Demanding Independence
on Behalf of Others

The Trusteeship Council and the Trust Territory
of New Guinea

In moving from discussions of the Lutheran Mission and colonial administration in the Territory of New Guinea in part 1 of this book to discussions of the UN Trusteeship Council and the bureaucratic attempts to decolonize the Territory of New Guinea, I am making a claim for a communicative perspective as an organizing frame for analysis. Local people sometimes confused the Trusteeship Council's visiting missions (biannual territory inspection trips) with Christian missions, to the chagrin of the UN delegates, but in most respects there was little overlap. The connecting link is the way in which the modernist imaginary of circulatory primitivity continued to be the overarching context through which the Territory of New Guinea was seen and dealt with. In this first chapter of part 2, I lay out the particular institutional and historical context of the Trusteeship Council and the communicative networks that it was trying to create between New York, Australia, and the Territory of New Guinea.

MAKING DEMANDS FOR DECOLONIZATION

Nationalist independence projects were difficult enough when centered on the complex ties between colonizer and colonized, but the postwar decolonization era saw a number of even more complicated demands for independence, mediated by the various groups of anticolonial nations that formed in the 1950s. In these contexts, third parties—whether parts of the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement, or other anticolonial formations—in essence made demands for independence on behalf of other colonized peoples. Using versions of the historicism that had been broadly foundational to the colonial project (Chakrabarty 2000, 2010), the nations that had decolonized early assumed that their brothers and sisters across

the colonized world would be repeating their experiences soon enough and tried to help that historical progression along. They found it necessary to triangulate multiple entities in a complex voicing structure in which more vanguardist groups could enunciate demands for independence that may or may not have been on the lips of colonized peoples in a given territory.

If colonialism is defined partly by the colonizer's sedimentation of ethnic or linguistic differences into communities to govern ("you are a people"), then narratives of nationalism assume that there is a performative event of self-enunciation in the demand for sovereignty ("we [are] the people") (Lee 1995). From within that framework, to demand sovereignty for others ("they are a people"), who themselves may not be making that request, seems to sit uncomfortably between those two more recognizable forms. In this part of the book, I examine the bureaucratic moments when an organ of the UN that was then being driven by a coalition of anticolonial nations made demands on Australia to decolonize the Trust Territory of New Guinea. This was a complex speech event in which a part of the UN claimed to be speaking for Papua New Guinean peoples: not *we the people demand independence*, but *we the UN demand independence on behalf of these people.*

Although Papua New Guineans were, in fact, demanding that Australia change its colonial policies at the time, in many cases their demands would have looked like requests for more, not less, colonial involvement: more educational facilities, more health services, more opportunities to participate in the cash economy. Alternatively, they were making demands for equality and autonomy that were illegible as political demands to the delegations at the UN, who instead glossed these movements as quasi-religious "cargo cults" (see Worsley 1957, Burridge 1995 [1960], Jebens 2004, Schwartz and French Smith 2021). But the fact that the UN delegations recognized relatively little evidence of local Papua New Guinean demands was not a deterrent to their efforts. If anything, it spurred further denunciation of Australia's colonial rule, since the anticolonial bloc assumed that every group wanted to be self-sovereign and that a lack of such demands could only be caused by repression or bad administration. In this ritual moment in which factions of the UN Trusteeship Council attempted to voice a demand for independence on behalf of the Trust Territory of New Guinea, we see contests over the framing of the demand itself and the ability of the various participants to be seen as part of the same political here-and-now. The anticolonial delegations of the UN had to claim that Papua New Guinean peoples were already full participants capable of sovereignty while also claiming that the UN had the legitimate capacity to author Papua New Guinea's demands in the absence of anything that UN delegates could themselves see as a demand.

Just as the canonical narratives of nationalism have emphasized these performative demands as moments of national self-making, canonical narratives of nationalism have also focused heavily on the mass media as network formations that promote nationalist identities and circulate demands for sovereignty. Anderson's

(1991) influential discussion of the role of realist reportage in newspapers and novels has been widely debated and discussed for several decades. Others have since argued that radio, television, film, and the internet likewise cultivate their own national imaginaries (Hayes 2000, Williams 2002, Whitaker 2004, Kunreuther 2014). Yet the call to national sovereignty documented in this and the following chapters happened through a set of narrowcast rather than broadcast channels, in the form of bureaucratic information flows from New York to Canberra to Port Moresby and back again. Indeed, the demand for independence itself was largely phrased as a bureaucratic demand for information: what target date was Australia planning on for the independence of Papua New Guinea?

