

Tok Blong SPPF

November 1986 #17



Photo by TAPOL

West Papua: Scene of Genocide

“By way of transmigration, we will try to realise what has been pledged, to integrate all the ethnic groups into one nation . . . the different ethnic groups will in the long run disappear because of integration . . . and there will be one kind of man.”

From a statement by Mr. Martano, Indonesian Minister of Transmigration, March 20, 1985.

TOK BLONG SPPF is pidgin english as used in many parts of the Pacific. It might literally be translated as “this talk belongs to SPPF” or, SPPF Newsletter. TOK BLONG SPPF is published four times per year by the South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada, 407-620 View St., Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 1J6, and is available to donors of SPPF (minimum \$10 yr.). SPPF exists to raise critical issues in the South Pacific to a Canadian audience through a variety of public education methods, and to assist in getting relevant Canadian financial, technical and other assistance into the South Pacific to assist islanders in their self-development. TOK BLONG SPPF is edited by Phil Esmonde.

The Rape of West Papua

By Marcus Colchester

The recent escalation of Transmigration into the strife-torn province of Irian Jaya has revealed with brutal clarity the military significance of the programme. Transmigration is being promoted in the province as an integral part of the Government's effort to integrate forcibly a recalcitrant people into the national order, in blatant defiance of their internationally recognized rights to their lands and to self-determination.

The three and a half million Papuans are racially Melanesians, speaking over a thousand distinct but related languages. As culturally diverse as they are linguistically, they inhabit the swamps, forests and steep highlands that make up the land once known as New Guinea, that is today divided into Irian Jaya (West Papua) and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The population in the western half is estimated at 1.2 million of whom about 800,000 are traditional inhabitants of the islands, the remainder being more recent arrivals. The West Papuans remain some of the most isolated and traditional tribal peoples in the world, with a strong loyalty to their ancestral ways of life that found vigorous expression during the colonial era in the revitalization movements known as 'cargo cults'.

PARTITION: THE COLONIAL LEGACY

The Dutch included West Papua into their expanding empire in the 19th Century, and, in 1848, concluded an agreement with Germany and Britain carving the island up into three parts. As a consequence of the World Wars, the two eastern parts passed into Australian mandate. The western half was retained by the Netherlands as its last remaining colony in the East Indies, while the Republic of Indonesia grew into being in the turmoil following the Japanese withdrawal. Dutch attempts to develop West Papua, negligible in the pre-war era, when it had been claimed merely as a buffer against territorial encroachment, were hardly more effective in the post-war era. The Dutch did little more than found a few coastal towns and allow some oil prospecting.

BETRAYAL AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Growing pressure at the United Nations for the decolonization of the Third World, linked to pressure from economic groups, both transnationally and in the US and Indonesia, forced the Netherlands to cede West Papua to the UN in 1962.

The UN, in turn, passed the area into Indonesian hands in 1963, "on the understanding there would be a plebiscite by 1969 to test West Irian opinion". The 1969 "Act of Free Choice", which followed six years of blatant oppression, was notorious as a complete and tragic farce in which only 1,025 carefully selected Papuans actually had a vote. Their unanimous vote in favour of assimilation into Indonesia was ratified by the UN General Assembly. Having rested control of the area from one colonial regime, the UN had promptly handed it over to another.

THE PLUNDER OF RESOURCES

The vast untapped resources of West Papua were among the primary reasons that it was annexed by Indonesia. The region has now become Indonesia's sixth most profitable province. It produces substantial exports of oil, timber, gold, copper and other minerals. There is a flourishing trade in shrimps and in (fast disappearing) crocodile skins. Large areas of tribal land are being taken over as oil-palm plantations.

Logging is now taking a terrible toll of West Papua's forests. Vast areas of the lowlands have been leased out in concessions. Worse still, in order to encourage the timber trade, the normal controls governing the issue of logging rights have been lifted. Companies operating in West Papua blatantly ignore the human and legal rights of the local people and, more often than not, avoid paying them compensation for the damage caused to their environment. In many areas local people have been passed over in the selection of labour, while in others they are paid criminally low wages to destroy their own forests. Complaints

about labour conditions have been met with violence, and men seeking union protection have quickly found themselves out of work altogether.

