effective, requires a strong, vocal opposition for a balance of power in legislative decisions. This has not been the case in the Marshalls, partly because open criticism of those in leadership positions is not consonant with the island tradition of *iroij* and *kajur* relationships. Suffice it to say, in the decade since self-government was established the public has become increasingly uneasy with policy-making “from the top down” and with

the lack of effective communication between the elected members of the Nitijela (including the president and Cabinet ministers) and their constituencies in both the outer islands and the urban centers. Two excellent insider views of the developing political situation are provided in Smith 1983 and Johnson 1988 by American expatriates married to prominent Marshallese women.

The public trust is embodied in the election of senators to represent the felt needs of their constituents. But, once elected, too many in the Nitijela are said to express their own assessment of issues, to help their own advancement politically, rather than the concerns of those who voted for them. Islanders, by custom, favor candidates on personal qualities rather than on issues, especially if those running for office claim upper-class rank. When the legislative sessions produce acts and resolutions, there is little feedback to the electorate. Press reports are read rarely in the outer islands, and radio newscasts carry little that informs listeners of happenings in the capital. For several years the mayors of the local governments did convene in Majuro to share their views with the republic's officials, but the high cost of air travel and per diems has of late ruled out this means of local expression.

The parliamentary system itself is receiving closer scrutiny by the people. They see a concentration of power growing more ominous as the system allows for the Nitijela membership to elect the president, who then appoints his Cabinet ministers from that same body--thus combining both legislative and executive control in a small group of politicians at the top. And, furthermore, the president and several of the senators are clothed in the traditional garb of the *iroij*, which adds immeasurably to their authority among the older people. The president is said to exert his personal influence increasingly in assignment of bureaucratic posts. The permanent secretaries take their orders from the policy-makers in the Nitijela, through their ministerial superiors, and have little opportunity to provide input from their longer experience in departmental business.

An Advisory Committee on Constitutional Amendments was authorized by the Nitijela in 1988 in accordance with a constitutional requirement for a review once in every ten years, to report and recommend its findings to the Nitijela to either directly amend the constitution or to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of proposing amendments. The committee, composed of persons from the Nitijela, the administration, and the general public, submitted a forty-one-page report in February 1989 with more than thirty recommended amendments, most of them to be referred to a constitutional convention as

opposed to direct action by the Nitijela. Issues ranged from legalistic concerns in the governance system, including the judiciary, to the participation of traditional titleholders at both national and local levels of government, especially where indigenous rights to land are concerned (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1989). The Nitijela accepted the proposals for consideration by a constitutional convention to be held later in 1989. Meanwhile, the Cabinet approved a four-day holiday in early May to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Marshallese Constitution.

The bureaucracy also needs reform. In some departments, varying with supervisory efficiency, the high rate of absenteeism and a "laid-back" inattention to office duties raise a question about how large the staff must be to get the job done. New skill requirements call for employee retraining. Communication within some departments and between departments is reportedly lax. Information about new projects in the republic and about negotiated relationships with other Pacific states is not always shared promptly for maximum efficiency.

Planning for the first five years under the compact has been revised to take into account reductions in US program assistance, domestic revenues, and anticipated loans and grant aid from international agencies. A frequently heard complaint is that government funds are spent primarily on capital improvement projects in Majuro or, less so, in Ebeye, and that outer-island communities are ignored, The budgetary revision includes cutbacks in outer-island fisheries development and in social services. Increased revenue will be needed if public services are to be strengthened. The private sector, already the strongest in Micronesia, and foreign investment are looked to increasingly to lessen the financial burden on the government (Gunasekara 1988). However, the more funding that is generated for island development the more the level of expectations--and the dependency on outside help--rises.

The increasing centralization of power in the president's office is a matter of deep concern to some Marshallese. Opposition to his recommendations in the Nitijela has been generally ineffective. Perhaps six or seven senators will speak out in that body, which numbers thirty-three members. However, in the last year or so, some change is reported in the increasing openness of debate in the parliament and in a corresponding shift in the ratio of "yes" and "no" votes when issues are decided on the floor.

During 1988 the president was in poor health, requiring several months of recuperation from heart surgery in California. One of his ministers served as acting president during his absence. Kabua is now in his third four-year term as head of state. Rumors abound as to when or

whether he may elect to retire. His decades of service in Marshallese politics and his leadership role in the indigenous system of chiefly authority have made him the outstanding figure of his generation. The question of who will be his successor is of enormous importance to the future of the state and the public trust.