In making this argument, I add to a growing literature that is rethinking the centrality of the nation-state form in the decolonization era. At the broadest level, some scholars argue that indigenous communities have engaged in decolonial projects outside of the nation-state across the history of the colonial experience (for a discussion of the Pacific context, see Banivanua Mar 2016). In terms of the twentieth-century history of decolonization itself, Kelly and Kaplan (2001) argued, contra Anderson, that the nation-state became the assumed form only after World War II. And as other authors have recently discussed, even the early years of the postwar decolonization movement did not necessarily assume national territorial sovereignty in the nation-state form as the ultimate aim.

In some cases, demands for an end to colonization were demands not for independence, but rather for greater integration with the metropole, as when leaders in francophone Africa and the Caribbean demanded to be incorporated into a greater France (Cooper 2012). In other cases, more relevant to the discussion here, some hoped to create self-determination through a coalition of the decolonized in which territorial sovereignty was important largely as a precursor to creating this broader formation, rather than as an end in itself. Adom Getachew (2019), for example, outlines some of the attempts made by a transatlantic coalition to create a countervailing group that could stand against the European empires. Some of this was supposed to happen through UN organs, the Non-Aligned Movement, or groups similar to them. Even though these and similar plans had largely been undone by the 1970s, Getachew and others (e.g., Wilder 2009) are hoping to recover some of these forgotten futures of the early decolonization movement as a way to think outside the sometimes failed promises and confines of the nation-state form. My goal here is to further expand on the sense of the communicative networks through which decolonization demands were made, focusing especially on networks that existed outside of, or in addition to, those linking only colonizer and colonized.

The first part of this book covered a more canonical topic in the anthropology of the Pacific and the anthropology of colonialism. We have well-established ways of thinking about the role of Christian missions in projects of both evangelism and colonial subject formation. But, with a few important exceptions (Downs

1980, Riles 2000, Denoon 2012), the UN and in particular the Trusteeship Council have not been front and center in the anthropology of the Pacific. This is partly due to the limited role of the Trusteeship Council. Probably one of the council's most consequential decisions was when it urged the World Bank to produce a report on Papua New Guinea in 1965 that then shaped postcolonial economic priorities (though in many cases by outlining goals and programs that Australia decided to work in opposition to). Outside of the World Bank report, the council's strongest effects may have been due to Australia's concern about its global standing, which it measured through the ways in which it related to the council and its other members, especially the United Kingdom and the United States. Was Australia being treated as an equal partner to these larger global powers? Was the Trusteeship Council trying to embarrass Australia?

White Australian residents of colonial Papua New Guinea associated the Trusteeship Council with a sense of scolding paternalism. For example, when a movie theater was discovered to be offering race-segregated screenings, its owner was mockingly warned that "you better watch out or we'll tell on you to the UN" (Craig Volker, personal communication). As I discuss elsewhere (Handman 2024), the Australian national press followed the recommendations and pronouncements of the UN about Australia's rule in Papua New Guinea with great interest, often taking umbrage at what the media class saw as illegitimate interference in sovereign Australian issues. Conservative 1950s anticommunist sentiment in Australia made many suspicious of the UN as a puppet of the Soviet Union. Minimally, it was a left-leaning institution demanding an unrealistic political idealism.

As the extensive amount of material in the National Archives of Australia attests, politicians and civil servants in the Department of Territories and the Department of External Affairs spent an incredible amount of time and energy managing the relationship with the Trusteeship Council. Although it may not have produced many changes in the day-to-day administration of more rural locales, where anthropologists have tended to do most of their research on Papua New Guinea, the Trusteeship Council was responsible for hurrying Australia toward a number of consequential decisions regarding the educational system, local government, and ultimately the timing of independence itself.

MANDATES, TERRITORIES, AND TRUSTS

The Trusteeship Council was one of the original main bodies of the UN (figure 6). Its purpose, composition, and responsibilities are laid out in Chapter XIII of the UN Charter. In contrast to the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat (all of which were also brought into being by the charter), it is the only main organ of the UN whose work has wrapped up. As of 1994, the Trusteeship Council is no longer in regular operation.[1]

FIGURE 6. The UN Trusteeship Council chambers on June 18, 1954, as delegates are about to begin the annual review of the Territory of New Guinea. Beside the window is an exhibit of maps and photographs from the territory. (UN Photo/MB, UN7662270)

The council had oversight of territories that had been placed under the international trusteeship system, also established by the UN Charter (Chapter XII). According to the charter, trust territories in the international trusteeship system were supposed to come from three sources: (1) territories that had formerly been League of Nations mandated territories; (2) territories detached from enemy states as part of World War II; (3) and territories voluntarily placed under the trusteeship system by states responsible for their administration. Most of the eleven trust territories were former mandated territories; only Italian Somaliland became a trust territory through the second route. No trust territories emerged through the third route—colonial powers were unwilling to voluntarily place any of their possessions under trusteeship.