One area most sorely disrupted by logging is Asmat on the south coast. Predominantly covered by seasonally flooded forests, the region is the homeland of sago-cultivating and hunting and gathering tribes who have become world famous for their intricate wood carvings. Today, many of the Asmat people have been forcibly relocated to the coast where they are forced to labour for the timber companies, often being held in a system of debt-slavery and paid only with shag tobacco and cheap clothing.

NATIONALISM AND REBELLION

Although the Papuan nationalist movement preceded Indonesia's UN-endorsed annexation of West Papua, it was not until after this that the Organization for an Independent Papua (the Organisasi Papua Merdeka - OPM) became a serious force in West Papuan politics. In spite of being declared illegal in 1963, separatist resistance to Indonesian domination has grown as fast as Indonesian plans to 'develop' West Papua. Religiously, culturally and racially distinct from the darker-skinned Papuans, Indonesians have regarded the inhabitants of their "26th Province" with ill-disguised contempt. Continuing attempts to "Indonesianize" the Papuans, by forcing them to abandon their traditions and adopt the "civilized" practices of the new colonists have only fuelled the conflict. In some areas, the programmes of forced integration and assimilation into Indonesian national society have been fiercely resisted by the West Papuans: denied all forms of normal political expression, some have taken up arms.

INDONESIA'S SECRET WAR

Armed resistance to Indonesian control of West Papua commenced in 1965, when Melanesians of the Arfak clan attacked the Indonesian Army Barracks at Manokwari. Since that time, the guerrilla struggle between tribal peoples, often armed only with traditional weapons, and the Indonesian army has continued. Armed uprisings by tribal warriors against the excesses of



the administration have been met with indiscriminate and brutal repression.

These rebellions have gone largely unreported by the world's press. Yet enough information has emerged to reveal that the conflicts have been widespread affecting large areas in nearly all parts of the province. Rebellion rocked the central highlands, especially in the Wissel Lakes region, in the month preceding the "Act of Free Choice". Indonesian troops crushed the rebellion through the use of air power, including indiscriminate strafing of villages. Similar tactics were used to crush the revolt of the Dani of the Balim Valley in 1977 following the impositions of "Operasi Koteka". When the tribal forces surrounded the administrative centre, the Indonesians responded with "strafing support from helis". Indonesian attempts to fly in special paracommandos were foiled by the planting of heavy stakes in the airstrips, so the Army resorted to aerial bombardment.

The growing unrest has caused Indonesia to attempt another solution to the problem; to quell local separatist feelings by sheer force of numbers, by colonizing their lands with more loyal subjects brought from the over-populated central islands.

TRANSMIGRATION AS RURAL "PACIFICATION"

Officially-sponsored Transmigration into West Papua commenced in 1966, even before the "Act of Free Choice". But the numbers were small, because of the logistical problems of transferring the migrants such long distances to an area almost totally lacking the necessary back-up facilities to make "modern settlement viable. By 1984, the total number of transmigrants settled on the island numbered over 80,000. West Papua has now become the principal area for settling transmigrants after Kalimantan. Present government plans include the settlement of about 685,000 people in West Papua between 1984 and 1989. World Bank statistics reveal that West Papuans will become a minority in their own country by 1995.

The security aspect of Transmigration is especially evident in West Papua where military authorities have made plain the importance of using Transmigration settlements for strategic purposes. This was spelled out in a recent book about the province written by the former eastern region territorial commander. Stressing that Transmigration was "very important for development everywhere", Lt-Gen. Kahpi said this was "especially the case in strategic areas, like border zones. . . former soldiers positioned in such areas are very important to create a 'buffer zone' and all such transmigrants would have the function of guarding against crossers of the Indonesia-PNG border, thus acting like a 'security belt' in the border district".

REFUGEES

The escalating conflict between nationalist Papuans and the Indonesian armed forces has caused a steady stream of refugees to leave West Papua. By 1979, an estimated 10,000 West Papuans had crossed into Papua New Guinea. Since early 1984, the situation in West Papua has deteriorated, causing a further flood of refugees to abandon their homelands and seek refuge in Papua New Guinea. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, there are presently 10,500 of these more recent refugees in camps all along the border, including about 500 new arrivals in the last few months.

Successive reports from those in direct communication with the refugees have noted that land alienation, resulting primarily from the Transmigration programme, has been a major cause for their flight. Refugees report the bombing of villages, indiscriminate shooting, imprisonment, torture, rape, the burning of settlements and the killing and stealing of livestock.

Not all those reaching PNG are just from the border region. Some refugees spent up to five weeks trekking to reach the frontier. Many of the fugitives have suffered severely on the way and some have even died while on trek, according to a recent account.

