

THE ROLE OF MIKE MANSFIELD IN CONSOLIDATING MONGOLIA'S INTERNATIONAL STATUS AND IN ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

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Today we are gathered in the Mike Mansfield room in the U.S. Capitol not only to celebrate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Mongolia, but also the special contribution Mike Mansfield made towards the establishment of bilateral ties. It seems that Mike's role has been forgotten and under-appreciated, which is why it is very fitting that we take a few moments to review the record.

Michael Joseph Mansfield, who as a member of the Democratic Party represented the state of Montana both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, was the longest-serving Majority Leader in the history of the institution from 1961-1977. Mike rose from humble beginnings to join the U.S. Navy in World War I, the U.S. Army after the war, and then the U.S. Marine Corps for a stint in the early 1920s in the Philippines. He returned to Montana to work in the mines and study for a special college entrance exam since he never attended high school. He went on to get B.A. and M.A. degrees at the University of Montana, where he then taught for ten years as a Professor of Latin American and Far Eastern History. He was elected to the House in 1943, and entered the Senate in 1953. His wartime service and educational background led to a lifelong interest in Asia and civil rights while he was in Congress. After retiring from the Senate, Mike was appointed Ambassador to Japan in April 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. He continued in this position during the Republican Reagan administration until 1988. He is remembered fondly by the Japanese people for his many contributions to strengthening the U.S.-Japanese relationship. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1990 and the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, which is Japan's highest civilian award. Mike died in 2001 at the age of 98 and is buried in Arlington Cemetery.

So what was Mike's special connection to Mongolia? On three different occasions during his long career he made significant, even crucial contributions to the forging of American relations with Mongolia. We must remember that the U.S. Government knew very little about Mongolia in the first half of the 20th Century. Mongolia was sealed off from the outside world and closely allied with the Soviet Union. Vice President Henry Wallace with Mongolist Owen Lattimore had visited the Mongolian capital for three days in 1944. A year later President Franklin D. Roosevelt had agreed at Yalta that a plebiscite over independence from China should be held in what was known as 'Outer Mongolia.' But, after Mongols registered a 100 percent unanimous vote for independence on October 20, 1945, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government in China and the U.S. used a border incident to defer recognition of Mongolia's independence. During this period a young, newly elected representative from Montana, Mike Mansfield, took the floor of the House in July 1945 to call on the U.S. Government to review its China policies and recognize that Mongolia was culturally and politically different from China and thus worthy of being recognized by the United States as independent.

Unfortunately, his words did not sway U.S. policy, but may be the first time a U.S. Congressman publicly advocated the United States reconsider its attitude towards Mongolia.

The second period when Mike Mansfield became involved in U.S. foreign policy vis-a-vis Mongolia was in the early 1960s. Mongolia was struggling for international recognition of its sovereignty through admission to the United Nations. Mongolian recognition was caught up in the ideological struggle over which government should hold the Chinese (PRC or Nationalist ROC) seat in the U.N. Repeated attempts by Mongolia to be admitted into the U.N. during the 1950s had been beaten back by the Nationalist Chinese Government supported by successive American administrations. However, since this was the era of decolonization and recognition of many new nations, there was growing pressure on the U.S. to not use Mongolia's highly dependent relationship on the Soviet Union as an excuse to prevent acknowledgment of its independence and sovereignty.

On April 19, 1960, then assistant Democratic leader, Senator Mansfield said in a Senate speech that the United States should explore the possibility of granting diplomatic recognition to Outer Mongolia and its admission to the United Nations. ("China News Pact Urged," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), April 20, 1960, p. 11)

"We have chosen, apparently, to exclude ourselves from the legitimate and continuing observations which would be possible in Outer Mongolia. If official contact were maintained with that country observations would be extremely helpful in the formulation of effective policies with regard to all of Asia as well as Russia.... Further, we have frowned upon the admission of Outer Mongolia to the United Nations. We apparently have marked it, and perhaps in error, as just another Soviet province. In short, we may well be imprisoning our policies in an unnecessary separation of ourselves from a most valuable source of information and official contact in the heart of Asia, out of inadequate facts, inertia or a fear of derision." (quoted by George B. Cressey, Syracuse, N.Y., Oct. 25, 1960—"Recognizing Mongolia," Oct. 30, 1960, pg. E10) Cressey was author of *How Strong Is Russia?* and *China, Land of the 500 Million*, former President of the International Geographic Union, and Professor of Geography at Syracuse University.)