The Trusteeship Council was composed of several categories of member states of the UN. Each state that acted as an administering authority for a trust territory had a seat on the council. Throughout the 1950s, there were seven administering authorities: the United Kingdom (administering Tanganyika, the British Cameroons, and British Togoland), France (administering the French Cameroons and French Togoland), Belgium (administering Ruanda-Urundi), the United States (administering the Pacific Trust Territory), Australia (administering New Guinea

and Nauru), New Zealand (administering Western Samoa), and Italy (administering Italian Somaliland). In addition to the seven administering authorities, any permanent members of the UN Security Council that were not administering authorities (i.e., the Soviet Union and [nationalist] China) were given permanent seats on the Trusteeship Council. Finally, as many other member states would be elected to three-year terms on the council as were necessary to have an equal number of administering and non-administering states on the council. During the period discussed here, there were always seven administering powers and seven non-administering powers.

The trusteeship system had several important differences with the League of Nations mandate system that it replaced. The first difference had to do with the horizon of possibility for each mandated territory. Mandated territories had been divided into three classes: A, B, and C. The A mandates, former territories of the Ottoman Empire, all gained independence between 1919 and 1948, eventually becoming Palestine/Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. The B mandates consisted of most of Germany's African territories, which were assumed to be on a slow but progressive track toward eventual independence: Ruanda-Urundi, Togoland, Tanganyika, and the Cameroons. The C mandates were former German and Japanese territories in the Pacific as well as one in Africa: New Guinea, Western Samoa, Nauru, the South Pacific Mandate, and Southwest Africa. These C mandates were considered so backwards that it was not possible to think in practical terms of independence happening in the foreseeable future. Within a few years of the UN's founding, all class A mandates were independent. The trust territories were the class B and C mandates, with the exception of Southwest Africa (now Namibia), a class C mandate that South Africa refused to place in the trusteeship system.

In contrast to the mandate system's three tiers based on the territory's level of "advancement," the trusteeship system gave all trust territories the goal of self-government or independence. As such, the trusteeship system seemed to be oriented toward decolonization from the beginning. In fact, ten of the eleven trust territories were independent by 1975, only thirty years after the founding of the trusteeship system (Louis 1978: 116). It was an unexpectedly rapid process, with the result that one of the main UN bodies was considered entirely obsolete not long after it was first established.

Although the UN is now most associated with its "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and with the advancement of decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century, scholars have argued that this outcome was in many ways a surprise to the architects of the UN system (Louis 1978, Mazower 2009):

> Indeed, many left the founding conference at San Francisco in 1945 believing that the world body they were being asked to sign up to was shot through with hypocrisy. They saw its universalizing rhetoric of freedom and rights as all too partial—a veil masking the consolidation of a great power directorate that was not as different from Axis powers, in its imperious attitude to how the world's weak and poor should be governed, as it should have been. (Mazower 2009: 7)

However, the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955 resulted in the Non-Aligned Movement a few years later and helped develop a visible anticolonial voting bloc led by India, Indonesia, and Egypt. These new anticolonial nations became a significant force in UN deliberations.

So while decolonization was written into the trusteeship system as the universal end-point for all territories, the speed of decolonization was unexpected. The administering authorities of trust territories were caught off guard by the way that the Trusteeship Council became an organ of decolonization, beginning in the mid-1950s and continuing through the rest of its active existence. Most of the architects of the trusteeship system assumed that it would be in operation for seventy-five to one hundred years or much longer (Louis 1978). As I will discuss further here and in the following chapters, the US played an important part in speeding up this timeline within the Trusteeship Council when it started to occasionally vote with the non-administering delegations in 1956. This allowed the non-administering authorities to pass resolutions with more forceful demands that the administering authorities quicken the pace toward self-determination in the trust territories. This was a radical shift from the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission, which had been staffed by former colonial administrators who saw things from the perspective of the colonial powers.

Not only was the Trusteeship Council organized in a way to give equal voice to administering and non-administering delegations, but it was also given additional powers in the form of bureaucratic oversight of the administering authorities. The new, postwar international order was going to be maintained with paperwork. In addition to asking for annual reports as the mandates commission had, the Trusteeship Council oversaw the trust territories through their management of three other forms of upward and downward information flows. First, a subset of delegates would be chosen to go on biannual or triannual visiting missions to each of the trust territories. During these fact-finding visits, the administering authority would try, through a guided tour of the territory, to stage-manage a presentation of its efforts toward political, economic, social, and educational development, invoking the primary categories of trust territory oversight. Second, subjects living in the trust territories could petition the council to demand actions or to seek redress of grievances. This could happen during the visiting missions, usually in large, often outdoor meetings in which local communities gathered to speak to and hear speeches from the members of the visiting missions. But subject peoples could also mail petitions to the council or even, on occasion, formally address it in person in New York. Third, the council could vote on resolutions that made recommendations to the administering authorities about future governance plans based on the annual reports, visiting mission reports, and petitions. Those recommendations were required to be addressed in subsequent annual reports prepared by the administering authorities, and checked on during the next visiting missions. Each of these three forms of information collection and distribution spawned other kinds of documents and flows. Files in the Australian archives, for example, show

that the Department of Territories created a standardized form for responding to Trusteeship Council recommendations.[2]

One of the most important features of all of this bureaucracy was that the council could make demands on administering authorities' future actions in addition to commenting on past actions. This orientation toward the future—with self-government the imagined telos, even if that was originally considered a century into the future, rather than just a few decades away—was the primary difference from the mandate system. It was the engine for the bureaucratic system of information flow embodied in the annual reports, the visiting mission reports, the petitions, and the recommendations themselves.