Describing the situation in the refugee camps in the Kiunga area in PNG, Bishop Gerard Deschamps, recently noted that many refugees still fear for their lives. He has described how many are seized by panic and flee into the forests surrounding the camps at the mere sight of unidentified helicopters. According to the Bishop: "Every day the refugees are still haunted with memories of the cruelties of which they were the victims shortly before their flight. . . forced repatriation would in fact mean their death from starvation in the forests, where these refugees would undoubtedly try to hide from the Indonesian army".

SOURCE: THE ECOLOGIST. VOL. 16. NO. 2/3. 1986.

"My vivid recollection of the act (of free choice) is of an Indonesian officer prodding, with a thin cane stick, Papuans into position in a meeting hall in Wamena, in the Baliem Valley, so that, on command, they would vote 'unanimously' for ties with Indonesia.

Bob Hawkins, former Editor of Pacific Islands Monthly, THE AGE (Melbourne, Australia) Mar. 26/86.



Irian Jayans flee massacre

MORE than 700 Irian Jayans yesterday fled into Papua New Guinea with horrific stories of a village massacre.

700 cross into PNG

A Roman Catholic was beheaded and many young men gunned down in a raid by unidentified forces in Irian Jaya.

The attack was made on March 3 in a village near Kiwirok, several hundred kilometres across the border.

The 747 Irian Jayans completed their remarkable trek yesterday, saying they had fled from continued oppression.

Border sources yesterday said that a group of soldiers armed with rifles and knives had taken the villagers by surprise on the fateful day.

By **ANGWI HRIEHWAZI**

The soldiers were dressed in red berets and army-green uniform. It is not known if they were Indonesian soldiers.

It is believed villagers were forced to watch Catholic catechist Tuberies Uropdana have his head chopped off.

Five young men were also shot dead and the whole village fled in all directions.

Fifty-eight of the villa-

gers reached Yapsei near Telefomin on April 6 and sought refuge.

Another 446 border-crossers arrived in the Yapsei Government station at the weekend, saying they fled for fear of being attacked.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Vagi said last night that the crossers told of another incident on August 24.

Two men and three women were arrested by Indonesian police suspected of aiding the OPM.

They said the five were assaulted and the three women raped.

Yesterday's 747 crossers said a further 600 to 700 were expected in PNG shortly.

Government officials in Vanimo quickly chartered a Talair aircraft to rush in a health extension officer, two health inspectors and two nurses to meet the Irian Jayans.

Two Foreign Affairs Department officials based in Vanimo yesterday began interviewing the people.

Mr Vagi said last night the Government was doing all it could to feed the latest batch of border-crossers.

Four chartered aircrafts have flown in food rations to their makeshift camps.

Transmigration And Its Effects

West Papuans have already lost some 700,000 hectares to transmigrants. If the planned colonization goes ahead they stand to lose a further 3.6 million hectares by 1989. In Merauke district, in the south-east of the country, where there is already visible degradation of the environment, fully two thirds of tribal lands have been set aside for transmigrants. Nor are the tribals receiving compensation for their lands, for in any case Indonesian (as opposed to Papuan) traditional law does not recognize tribal rights to hunting and gathering territories or lands set aside for shifting agriculture. Many communities have been intimidated into signing away their lands, often after being lectured by Indonesian officials, backed up by contingents of armed soldiers, on the benefits of development.

Transmigration in West Papua is only one part of an overall programme which has the aim of 'integrating' the Papuans into Indonesian society. Rural development programmes throughout the area are aimed at bringing the tribals out of isolation and into contact with modern communications and the market economy. The Transmigration programme itself has been modified to the same end so that fully 25% of the people settling the new sites are to be "translocals", local Papuans alienated from their traditional communities, who find themselves in a minority, despised for their 'primitive' customs and forced to conform to the lifestyle of their invaders.

West Papua has been singled out for special treatment because the local peoples are becoming increasingly resistant to Indonesian economic exploitation and oppression. Ever since 1969 there have been louder and louder calls for independence, which the government has responded to with such violence that, according to the Jakarta-based Association for Legal Aid Institutes, West Papua is the worst region for human rights abuse in Indonesia.