Hazards Past, Present, and Future

Hazardous living for Marshallese did not end with the surrender of the islands by Japan to the United States in 1945. In March 1946, some 168 residents of Bikini Atoll were removed by the US naval government to make way for an atomic-bomb test site. They stayed on nearby Rongerik Atoll until early 1948, when near-starvation threatened and all were taken to Kwajalein Island. In November they decided to take up a more permanent residence on Kili Island in the southern Marshalls. I had conducted a survey of their condition on Rongerik and subsequently visited the group on Kili in 1949 briefly and during the summers of 1957 and 1963. I spent several days in March 1988 on Kili as the Bikinians' guest and had the opportunity to review their situation and their thoughts of what the future may hold. Testing on Bikini ended in 1958. By 1968 the US government had declared the atoll safe from radiation exposure. In late 1972 several families returned to Bikini, but by 1978 a US medical survey found radioactive cesium in members of the community. This resulted in a US Interior Department decision to remove all of the 139 people from Bikini. Some went back to Kili, others settled on Ejit Island in Majuro Atoll. Aided by a Washington lawyer, the Bikinians--who by 1988 numbered more than twelve hundred, with in-marriages and adoptions from other island communities--had received from the US government a total of $185 million for the use of Bikini, for resettlement costs, and for cleanup of the atoll. Those still living on Kili Island, about 750 people, produce little from the land and the sea and are completely dependent on imports. The Bikini/Ejit/Kili local government council is seriously considering one of several options proposed by scientists, to have one foot of topsoil removed from the islands, with reoccupation to take place perhaps ten years hence. When it is safe for the Bikinians to return to their homeland, the population will no doubt continue to be divided--some remaining on Kili and Ejit and some going back to Bikini but still dependent on imports of food.

In late 1947 another atoll community was removed, from Enewetak Atoll, to allow for expansion of the US nuclear-test program. These people were resettled on Ujelang, an uninhabited atoll to the south. I spent

the first half of 1964 with them for comparison with the Bikinian dislocation. In my 1963 visit to Kili and in the 1964 study on Ujelang, I was accompanied by Robert C. Kiste, then a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Oregon. We have both published articles and books on the resettlement experience. The Enewetakese, spurred by the US actions to return the Bikini people to their homeland, lobbied aggressively for cleanup of their own atoll. In 1980, by then very dependent on US funding for their material needs, some five hundred people moved back to Enewetak, their residence limited to islands along the southern rim of the atoll that had been declared safe. But nearly half of that number had returned by 1983 to Ujelang, where some subsistence was possible from their own production of food. Those who stayed on Enewetak will no doubt remain there only as long as US aid continues, for radiation is still a danger to their health if they fail to observe restrictions on local food consumption.

A disaster of a different kind has changed the lives of those who lived on Rongelap Atoll, some distance east of Bikini. In March 1954 the US military tested the largest hydrogen bomb in its nuclear program on Bikini. Strong winds carried the giant radioactive cloud eastward. The fallout passed over Rongelap, whose residents had no official warning or notification of precautions to take, and caused severe vomiting and diarrhea among the people. They were evacuated to Kwajalein for medical review and three months later they were settled on Ejit Island in Majuro. In mid-1957 they were at last returned to Rongelap, where they were monitored regularly thereafter by medical teams from the US mainland. By 1963 thyroid tumors were diagnosed and patients were treated in the United States. The son of the Rongelap magistrate died of leukemia in 1972, resulting from his exposure in 1954. Finally, in May 1985, the entire community chose to leave Rongelap, fearful of further contamination, and were transported voluntarily by the Greenpeace organization's vessel, the *Rainbow Warrior*, to Mejatto Island on the northern rim of Kwajalein Atoll, where they still remain. US scientists report that radiation on Rongelap no longer constitutes a life hazard, but the Rongelapese are doubtful and have asked for another survey.

These three communites best exemplify the problems created by the US nuclear-test program. Other Marshallese have also suffered but to a lesser extent. Their experiences are but part of the larger issue created by worldwide developments in nuclear weaponry, not only in the Pacific where France continues to test underground at Moruroa Atoll in the Tuamotu archipelago (Firth 1987). Although the Marshallese joined the South Pacific Forum in 1987, they have still not signed the South

Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone (SPNFZ) treaty drawn up by Forum members in a 1985 Cook Islands meeting. The Marshallese are sympathetic to the terms of the treaty, to outlaw nuclear weapons in the South Pacific, but they are concerned that such an act may jeopardize their relationship with the United States under the Compact of Free Association (Mason 1988). The US has to date refused the Forum invitation to sign the SPNFZ protocols as one of the nuclear world powers. The republic established a Nuclear Claims Tribunal in early 1988 to process Marshallese claims for land deprivation and radiation-related injuries or death. The US did agree to fund such claims up to $50 million during the fifteen-year duration of the compact.

