THE ISLAND OF FUBAR

Nauru. Welcome to the world's smallest country - a tiny isolated rock in a remote part of the Pacific, right on the Equator, 8.1 square miles with 9,300 people living around its 10-mile circumference. No one lives in the interior and we'll soon find out why. Of all 193 Member States of the United Nations, Nauru is the smallest in population. Only Monaco (less than 1 square mile on the French Riviera) is smaller in area.

I wanted to reach the three most unknown and hidden nations in the South Pacific on this excursion. I found Tuvalu entrancing, and Tarawa in Kiribati repelling - but now I have made it all the way to the bottom of the Pacific's barrel.

I have been to almost all of those 193 UN countries (189 in fact), and I can confirm that Nauru is more FUBAR than any other. Actually, that's an understatement. You all know what the acronym means, and Nauru takes it to a whole new dimension, a higher standard of fubaredness than the rest of the world which is unlikely to be surpassed in our lifetimes if ever.

Better get comfortable in your favorite chair with at least three fingers of your favorite adult beverage at the ready to get through this. You'll find it hard to believe but this is a true story. Kafka himself couldn't have made it up, although he would have relished the irony in how it applies to us. The photos are all mine.

We'll start with what Nauru unbelievably looks like. Note the green strip around the perimeter and the vast gray uninhabited interior.

Nauru is a coral outcrop built up over five million years on top of an ancient volcano summit that eroded to sea level. There's no lagoon, just the solitary island in the middle of a vast ocean. For those five million years, countless nesting birds pooped on the coral depositing millions of tons of guano. Polynesians showed up in their outrigger canoes a couple of thousand years ago to eat the birds, fish, gather coconuts, and make war between the dozen clans they divided the island into.

The Germans claimed the place in the 1880s and put an end to the inter-clan warfare. The Brits stole the island from the Germans after World War I, and began a mining operation of the island's interior containing one of the richest and highest-grade deposits of phosphate in the world.

This came to a halt when the Japanese seized the island during WWII, but resumed after the war. Nauru was now a UN Trust Territory run jointly by the Brits, Aussies, and Kiwis - who were jointly stupid enough to grant Nauru full sovereign independence in 1968.

When the Japanese surrendered the island at the war's end, there were less than 800 Nauruans left alive. By 1968 there were still less than 2,000 - while agricultural production in both Australia and New Zealand had become dependent on Nauru's "superphosphate" for the fertilizer making that production possible.

Yet this tiny number of Nauruans somehow intimidated these huge countries into full sovereign ownership of the island and all phosphate production. Mining the phosphate had been hard labor-intensive work, chipping the solidified guano out of fossilized limestone coral pinnacles. Yearly production in the 50s and 60s was in the thousands of tons.

The new Nauru government wasted no time in creating the government-owned Nauru Phosphate

Company that went full-bore to produce as much phosphate as possible by strip-mining. Soon, Nauru was producing 1-2 *million* tons per year. During the 1970s and 1980s, Nauru was making $100-$200 million a year in phosphate profits, giving Nauruans the world's highest per capita GDP (over $50,000 per person per year, higher than any other country on the planet).

For 30 years, from 1968 to 1998, Nauru produced 43 million tons of phosphate at a cumulative profit of $1.8 billion. Yes, billion - for a few thousand people. And they blew it all.

Everyone had a brand-new car. Nauruans' favorite pastime was driving around the island - which takes about 20 minutes - over and over like a lab mouse running on a circular treadmill, while drinking Pale Blonde Aussie beer and throwing the empty cans out the window.

No one paid any taxes, everything was paid for by the government as Nauru became a total welfare state. Nauruans changed governments like musical chairs so that everyone was on the gravy train.

Nauruans became fully sedentary. Consuming enormous quantities of beer and rice, Nauruans became and still are the most obese people on earth - it is astounding how fat they are - and have the world's highest rate of diabetes (e.g., 53% of Nauruan women over age 55 have diabetes).

During Nauru's go-go days, the police chief bought himself a $200,000 yellow Lamborghini. Off-loaded at the dock all shiny spanking new, the chief was the proudest guy on the island - until he tried to take it for a spin only to discover he was too fat to squeeze into it.

Nauru's circular road was littered with car wrecks crashed by drunks. The politicians in charge of the Nauru Phosphate Trust Fund squandered incredible fortunes on expensive real estate buys they trashed like office buildings in Australia, or hotels on Waikiki in Hawaii and the Grand Pacific in Suva, Fiji, then letting them go kaput. They spent millions on a play, *Leonardo (da Vinci) the Musical*, panned by critics and audiences as one of the worst in history of theatre, and to which the entire cabinet and their families flew to London in their private jet for the disastrous debut.