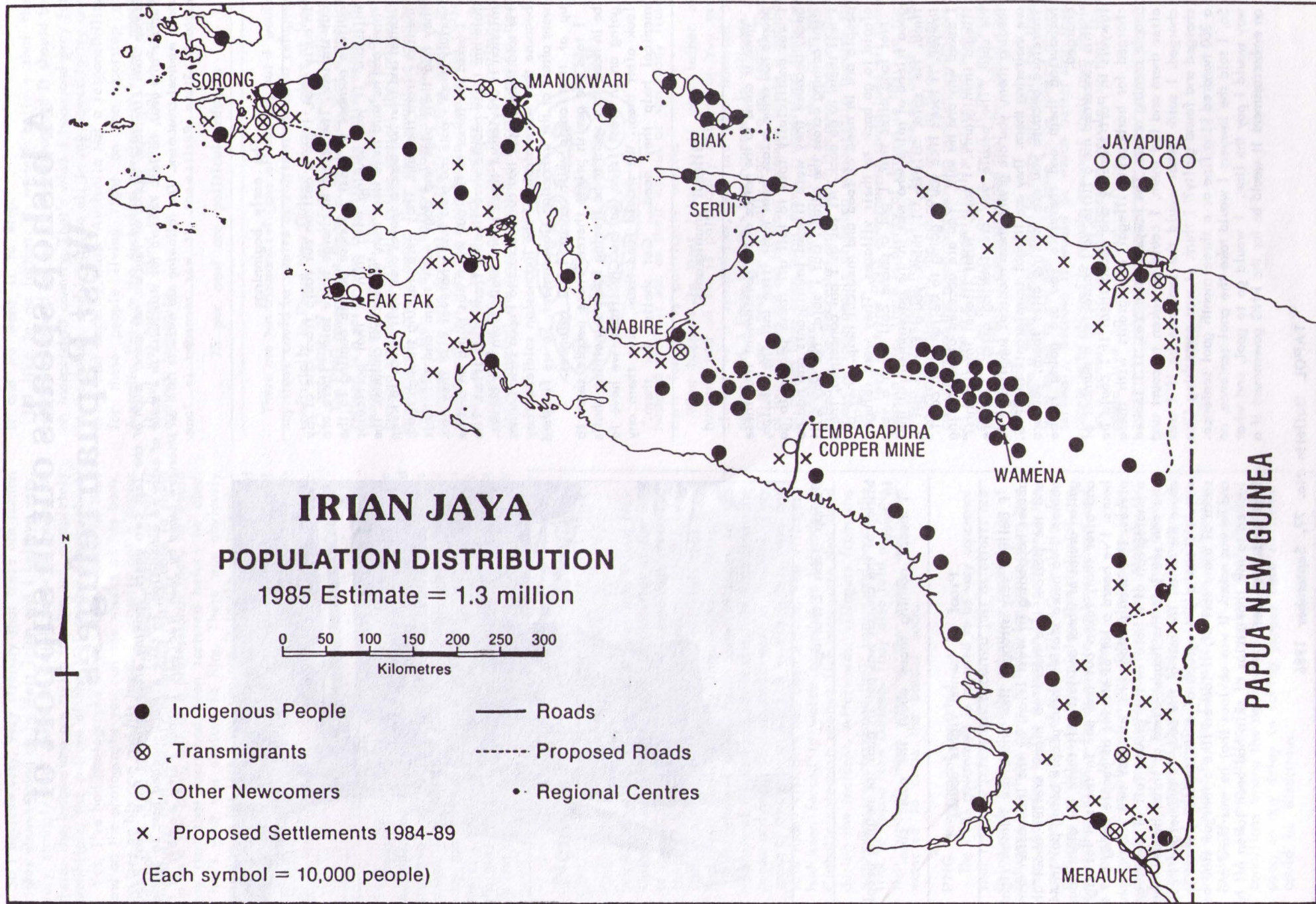
The fact is that Indonesia cannot contemplate granting independence to what is now its sixth most profitable province. Nor does the military regime feel it can allow even a minimal degree of regional autonomy for fear of encouraging the separatist movements in the other peripheral islands. The only alternative is increasing repression from the 20,000 occupying armed forces, a strategy that also accounts for the programme of 'transmigrasi saptamarga' by which the government plans to settle a 'cordon sanitaire' of ex-military personnel all along the Jayapura-Merauke highway, currently under construction.

Last year some 10 to 12,000 West Papuans abandoned their traditional lands and fled to Papua New Guinea. A recent investigation by the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists, revealed that one of the main reasons for the exodus was fear of the Transmigration programme.