"Star Wars" Testing. Kwajalein Atoll is the site of the most far-reaching disruption of Marshallese society. After World War II, the US naval facility on Kwajalein Island was upgraded from a modest air transport station between Hawaii and Guam to a support base for nuclear testing on Bikini and Enewetak from 1946 to 1958. In 1959 the island was selected as a test site for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Launch pads for test-firing Nike-Zeus missiles were developed to destroy the incoming ICBMs. Ebeye Island became home for the displaced residents of Kwajalein Island as well as for the migrants from other atolls who sought jobs at the Navy base. The Ebeye population in 1959 was about thirteen hundred. Command of Kwjalein was transferred in 1964 from the Navy to the Army. The new test site included facilities on four other islands in the atoll as well as on Kwajalein itself. The central two-thirds of the lagoon was named the Mid-Corridor, a target area with hazards for Marshallese still living on the surrounding islands. They were all relocated to Ebeye. The island population had reached three thousand by then. A ninety-nine-year lease was negotiated with Kwajalein landowners (*iroij* and *kajur* alike) for a one-time payment of $750,000 and for Army construction of improved living facilities on Ebeye (Johnson 1984).

By 1982, however, the landowners had become increasingly unhappy with their deal with the Army. They sought a shorter lease term, higher annual payments, better conditions on Ebeye, and access to Mid-Corridor islands when tests were not scheduled. They staged a four-month protest involving about one thousand people, reoccupying their home islands and disrupting at least one missile test. The government forces (the US Army and the republic together) capitulated. The United States had already expended $1 billion on the test site and construction of a

new one elsewhere was unlikely. As part of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI or "Star Wars" program), Kwajalein had become essential to the US military interest in the Pacific. A new three-year lease was negotiated to provide $9 million a year in lease payments and funding for improvements of Ebeye living conditions. The Kwajalein Atoll Development Authority (KADA) was established with support from both the United States and the republic, to draw up and implement a master plan for the entire atoll community. For the five-year period 1986-1991, KADA has identified development projects amounting to $60.6 million, a major part of which will come from compact aid. Projects encompass agriculture, fisheries, education, health, social services, transportation, and telecommunications. Included also is construction of a causeway linking Ebeye with six smaller islands to the north, which will add badly needed space for household and public facilities (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1987a). The land area available to the community will then be about one-half square mile, considerably more than Ebeye's seventy-eight acres. In October 1988 the Kwajalein landowners with rights to the Ebeye area, represented by one *iroij* and two *alabs,* agreed to lease the land to KADA for maintenance and administration of all public facilities and private rentals. Upon expiration of the 1982 lease in 1985, arrangements were made for compact monies to fund the continued lease of Kwajalein to the US military for the compact's fifteen-year term and renegotiable fifteen-year extension thereafter.

Waste Dumping. As early as 1981, when Japan was considering nuclear dumping in the western Pacific ocean, President Kabua had suggested either Bikini or Enewetak as possible storage sites. His Cabinet authorized him to ask Japan for aid to conduct a feasibility study, but nothing came of the exchange. The London Dumping Convention (LDC) in 1984 proclaimed a moratorium for four years on ocean dumping of radioactive waste. Pacific Island states strongly supported this action although Japan opposed it. The ban was extended for another year in October 1988, pending a report on the environmental hazards involved. Meanwhile a Nevada-based firm approached the people of Wotje Atoll with a proposal to dump industrial waste from the continental US on nearby Erikub Atoll. Landowners at Wotje rejected the idea.

In December 1987 President Kabua requested the US Congress to conduct a feasibility survey for storage of nuclear waste in uninhabited atolls in the north, since unlimited sums of revenue monies were promised by mainland companies for the disposal of waste, toxic or nontoxic.

The Nitijela overrode his proposal as potentially hazardous to Marshallese living nearby. Later a firm in Seattle, Washington, Admiralty Pacific, came with a proposition to dump solid waste as landfill in the northern uninhabited Marshalls, arguing the advantages of creating new land area and generating millions of dollars annually, The firm's representatives visited the Marshalls in October of that year, seeking official approval for environmental studies. The government agreed in January 1989--subject to a thorough environmental study--noting the potential for more land on hitherto uninhabited islands, for crop production, for housing sites, and for airstrips to facilitate transportation. The company expects to complete its studies by the end of 1989 (Johnson 1989).