They insisted on having their own prestige airline, Air Nauru, with five Boeing 737s and two 727s flying routes all over the Pacific at 10-20% capacity. Often, the president or one of his cronies would commandeer a plane ready to fly in order to take his family on a shopping spree in Hong Kong or Tokyo, leaving all the passengers and their luggage stranded on the tarmac. By 1990 Air Nauru was losing $100 million a year. By 1996 it was down to a single 737.

As phosphate production began winding down in the 90s, the politicians began borrowing against the trust fund to bankroll their lifestyle and the Nauru welfare state. General Electric Capital Division lent them $236 million. Phosphate production fell off a cliff in 1998 and was down to almost zero in 2006. GE foreclosed in 2004. Air Nauru ceased operating in 2005 with its one plane seized by creditors.

The state was so bankrupt it couldn't pay its satellite phone bills and lost contact with the world for several months.

Today, Nauru is kept on life support through aid and handouts of various kinds from the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan. Nauruans think the world owes them a living. Very few have any drive or incentive. The population has quintupled since independence as Nauruan women have an average of 4 children - yet parents could care less if their kids go to school. Truancy is rampant, with Aussie teachers here telling me their students have almost no desire to learn anything.

People here are fatter than ever and dying like flies from diabetes, smoking, heart disease and booze. Men die on average at age 56, women a few years later. At least a quarter of Nauruan children are stunted from malnutrition, eating sugar junk food and white rice. Most Nauruans live in destitution. Most of the island looks like Detroit in the Pacific Ocean.

There are no banks here or insurance companies. There is no Nauru currency - the official currency is Australian dollars. Every transaction is cash. Almost all real jobs are done by ex-pats, mostly from Australia, or elsewhere in the Pacific like Tarawa or the Marshall Islands. Almost all businesses and shops, mostly tiny tin shacks, are run by Chinese. Defunct Air Nauru has been restarted with one 737 bought as a gift from Taiwan. It operates as, I kid you not, Our Airline. That's the actual name of Nauru's airline now.

As of 2013, according to the New Zealand government, Nauru's public debt is around $869 million. After wasting or stealing $1.8 billion, not one single Nauru politician has been prosecuted, much less jailed. One reason is because of any 5 Nauruans, 2 are related. They were all in the scam together.

Now let's take a look at the Island of Fubar. Remember I asked you to note the vast gray patch of the island in the picture above? 80% of the island has been rubble-ized by phosphate strip mining, leaving countless stone coral pinnacles.

Nauruans call this area "Topside," and you have to see it to believe it. Pinnacles up to 20 feet high as far as you can see. It's a mind-boggling ecological catastrophe. Topside - 80% of Nauru - is utterly uninhabitable and always will be.

Nauru's beaches exist only at low tide, and are also studded with coral pinnacles. They are natural formations, but make the beaches jeopardous and unswimmable.

That beach front home you see? Here it is close up. Completely trashed, it's not abandoned - people live here. I love the thoughtful touch of old blue jeans as window curtains.

Most Nauruans live in trashed tenement homes. Here's another - note the loving attention paid to front yard landscaping, given that this is a lush, tropical South Seas island:

Trashed office buildings are everywhere also.

There's an idyllic lake called Buada Lagoon...