One of the most significant pieces of information that the Trusteeship Council tried to elicit from each of the administering authorities was the target date for the attainment of independence. The non-administering authorities had frequently tried to demand target dates for the attainment of independence throughout the history of the council, and those demands increased throughout the 1950s. The 1955 Bandung Conference, led by India and Indonesia, was an important event for organizing a broader anticolonial coalition of recently decolonized nations. It was a precursor to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in the early 1960s, in which India, Indonesia, and Egypt took leading roles in trying to end colonial rule around the world while also offering a nonaligned way out of the bipolar Cold War political order defined by the opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2010: 53ff.) has discussed, the Bandung conversations included what he calls a "pedagogical" project. The Bandung leaders wanted to end the oppression and inequality of colonialism while at times also holding on to a sense of themselves as "more advanced" countries within the anticolonial project (see also Pham and Shilliam 2016, Lee 2010). They would lead the "less advanced" colonized peoples into the anticolonial future. Representatives of these delegations saw themselves as providing the political model that other colonized territories needed to emulate, in some ways putting those other colonies into a developmentalist "waiting room of history" while working toward decolonization.

Demanding target dates for independence was part of this project. When the non-administering delegations tried to include target-date recommendations in these reports, these were either final target dates (when sovereignty would be transferred to the local people in a territory) or intermediate target dates (when particular benchmarks would be reached in the areas of political, economic, social, or educational development). The most contentious of the intermediate target dates were those for political development, since these were inevitably dates for establishing whatever would be the precursor to an independent or at least self-governing territory. That is, intermediate target dates for political development were seen as being only a small step away from final target dates for independence (this, at least, was how Australian civil servants viewed the matter from Canberra).

In 1956, the US started to vote with the non-administering authorities on the issue of intermediate target dates (I discuss this policy shift in more detail in a later section). After debating the 1956 visiting mission's report on its visit to the Territory of New Guinea, the council voted to include in its recommendations a greater emphasis on target dates. Set apart from the rest of the report in its own section— "VI. establishment of intermediate target dates and the final time-limits for the attainment of self-government or independence"—and then set apart again with paragraphs printed in italics was the specific performative ritual demand: to ask on behalf of the people of Papua New Guinea for information about when, exactly, Australia planned to hand over control. After noting that Australia ("the Administering Authority") has "on occasions planned regional and territorial development with tentative target dates," the council

> commends to the Administering Authority for its consideration the opinion that a more precise statement of the steps and manner in which self-government or independence is to be achieved, and the drawing up of successive targets for political, economic, social, and educational plans and programmes, would give the Trust Territory a stronger sense of purpose and direction in achieving its final goal and would tend to induce in the inhabitants a greater understanding of their future which would enable the Territory to move ahead as rapidly as possible.
>
> The Council accordingly recommends to the Administering Authority that it indicate such successive intermediate targets and dates in the political, economic, social, and educational fields as will create the pre-conditions for the attainment of self-government or independence.[3]

The next paragraph "invites" Australia, in its next annual report, "to inform the Council of the results of its consideration of these recommendations." With these explicit primary performative verbs of speaking—*commending, recommending, inviting*—the council establishes a framework in which it has the authority and capacity to do such things, implicitly in the name of the rights of man, and particularly in the name of the people of the Trust Territory of New Guinea, who may need help forming "a greater understanding of their future."

The 1956 visiting mission, which had happened earlier in the year, had tried to hear the voices of the people of the Trust Territory of New Guinea. The delegates held many meetings during which they hoped that local people would voice demands for autonomy, greater control of local-level government, or even something like a plebiscite. But what the visiting mission delegates heard instead were demands for more hospitals, schools, and roads—that is, more intervention by Australia rather than less. Papua New Guineans attempted to elicit a moral relationship with Australia through soliciting greater interaction with the administration (see Stasch 2015). During the visiting mission of 1953, the delegates had received a petition about participation in local government, but it was a petition from one community to have the right to *refuse* to participate in local self-governance (as I discuss in chapter 5). In some places away from the more heavily colonized

islands and coasts, communities that had only recently come into regular contact with the Australian administration did not take speaking roles in these meetings that the visiting mission had set up to allow indigenous voices to be heard. They participated instead by putting on elaborate welcoming dances of reception, highly political events by which they hoped to initiate connections and exchanges for the local people, but ones that were somewhat indecipherable for the UN delegates.[4]