Meanwhile, scientists from Hawaii have been studying those same atolls in the north, assisted by funding from South Pacific regional organizations, to advise on proper management of natural resources and endangered fauna, for example, turtles, clams, coconut crabs, and birds. Jemo Island and Bikar Atoll have been recommended as off-limit preserves. Two others, Taka near inhabited Utirik Atoll and Erikub near Wotje Atoll, are suggested as limited-harvest areas to be used only by residents of the nearby owner atolls. Whether these islands are used for dumping wastes or as reserved areas, the republic's Cabinet and Nitijela will have to approve final disposition, officials say.

"Greenhouse Effect." Global climatic changes in recent years threaten atoll environments in the Pacific with a rising sea level, due to warming of ocean waters and melting of polar ice sheets and glaciers. Scientists do not agree on the rate of sea-level change to be expected, but it may be as much as three to six feet in the next twenty to forty years. At the September 1988 meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Tonga, this "greenhouse effect" was the subject of extensive debate. President Ieremia Tabai of the Republic of Kiribati, a country of atolls lying south of the equator from the Marshalls, expressed his great concern not only about the long-term result when whole atolls may be submerged, but also the short-term need to plan realistically for the future of the Kiribati people (Palmer 1988).

The Marshall Islands will face equally threatening disaster if the continuing studies of scientists verify the present claims of some observers. In February 1989, the Marshallese Cabinet approved a proposal from the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) to convene a major conference in Majuro, in July 1989, on the greenhouse effect. Representatives from nineteen Pacific Island governments plus Austra-

lia, New Zealand, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom were scheduled to meet with scientists from universities in the Pacific and the United States to discuss the impact of climatic changes and sea-level rises in the Pacific and to consider assistance that may be needed by atoll populations in particular.

Primary Health Care Efforts

In reviewing health services, we return to consideration of the high population growth rate with the expectation of sixty thousand Marshallese by the year 2000. In early 1986 the new minister of health services, Tony DeBrum, said the basis of his administration would be promotion of preventive health care, to keep people healthy so they do not have to go to a hospital. A task force was named to assess the situation and to make recommendations. Apart from the growing population problem, the Marshallese were experiencing a high infant mortality rate from malnutrition and infections, a high suicide rate among young men, a high incidence of communicable diseases, especially those transmitted sexually among youth, and an alarming degree of diabetes, cancer, and heart problems among the elderly. The task force recommended greater attention to health education, to immunization outreach programs, to maternal and child health, to family planning, including the Youth-to-Youth in Health volunteer corps, to mental health and counseling of youth with suicidal thoughts, to sanitation and a clean water supply, and to improvement of the outer-islands dispensary system to encourage more community-based health care efforts. The key word is now "self-reliance" as applied in community programs of preventive or primary health care (Republic of the Marshall Islands 1988a).

The ministry is still concerned with curative health services. In May 1986 a new $8-million medical facility was opened in Majuro to replace the old Armer Ishoda Hospital. The US-based Mercy International Health Services organization was contracted to administer the well-equipped eighty-one-bed facility. Improvements were planned in existing services, in more staff training, in more efficient procurement of medical supplies, and in more effective management of both out-patient and in-patient care. Another hospital is operating on Ebeye, and sixty-one dispensaries on the outer islands provide out-patient care, with referrals to the Majuro hospital as needed.

In 1984 the Marimed Foundation, a private American endeavor committed to the betterment of Marshallese health, proposed to build and equip a three-masted, shallow-draft medical ship, the *Tole Mour* (Gift

of Life and Health), to be subsidized by the republic's Health Services Ministry and staffed with medical volunteers from the United States. Working as an integral part of the islands' health system, it would visit the outer islands on a regular basis and train Marshallese medical personnel. The *Tole Mour* was built in Seattle, dedicated there and in Honolulu in 1988, and sailed across the Pacific to begin work in the Marshalls at the end of the year.

Reflecting about the Future

What about the future? No one from outside the Marshalls should presume to instruct the islanders about what is best for them, and I will not do so. Nevertheless, in my conversations with them during my two visits to the Marshalls in 1988, they identified options and courses of action they might follow to make the decisions for which they alone are responsible. They readily acknowledged the acute dependency on outside financial aid that they have accepted. As one man put it, they are like shoppers in a supermarket, taking goods from the shelves impulsively without regard to need or to cost. They live in the present, not in the future. Whatever will be, will be. Worry later about the consequences. These statements sum up the attitude of most individuals, I suspect, as well as that of those in authority. The government planners have laid out a programmatic course for the republic for the next five years, as required under the compact. At first draft, this was merely a "wish-list," a Christmas shopping agenda, which later had to be rephased to take into account the realities of limited revenues available to the republic.