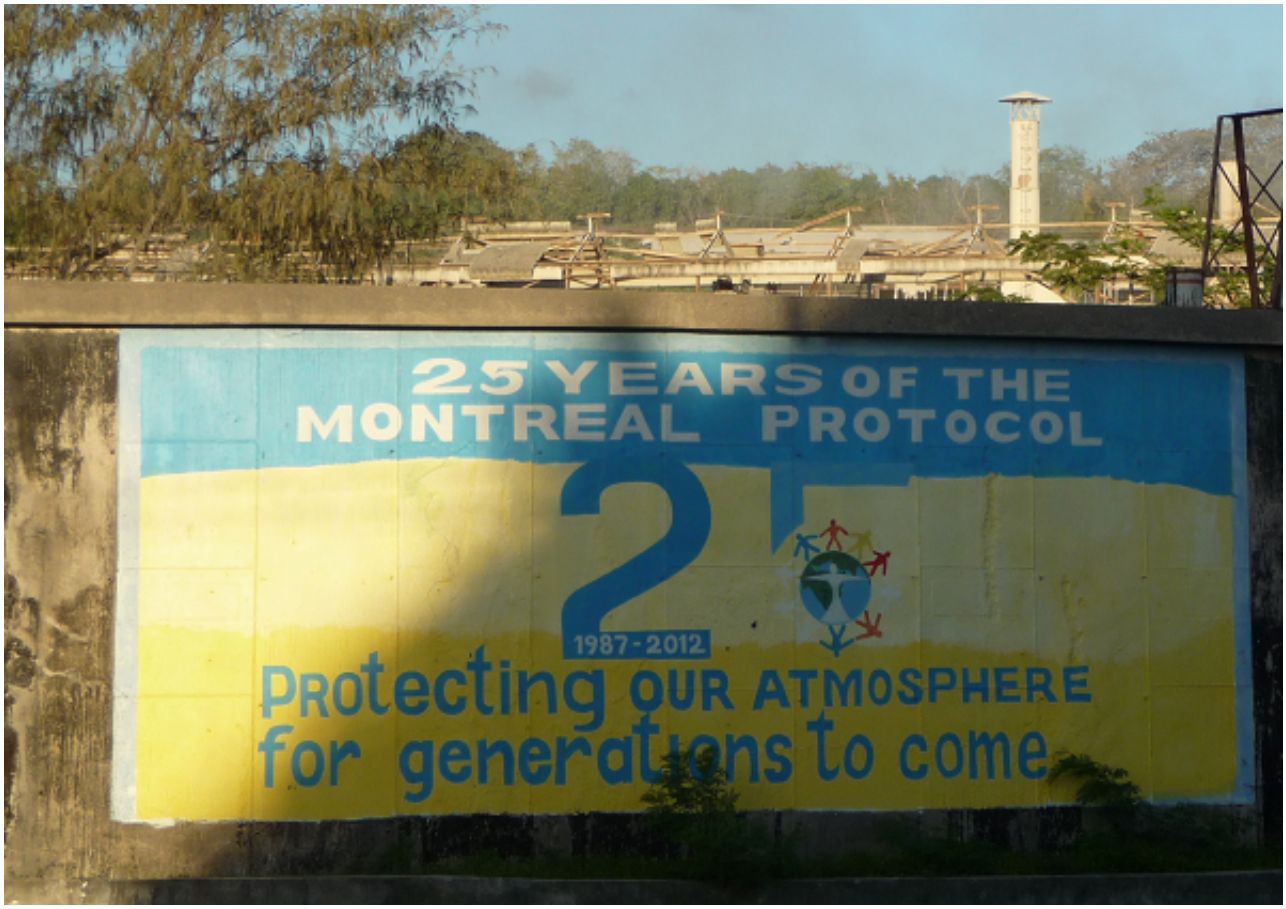
But it's trashed too.

There's also the gigantic wreckage of the abandoned phosphate operation.

Recently, however, it's been revived to extract "secondary" lower-grade phosphate. The enormous processing plant has been reopened.

With the emission of huge clouds of phosphate dust...

That everyone in Nauru's largest community of Aiwo below the plant has to breathe. Adding insult to injury, the government put up this hilarious sign in Aiwo. Note the processing plant behind it.



I'm quite sure by now that you see the irony reeking in all of this, that it has dawned on you that Nauru is what Zero wants to turn America into, that he wants to turn Americans into Nauruans. The latest headlines proclaim it:

90,609,000: Americans Not In Labor Force Climbs To Another Record.

U.S. Spent $3.7 Trillion On Welfare In Last 5 Years.

Census Bureau: Means-Tested Gov't Benefit Recipients Outnumber Full-Time Year-Round Workers.

We were the richest people on earth and now the most indebted, borrowing trillions to maintain our welfare addiction and dependency. It is this addiction and dependency that got Zero elected and reelected. What has destroyed Nauru is what is destroying America - especially when we are governed by a president and a party determined to do so, and have an opposition party too stupid and cowardly to prevent it.

There is no hope for the Nauruans, for they have passed the point of recoverability, of no return. Their state must soon cease to exist, with the island abandoned and its inhabitants scattered elsewhere. (What is going on as an insane attempt to prevent this fate will be discussed next week.)

Is there hope for us? Sure there is. Americans are not Nauruans, no matter how much Zero attempts to "fundamentally transform" them. Just look at the utter FUBAR of Obamacare, the lynchpin of his presidency, for evidence.

There is nothing fubared in America that a President Ted Cruz can't rectify - especially if he's teamed up with a Vice-President Ben Carson, MD.

So ends my odyssey to the Remote Pacific. Soon I head back to America, from a land of no hope to a land where there is still hope, and where we have the opportunity to turn that hope into reality. Cruz-Carson '16!