And yet, what seemed to be the relative silence of Papua New Guinean subjects did not get in the way of the Trusteeship Council inviting Australia to name target dates for independence. In the absence of the kinds of "we the people" ritual demands that the visiting missions were expecting to find, the council's representatives in New York put together their own bureaucratic demands on behalf of the people of the Trust Territory of New Guinea. Indeed, one of the major topics of debate in council meetings throughout the 1950s was trying to decide what they would call the people of the territory, whom they were trying to baptize, so to speak, into a national consciousness.

At times, the lack of a demand for independence from the people of the Territory of New Guinea was considered a benefit by some of the more engaged members of the anticolonial bloc. The delegate from India, Rikhi Jaipal, spoke at length in the discussions of the 1956 visiting mission report on this topic. While criticizing Australia's administration, he also argued that the lack of Australian colonial "progress" was an opportunity for unprecedented transformation. The people of the Trust Territory of New Guinea "will have no history of colonial domination or exploitation; they will have no legacy of colonial strife or bitterness; there will not be the apathy born of political frustration. Their freedom is assured and held in reserve by the international community."[5]

Jaipal was perhaps implicitly contrasting his own country's experiences with those of the Territory of New Guinea in making these very optimistic statements about the opportunity provided by what seemed to him a colonial blank slate. He reiterated the visiting mission's report that the current enthusiasm for state services and greater engagement "runs the risk of drying up if development is not sufficiently rapid" and that "if the present high hopes of the people are seriously disappointed conditions may change radically."[6] In other words, people might not be making demands now, but if Australia does not obey the recommendations for target dates, there will be demands soon enough. In the gap between 1956 and whatever time it might take for the people of the territory to experience that frustration, the Trusteeship Council—or at least the non-administering delegations of the council—would voice the demands for independence that would be coming soon enough anyway. The historicism that places the Global South in the "waiting room of history" is here used by a strongly anticolonial delegate from one of the first nations to decolonize in order to usher on that history of growing sovereignty for a different colony.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the UN approved a suite of statements and declarations that enshrined in global bureaucratic consciousness a particular image of

humanity. The "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948), the "Statement on Race" (1950), and the "Statement on Vernacular Education" (1955) each argued for a vision of the human that has a natural inclination for self-determination, a mental plasticity, and a perfectly adequate vernacular language in which to govern and learn. Even as the UN became the central institution pushing for rapid decolonization of the world, the UN documents did not seem to acknowledge the massive transformation in local communities that this would involve (see Steffek 2021: 137ff). This was especially true for the Trusteeship Council, which vacillated between recognizing the wholesale transformation of the political world that decolonization would engender and denying that very much needed to be done to transform colonized peoples into self-governing peoples.

Because the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" assumed that all peoples wanted self-determination, any reticence about it could only come from one of two sources. First, reticence about self-determination could be due to selected cultural practices that needed to be pruned in order to let the desire for freedom shine brighter. Trusteeship Council debates about specific forms of oppression—for example, of women—worked off the assumption that if a certain practice could be eradicated, then the realization of the need for self-determination would spread further. Second, reticence about self-determination could come from ignorance (especially the kind of ignorance fostered by colonialism). If people could be introduced to the principles of self-determination, of course they would want to enact them.

When it came to the Trust Territory of New Guinea, the council's debates centered mostly on the second issue: how could the people of the territory learn about the principles of self-determination and freedom that had been kept from them? The council often assumed that it was not Australia, in particular, that had kept this good news from the people, but rather the conditions of the Territory of New Guinea itself. With so many people closed in, shielded from contacts with others by the geographic and linguistic conditions, freedom in the territory would be achieved by overcoming these communicative issues. In that sense, the focus of much Trusteeship Council work on the territory emphasized the flow of information into it. The faster and easier information could flow, the faster and easier decolonization could be enacted.

The emphasis on the speed of decolonization was formalized in 1960 with the UN General Assembly's Resolution 1514 (XV), "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." The resolution, which begins with the assertion that all dependent peoples yearn for freedom, invalidates any rationale for continued colonial dependence: "Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence." This perspective had clearly been present in the Trusteeship Council's debates in the 1950s, although it did not then have the official backing of the entire General Assembly. Indeed, Australian diplomats had spent much of the decade coming to terms with the fact that, as one Department of External Affairs

memo put it, "criteria other than that of speed of development are no longer worthy of serious consideration" for the non-administering authorities, and perhaps even for the Trusteeship Council Secretariat.[7]

LONG-RANGE PLANS AND OTHER DEMANDS FOR INFORMATION

The UN's power was always limited. With few mechanisms for punitive action, much of its power came from the idea that member states would want to avoid censure from the newly created "family of nations." The UN tried to put pressure on delegations in the Trusteeship Council, and Australia in turn tried to deflect that pressure, mainly through management of information. The council tried to elicit certain forms of information from Australia, just as Australia tried to provide only the information that it thought would help maintain the sense of its moral standing as administrator of Papua New Guinea. Across many of the remaining sections of this book, I am looking at how these relationships were negotiated through information flows: how those pushing for rapid decolonization and those pushing for continued colonization fought this battle through the circulation of forms, reports, and petitions.