The programme, which threatens to destroy the lives and lifestyles of the West Papuans and make them a minority in their own lands, is being funded with international capital, two thirds of it via the World Bank. This is in spite of the fact that Transmigration denies tribal land rights and is being fiercely resisted by tribal people in some areas. The Bank is thus directly contravening its own guidelines.

(SOURCE: SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL, MARCH 1985)





A bishop speaks out in support of West Papuan refugees

Bishop John Etheridge, Bishop of Vanimo, has spent much of the last two years, looking after refugees from West Papua. Earlier this year, he left Vanimo for Australia in a state of extreme exhaustion, to take a much-needed rest in Sydney, under medical treatment. The following are extracts from an interview taped by Jean MacLean, Labour Party member of the Victoria State Parliament. It was recorded in June.

The early beginnings

In early 1984, I got a call on our radio from one of my out-stations. The priest in charge there said: "There are quite a number of West Irianese people coming to the mission." It was pouring with rain at that particular time, and he said there were men, women and children. The women and men had banana leaves over their heads to keep them dry from the rain. They were walking through mud; they had their pigs and dogs with them and all their worldly goods - pots and pans and whatever else they had.

I asked the father to find out what was going on and he told me these people were fleeing from West Irian. The mission is only about three hours' walk from the border. He said these people had come across to Papua New Guinea because they were afraid of the Indonesian soldiers, they were afraid of the Indonesian Government. So we finished up at that camp with about 1,200 refugees.

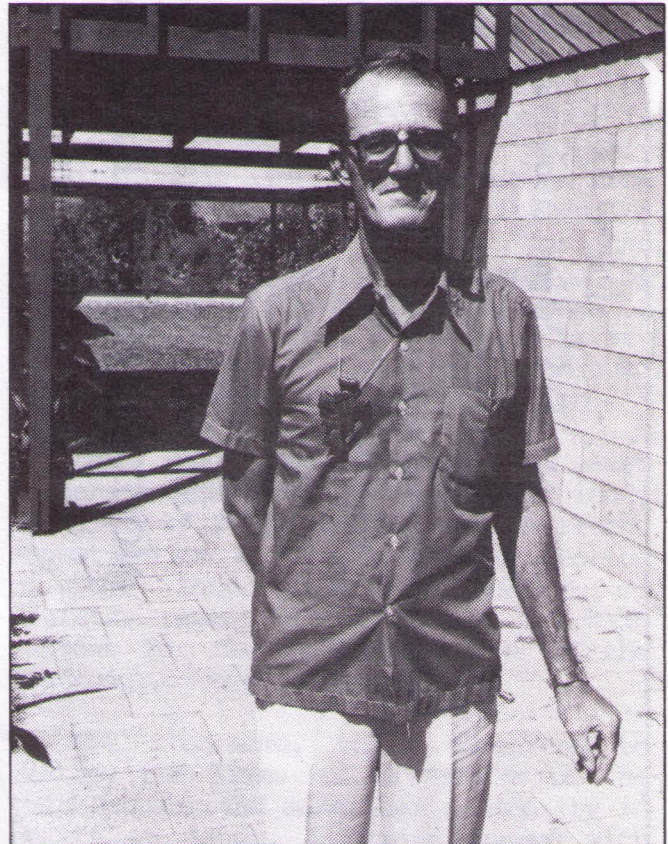
I told the parish priest there: "These people seem to be in need, they seem to be fleeing from something that's going on in West Irian, so, as Christians, we have to look after them. We should feed them, give them any medical help they need... Get shelter for them."

"Illegal immigrants"

When it came to the notice of the government that these people had come across from West Irian into the mission, I was unofficially told to tell all these people to go back, because they were illegal immigrants and had no right coming across the border. But I said, "No way will I tell them to go back. As far as I am concerned, these people are in need of food and medical help. They are afraid to go back to their villages. They want refuge."

Not long after that, I got a phone call from a very good friend of mine who was in the government at that time. He said: "Bishop, I think you'd better get a lawyer. It looks like you're going to be taken to court." I asked why and he said, "You are accused of harbouring illegal immigrants." I said, "What illegal immigrants?" He said, "The people you are looking after. You are feeding them, you are giving them medical supplies. You are sheltering them. They are illegal immigrants in PNG. Therefore because you are looking after them, you are harbouring them and therefore you are going to be charged."