Who are the Marshallese today? How do they view themselves as a people, culturally and ethnically? How do they wish to be seen by others in the Pacific and in the world beyond? The republic's foreign relations program since independence in 1986 has been ambitious and remarkably successful in negotiation of diplomatic ties and trade agreements with other Pacific Island states (Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, the FSM, New Zealand, Australia, and Papua New Guinea) and elsewhere in the world (Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Israel, and several regional and international organizations). Ambassadors have been formally installed in Fiji and in Washington.

But what about the internal, domestic, or cultural self-image that the Marshallese people seek for themselves today? My Marshallese correspondents talked to me about goals of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The government of the republic cites these goals as paramount, but

many citizens are doubtful about its commitment as they watch its efforts to develop more revenues from external sources, both public and private, I was told repeatedly that the government must work more closely with the people, accepting input from the middle and bottom rungs of society as well as from the top. Each constituency in the islands has distinct and complementary contributions to make toward achieving national goals and aspirations. One respondent labeled this approach "multi-party planning," a process that acknowledges more public participation.

More emphasis was suggested on positive thinking and reflection on the quality of life. Is there really a choice for the future? What are the options--a return to traditional custom, uncritical acceptance of the Western mode of living, or some blend of the best of both? But what does "best" mean? What criteria do Marshallese rely on today to decide this fateful dilemma?

As explained to me, discussion is vitally needed among public and private groups alike. Questions have to be asked about what is desirable in the quality of life decades hence. Exploration of existing problems is called for to define the critical issues and to examine possible solutions. The people themselves have to come up with the answers to questions as they conceive them. This means workshops, seminars, and public gatherings of people from all avenues of Marshallese life. This means the vocal expression of ideas and attitudes from local government councils, from women's and youth organizations, from the elders in each community, from church congregations, from school administrators and teachers, from the Chamber of Commerce that represents island business interests, from the traditional leaders, as well as from the Nitijela and the Cabinet, This means realistic involvement in planning economic and social programs from the very start, so that these are the people's programs and not something imposed on them from above or from outside.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that there is no possibility of turning back to the old Marshallese way of life. That is now a matter of history. Too much has changed during the last century or more, since foreigners came to the Marshalls and began to introduce new customs --trade, Christianity, colonial impositions, and a depth of dependency on outside help since World War II that seems irreversible. However, President Kabua supports a Marshallese self-image based on old cultural forms, and has encouraged the Alele Museum in Majuro to expand its programs of cultural awareness of the islands' past. A language commission has been appointed to encourage the teaching of Marshallese in

the schools and to conduct research on the vocabulary and grammar of the native vernacular so that it will not die out in the next generation. A weekly television show relates stories and legends from the past and instructs the viewing audience in the songs and dances of Marshallese tradition that are unique in the Pacific, as evidenced in August 1988 at the South Pacific Arts Festival held in Townsville, Australia. Annually, the museum sponsors a folk arts festival in Majuro to acquaint the urban community with traditional arts, craftwork, and healing practices. Oral history is tape-recorded for the museum archives and historical landmarks are being identified for preservation.

At the other end of the spectrum of community-oriented attempts to get a better grasp of what the future holds is the Youth-to-Youth in Health program, a family-planning venture in which young men and women are invited to volunteer their time and energy in creative efforts in the arts, writing stories and plays for public showing on television. In the process, during weekly sessions, they learn more about themselves as individuals, about the talents they possess that only need development, about the importance of self and service to the community, and about the value of a positive approach to modern life. It is the youth of the Marshall Islands who in the end will determine the future course of fulfillment for a people who have experienced such rapid change in only a few decades.

NOTE

The names of certain Micronesian groups--Ponape, Kusaie, and Palau--have been employed consistently in older atlases and historical writings. Recently, owing to local preferences, Ponape has been replaced with Pohnpei, Kusaie with Kosrae, and Palau with Belau. I have adopted the newer terms when used in a cultural/linguistic sense, or in a political reference after the change was officially made to Pohnpei and Kosrae. Either Palau or Belau is acceptable in contemporary political usage. The older terms are used where legally appropriate in the political history of the region.

Considering the rapid rate of change in contemporary Micronesia, I should note that final revision of this paper was completed in June 1989, and no attempt has been made to update the material since then.

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