The most significant piece of information the Trusteeship Council tried to elicit from each of the administering authorities was the target date for the attainment of independence. As mentioned above, the eighteenth session of the council, which met during July and August 1956, was an important one because it was at this point that Australia really had to contend with the fact that control of the council had shifted into the hands of the non-administering authorities due to the US policy shift. A general sense of Australian frustration with the idea that the UN would have the capacity to make demands on the administering authorities is especially clear in a marginal comment on a cable from the Australian delegation to the UN. The cable notes that the French government proposed to carry out a "prescribed popular consultation [i.e., a referendum] in French Togoland under UN supervision" in October 1956 and asked that the UN appoint observers to supervise the vote. A reader of the cable at the Department of External Affairs has underlined the word *prescribed* and written next to this paragraph in rather nondiplomatic terms, "This stinks!"[8] Clearly, the Trusteeship Council's emerging power to prescribe, supervise, and otherwise demand information and action was upsetting the members of the Department of External Affairs, as well as many other civil servants and politicians involved in the administration of the Trust Territory of New Guinea. From the perspective of these men, much of this situation was due to one person in the US delegation.

For most of the 1950s, the US representative to the Trusteeship Council was a man named Mason Sears, who had his first major effect on the council when he chaired the 1954 visiting mission to the trust territories of Africa. In memos and

reports written after that visiting mission, Sears devoted himself to advocating an advanced schedule to move the African territories much more quickly toward independence. While this was starting to become the US policy position with respect to much of the colonized world, he pushed for it with a religious zeal. In a memoir of his time on the council—a self-congratulatory account with the grandiose title *Years of High Purpose*—Sears (1980) depicts himself as the leader of a crusade for a dramatic and novel approach to independence timetables that shook up the fusty world of Trusteeship Council diplomacy.

It's clear from diplomatic cables sent between New York and Canberra that Sears had a bull-in-a-china-shop attitude toward UN diplomacy and especially toward the other administering authorities on the council. For a while, Australian diplomats assumed that Sears was a loose cannon, and that all they needed to do to get rid of the target-date issue was have conversations with his bosses at the US State Department. For several weeks in July and August 1956, Australia and the UK sent diplomatic messages to the State Department, shared them secretly with one another, and presented their arguments against target dates as best they could. But they slowly realized that it was not just Sears who was taking a positive position on intermediate target dates, and that the US would no longer vote in line with the UK and Australia on this issue.

In these communications with the UK and Australia, the US diplomats described their position as a relatively moderate one. They were not in support of *final* target dates for complete independence (in contrast to the Soviet Union and some of the other more militant non-administering authorities on the Trusteeship Council), but only *intermediate* target dates for reaching particular benchmarks in political, economic, social, or educational advancement in the various trust territories. In reality, this US policy was largely oriented toward the African rather than the Pacific trust territories, as one part of the Cold War battle for influence on the African continent. Sears even confided to the Australian representative to the UN that target dates were important mostly in places like Tanganyika and Ruanda-Urundi, and that they were just "hocus pocus" for the other territories.[9] But it was hocus pocus that the US practiced and that Sears defended with passion when it came time to vote. A memo that circulated within External Affairs summed up the Australian sense of defeat in the face of the new US position:

> [We consider] the US position as essentially a national policy and not simply as a personal thesis of Mr. Mason Sears and we are in agreement therefore with the Australian Embassy in Washington's views on this point as expressed in their memorandum No. 1298 of 2nd October, 1956. However, while the State Department regards the intermediate target date formula has some practical administrative merit and political advantage, Mr. Sears is inclined to view it as of revolutionary significance. It was for this reason that he encouraged in the Council during the Eighteenth Session the belief that, in adopting the new principle, the United States had departed so far from its basic policy of "assisted evolution" hitherto applied in the Pacific Islands

Trust Territory that that policy should be henceforth regarded as superseded rather than merely modified. In this attitude Mr. Sears would appear to have come dangerously close to adopting the non-administering view, to which we refer in the attached memorandum, that criteria other than that of speed of development are no longer worthy of serious consideration. It might be advantageous if the State Department could be persuaded to concede that at least this aspect of Mr. Sears' thinking is incorrect, for it is from this point that that intermediate target date formula derives much of its emotional support.[10]

The war within the Trusteeship Council was practiced, then, as a set of battles about a quite specific piece of information: would administering authorities give the council dates by which independence, or benchmarks toward independence, would happen? If speed was the only issue, then the most important order of business was setting those benchmarks. Australia felt that this was making a mockery of trusteeship by reducing its object to a particular date. But the non-administering authorities on the council saw the target date as a final element of a larger set of explicit, supervisable plans. The focus on target dates meant that there was a horizon toward which each trust territory was directed.