This concerned me a little, so I contacted a number of lawyers in Port Moresby and asked them if I could be charged for harbouring illegal immigrants with these people coming across. The lawyers said: Yes, if I looked after them and fed them, I could be taken to court and charged. I said: "What would the sentence be if I was charged and found guilty?" I think it was something like a 300 hundred kina fine or a three-month gaol sentence. So, I told the lawyers I would take the gaol sentence, no way would I pay the fine. I would go to gaol, and what an embarrassment it would be for the PNG government if a



Bishop John Etheridge

bishop of the church was put in gaol for helping people in need.

I heard nothing more about the court case.

Proof of human rights abuses

I believe very strongly that there are human rights abuses happening in West Irian, by the Indonesian army and the police. I've heard so many stories about the abuses. I've heard stories about people being put in 44-gallon drums of water and just left there for eight hours and after that, taken out and put in the sun for eight hours. I've heard a lot of stories of people being cut to pieces. I've seen photographs, at least two photographs, a photograph of a hole in the ground full of water and you can see just the heads - two or three heads - just above the water. The rest of the body is submerged in the water. I saw a photograph of a Melanesian person in a room of some sort of; it looked like a morgue slab bed and he was naked. It was obvious that he was dead and it looked to me that strips of skin had been taken off his legs and his feet.

So I believe very, very strongly that there are human rights abuses going on in West Irian and I believe very, very strongly that there is racial genocide going on there. The Indonesians are trying to wipe out, completely annihilate, the culture of the Melanesian people there.

Yes, I've had photographs of Arnold Ap after he died and on the photographs you can see marks on his body, bruises on his arm and his hand. I actually got a doctor to look at these photographs. The doctor said, to put it truthfully, that possibly he would not be able to stand up in a law court, but as a professional man, he would say that that man had been tortured before he died. That's what was obvious to him. There was obviously bruising on his legs - you can see it in the photograph - bruises on his legs, across his head and forehead, and his fingers and hand were white. It seemed to be that he'd lost a lot of blood or something in that area.

Australia must speak out

I myself am an Australian citizen and I believe Australia and the Australian government and people should stand up very strongly and speak out about human rights abuses going on in West Irian, and let the Indonesians know that they know that human rights abuses are going on there. I believe the Australian government should have the guts to stand up for humanitarian reasons, to stand up and say, "This is going on and we are not happy with

Nearly 750 more refugees cross over

A new influx of West Papuan refugees into Papua New Guinea was reported by border authorities at the end of August. PNG Foreign Minister, Legu Vagi, announced that 747 West Papuans had reached the PNG border station of Yapsiei, and had told officials that they had been maltreated by Indonesian soldiers.

The refugees come from seven villages in the vicinity of Kiwirok, which is about 30 kms from the border and nearly 50 kms south-west of Yapsiei. They spoke of an attack on Kiwirok in March this year, and said many villagers had been killed. The villagers had been forced to watch as soldiers beheaded a Catholic catechist; another five men were shot dead during the incident. Afterwards, villagers from the surrounding area abandoned their homes and began the trek to Papua New Guinea. They also told officials that hundreds more were on the move, and were expected to cross the border soon.

PNG government worried

The PNG government is reported to be very concerned that this new influx has occurred just as efforts are being made to speed up the voluntary repatriation of refugees who have been in PNG for more than two years. According to *The Australian* [5 September], the government is critical of the UN High Commission for Refugees for delays in determining the status of the more than 10,000 refugees now in various camps, and arranging for their re-location.

But the problem of status determination could be even further exacerbated because Port Moresby is insisting that the refugees who have just arrived must be screened before they can be housed or provided with regular supplies. Initially food is being provided by the Catholic mission and nearby villagers.

It is not difficult to imagine that health conditions among the newcomers must be extremely poor, so any delay in taking proper care of them could be disastrous.

it and we want it to stop."

I'd like to go farther. I myself believe that the Indonesians should get out of West Irian and it should be an independent country. That's what I hope and pray for in the future, and I will do all in my power to try and bring that about. I think Australia has a responsibility for these people living right on the doorstep of Australia. I'm sure the Australian government knows about it, but just turns a blind eye. To me, that is a crime against humanity.

75 per cent are political refugees

There are ten thousand refugees officially, but I would say there could be twelve or thirteen thousand refugees unofficially in Papua New Guinea. Now, I class at least 75 per cent of these as refugees, as genuine refugees.