After his speech, the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. Mikhail Menshikov met with Senator Mansfield to tell him that the Soviet Government in fact would welcome establishment of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the United States. But, this was not the foreign policy position of the Eisenhower administration. Nevertheless, Mansfield's ideas did influence some officials in the State Department for the first time to see recognition as a future possibility.

A year later in May 1961, after Mike had become Democratic Majority Leader in the Senate under the new Kennedy administration, we know that Secretary of State Dean Rusk wrote to President John F. Kennedy to report that the Department had reexamined

the question of Outer Mongolian sovereignty, and that the U.S. was prepared to support and even co-sponsor Mongolia's application for UN membership. Rusk revealed that Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles had discussed this proposed policy change in formal executive sessions with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in secret sessions with Senator Mansfield, Chairman of the Committee, who was highly supportive of the new strategy and confident he could shepherd it through the Senate. (pg. 2, Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, Outer Mongolia. Secret. (Department of State, Central Files, 793C.02/5-2361))

Rusk then authorized Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson in Moscow to make an approach to the Mongolian Ambassador (Sodnomin Lubsan) in Moscow to discuss establishing diplomatic relations. (200 Editorial Note, also see Dept. of State Bulletin, September 4, 1961, pp. 408-409) However, Chiang Kai-shek was very incensed about the proposal and delicate discussions between the ROC and U.S. Governments, which included the participation of Mansfield, ensued over that summer. Finally, the Nationalist Chinese Government agreed to not block Mongolia's U.N. admission, if Kennedy put aside Mongolian recognition and publicly announced the continuation of the U.S. policy of supporting ROC Taiwan's seat in the U.N. The U.S. then told the Mongols in Moscow that we were withdrawing from discussions on diplomatic recognition. On October 25th the United Nations Security Council recommended the admission of Mongolia by a vote of 9-0 with the U.S. abstaining and the ROC not voting. So, although the U.S. still did not have diplomatic ties with Mongolia, at least the nation was given international recognition through its U.N. membership—a step that in no small measure was due to the vision and support of Mike Mansfield.

The third time Mike Mansfield became involved in the question of opening diplomatic relations with Mongolia was the crucial one. In 1985, while he was serving as Ambassador to Japan, the Mongolian Government in Ulaanbaatar sought out the Japanese Ambassador to Mongolia to ask him to be an intermediary and bring a message to Mansfield in Tokyo, whom the Mongols remembered as sympathetic to their nation. The Japanese Ambassador was a good friend of Mike's, so he passed the offer to open negotiations on mutual recognition to him, and the Ambassador passed down responsibility for exploring the issue to the Embassy Political Section. One of the Political Section officers, Donald Keyser, arranged a dinner meeting with a Mongol official from the Mongolian Embassy in Tokyo. However, that meeting from the American point of view did not go well, and Keyser reported back to the Ambassador that he did not view the Mongolian initiative as serious. Mike could have let the matter drop, but he decided it was necessary to make another approach to the Mongols through a more junior American officer working in the Visa Section, an officer who had a strong academic background in Mongolian Studies. That officer was me.

I was asked to reach out again to the Mongol official who had met with Keyser. This Mongolian officer was a young Ravdan Bold, who is now Mongolian Ambassador to the U.S. We two hit it off much better, and we were determined to make this discussion about diplomatic recognition a success. We negotiated in Tokyo for more than 1 year and when our preliminary negotiations were deemed by both capitals to be fruitful, final

discussions moved to New York City to the UN Missions of both nations. Finally, on January 27, 1987, the U.S. and Mongolia formally established diplomatic ties.

Frankly, this would not have been possible if Mike Mansfield had not been a supportive and persistently optimistic Ambassador, who saw the importance of normalizing relations. He could have let the process die in Tokyo, but he did not. I am personally very grateful to Mike for allowing me to seize the opportunity to work with young Mr. Bold in Tokyo. Mike Mansfield's foresight and key decisionmaking over the years led us directly to where the United States and Mongolia stand today—two friendly even neighborly nations, united in mutual respect to promote the common goals of supporting democratic, equitable and transparent free enterprise institutions and defeating the international terrorist threat.

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