After debating the 1956 visiting mission's report on its visit to the Trust Territory of New Guinea, and with the US now voting with the non-administering authorities on this issue, the Trusteeship Council specifically included in its recommendations a greater emphasis on target dates. The council strongly recommended that Australia set these target dates and invited the Australian delegation, in its next annual report, "to inform the Council of the results of its consideration of these recommendations."[11] In other words, give the council target dates or explain why you are directly flouting its recommendations. This last recommendation was met with indignation in the Department of Territories and outrage in the Australian press (see Handman 2024).

The Australian UN delegation was more clear-eyed than their fellow civil servants in Canberra in seeing the direction in which the UN was moving (that is, toward the 1960 resolution mentioned above, the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples"). By the beginning of 1957, they were gently trying to suggest ways that people in the Department of Territories could adjust reports to include more specific plans and benchmarks, at least for the less controversial areas of economic, social, and educational advancement. A memo prepared by the Dependent Territories section of External Affairs (whose first page—with the date and identification of author and recipient—is unfortunately missing) recommends that in addition to continuing to oppose target dates, the Department of Territories could also provide more information in their annual reports on the Territory of New Guinea as a way to placate the demands of the UN. That is, they would manage criticism and suspicion on the world stage by managing the upward flow of information, replacing target dates with more information about plans and policies. Under the heading "Suggested Action," the memo

says that "we should, therefore, whilst maintaining our opposition, endeavor (a) to remove the suspicion of our motives held by non-administering powers as a result of our outright opposition to target dates, and (b) to provide maximum information to the Council consistent with the maintenance of our long-term interests." "Maximum information" would consist of "revising the manner of presentation of our annual record of administration" and "enlarging the amount of information in the Annual Report, with more facts, statements of principle and policy, and advice of planning, wherever this is possible, and with explanations where it is not. This would greatly facilitate defence against criticism."[12]

As much as Australia resented the capacity of the Trusteeship Council to precipitate actions within specific trust territories (as the reader in External Affairs noted, "This stinks!"), at least some within their ranks argued that more information sent upward to the council could result in fewer actions taken by the council in the Territory of New Guinea. For most of the people and institutions involved, control of the territory was contested in terms of control over this information. If the council could successfully elicit a target date, they could hurry along the administering authority toward the goal of self-government. If the administering authority could instead mollify the council with elaborate descriptions of plans, then they might be able to fend off a plebiscite or a premature transfer of power.

Specific people in External Affairs or in the Australian delegation to the UN seem to have resigned themselves to a future in which target dates would take a larger and larger share of the debate about the trust territories. But for those in the Department of Territories and the Territory of New Guinea administration itself (that is, the people responsible for producing reports and enacting policy in the territory), it was a much longer road toward the acceptance of target dates or Trusteeship Council intervention more generally. In the next section, I outline some of the main figures and processes featured in the files that I examined regarding Australia's interactions with the council.

FILES AND INFORMATION FLOWS

In the Australian archives, certain civil servants and politicians appear over and over again in the 1950s Trusteeship Council files. These include two men who spent most of their time in New York and appeared frequently before the council. As a member of the Department of External Affairs, William Forsyth was Australia's permanent representative to the UN and had been the Australian delegate on the Trusteeship Council in earlier years. Stationed in New York, Forsyth often sent cables to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra as well as to the Australian Embassy in Washington, DC. Australia's special representative to the Trusteeship Council at this time was J. H. Jones (figure 7), who had worked in the Territory of New Guinea for many years and brought the kind of practical,

FIGURE 7. At left is J. H. Jones during the twelfth session of the UN Trusteeship Council in 1953. Jones was Australia's special representative to the Trusteeship Council throughout the 1950s. Pictured with him at right is A. H. Loomes, a member of Australia's Permanent Delegation to the UN. The other man in the photograph is not identified. (National Archives of Australia, A6513, 9)

grounded knowledge and experience of Papua New Guinea that many in Canberra thought was otherwise totally lacking on the council.

In Canberra, members of the Department of External Affairs coordinated with the Department of Territories, which during the 1950s was led by Paul Hasluck. A Liberal Party member for Curtin in Western Australia, Hasluck was an important architect of Australia's position within the Pacific. He hoped to create a wider sphere of influence for Australia in order to counter the perceived threats from communist nations to the north and west (see Waters 2016).

In Papua New Guinea, the Department of Territories often sent cables back and forth to the Office of the Administrator. For much of the period discussed here, the administrator was Brigadier Donald Cleland, CBE, Australia's top representative for both Papua and New Guinea. Given the different status that Papua had in comparison with the Trust Territory of New Guinea, Cleland had to deal with the UN via two different agencies: the Trusteeship Council for New Guinea, and the Fourth Committee on Non-Self-Governing Territories for Papua. Working from Port Moresby, which was officially part of Papua rather than New Guinea, he often had to contend with protests, especially from Soviet delegations, that the "administrative union" of Papua and New Guinea was harming the Territory of New Guinea. In addition to managing relationships with Hasluck and others in the Department of Territories and with the UN representatives of the two agencies that dealt with New Guinea and Papua, Cleland also organized the flow of information throughout the territories, exchanging messages with the district officers in the different regions of the territory, who would themselves liaise with the patrol officers in the more remote stations.

The usually biannual visiting missions from the Trusteeship Council were coordinated by members of the Department of External Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Territories and the administrator. After their elaborately stage-managed tours of the Trust Territory of New Guinea, the visiting mission delegates would travel to Port Moresby to meet with Cleland and then on to Canberra to meet with Hasluck. Policies about administration were decided in the name of both Cleland and Hasluck, and the visiting mission delegates spoke with them as the policymakers for the territory.

At UN headquarters in New York, the different kinds of documents that were sent to or generated by the Trusteeship Council were debated by delegations from the administering and non-administering authorities. The administering authorities spent months preparing their annual reviews, which had to answer questions posed by Trusteeship Council questionnaires (see chapter 6). Special Representative Jones (or sometimes Forsyth) usually presented the annual report for the Trust Territory of New Guinea, after which he would answer questions from the other delegates. Then a subcommittee of delegates would prepare a report on Australia's report that would include recommendations. The wording of these, and later the recommendations themselves, would be voted on by the council. Similarly, visiting missions would produce a report after each trip to a trust territory, which would then be debated in the council. Again, Jones was usually present to answer questions about the Territory of New Guinea and defend Australia's policy decisions that came up for debate during the presentation of the visiting mission reports about the Territory of New Guinea. The final report of the visiting mission also included recommendations, which would also be voted on by the council. Finally, petitions from residents of the trust territories were admitted into the record and debated. All of the debates regarding these documents were made part of the Trusteeship Council's official record.

In writing this second half of the book, I have relied on documents from these different agencies and departments, using a vast set of records that in themselves testify to the ways in which decolonization happened through the management of information flows. Records from the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Territories, and the administrator are available from the National Archives of Australia and, in some cases, from the National Archives of Papua New Guinea. Each visiting mission produced many massive files: from biographical snapshots of delegates, to itemized bills for charter flights into and out of the trust territory, to detailed debates about the itinerary of the visit, to summary analyses evaluating how the trip went. Annual reports likewise produced archival material that can be measured by the cubic foot, as different departments of the Territory of New Guinea administration tried to organize the enormous amount of statistical and narrative material requested. Finally, there are extensive collections of cables sent among diplomats and politicians in Canberra, New York, Washington, and London, in which broader questions of policy, diplomacy, and administration get discussed in detail. UN documents, including the reports, recommendations, and

verbatim records of debates, are largely available through the online UN archives or at physical UN depository libraries. In addition, draft versions of some documents appear in records from the Department of Territories or Department of External Affairs. These various primary documents formed the basis for my analysis in the next two chapters.

In many of these documents, especially those that focus on how to communicate with the Trusteeship Council, authors of memos and cables speak in the voice of their national delegation: "Australia" has a position, objection, or comment that needs to be transmitted to the council (see Riles 2000). The materials from Cleland as administrator of Papua New Guinea, or from Hasluck as minister for territories, obviously have a more individualized sense of authorship and authority. But these are not documents that tend to offer deep insights into their authors or their contexts of utterance. I sometimes follow the convention of speaking about "Australia's" position on a given topic, even as I recognize that this assumes a coherence of both the state and the position that is not necessarily evident.

CONCLUSION

While there was significant disagreement between the anticolonial non-administering authorities and Australia as the administering authority, both sides shared a number of fundamental perspectives on the Trust Territory of New Guinea, as I will show in the following chapters. First, they agreed that it had to be decolonized in and through English rather than Tok Pisin. Second, they agreed that it was a space in which a kind of circulatory primitivity governed all considerations of its "advancement." But whereas Australia had produced the problem of fragmentation in response to that imaginary of noncirculation, the anticolonial Trusteeship Council delegations tried to stitch those fragments together into a national consciousness through the implementation of a bureaucratic order. As was true of the chapters in part 1, the next two chapters will focus on language and infrastructure together to understand how the Trusteeship Council organized a project of decolonization.