The PNG government seems to be saying that a genuine refugee is a person who is politically active against the Indonesian government. Now, there may be four or five hundred who are politically active against the Indonesian government, and I agree that they would be genuine refugees. But I also believe there are other West Irianese here who are not politically active against the government, but they are sympathetic towards the OPM. They are afraid to go back because they could be persecuted or harassed, not because they are politically active against the government but because maybe their



husband or their son or their cousin or somebody from their family is politically active.

What happens in West Irian is, if your father or husband and so on is politically active, or you are classed as a sympathiser, you are also harassed or persecuted. I know that this has happened in villages. I can give you a case that actually came to me today, that of four villages not too far from Jayapura where a number of houses have been burnt down. I understand that two churches were burnt down too. Pigs and dogs have been killed by the Indonesian army. Why? Because they accused these village people of being sympathetic towards the OPM.

I feel that the PNG government could take all these people here. There is plenty of ground in PNG so they could be resettled here. They could be an asset to the country, particularly the educated ones in Blackwater. I can understand the government having problems with some of them who are really politically active and who will continue to be politically active, even if they are made citizens of PNG. I can understand that they could cause problems

Maybe a third country would be more advisable for them to go to, but to me, that would have to be looked at very seriously, because it would be much better for these people to be allowed to remain amongst their own people, in a sense, their own Melanesian people, so that they could live in their own culture.

West Papuan Rex Rumakiek Speaks

An interview conducted at University of Victoria Radio, CFUV, June 1986, by
Dave Marshall

Rex Rumakiek fled West Papua in 1970. Involved in the OPM since its inception, Rex was one of its earliest Political Officers. After studies in PNG, Rex moved to Vanuatu. He is the editor of the OPM newsletter.

(Q) BESIDES THE SOCIAL POLICIES OF THE
INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IN WEST PAPUA, HAS
THERE BEEN MUCH ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS?

(Rex Rumekiek) Yes, at all levels there
is much abuse of human rights in West
Papua. For example: if you travel from
one village to another or from one city
to another you need to have police
permission on paper. When you get to
that other city you must make sure that
another official from that city signs the
paper to prove that you have been to that
city. Officials keep on checking the
movements of people. Also, you have no
right to criticize the government; if you
do you can be severely punished.

You have no right to organize
political meetings or to talk about
politics. You can only talk about
politics that the Indonesian government
is interested in, not the ones that you
are interested in.

There are all kinds of restrictions.
Even the names like Papua or Melanesia,
which normally were known everywhere and
associated with the people who lived
there, are discouraged from being used.
Those names are now associated with
subversives, so people are discouraged
from using them and are now afraid to use
them. Names of rivers and mountains that
had Papuan names have been changed to
Indonesian names. That is the whole
process of "Indonesianization" of the
country. Now we don't sing our own
songs. We have to learn a lot of
Indonesian songs and dances, and some of
the cultural activities and habits and
customs of our people are prohibited.
Indonesians call our customs primitive,
so we should not use them any more.

(Q) DO YOU SEE ANY HOPE FOR RESISTANCE
FROM WEST PAPUANS, EITHER ACTIVE OR
PASSIVE?

(RR) Since we have considered all
peaceful means normally applied in other
democratic systems and because those
means are prohibited in West Papua, we
have had to chose armed struggle. That
is the only way possible to get our
country back.

(Q) HOW LONG DO YOU SEE THIS STRUGGLE
GOING ON? IS THERE A TIMETABLE TO FORCE
THIS ISSUE TO THE BOILING POINT?

(RR) That is one thing that we are still
preparing. It will be determined by an
analysis on how much international
support is available. When we know that
we have the infrastructure
internationally, we can use this support
for any big operation inside West Papua.
That is the time when I feel we will be
ready to start something.

(Q) SO, ESSENTIALLY YOU ARE FOLLOWING A
VERY CAREFULLY PLANNED ITINERARY TO
SLOWLY BUILD UP INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS
AND SUPPORT AND THEN TO INCREASE ACTIVITY
WITHIN WEST PAPUA TO MAKE THAT ACTIVITY
MORE VISIBLE AND TO MAKE THE ISSUE MORE
VISIBLE AROUND THE WORLD?

(RR) That is correct. In fact, inside
the country we are already prepared and
keeping the Indonesians in check by
keeping them in cities. We will go down
and challenge them when the time is
right.

CONTINUED...

(Q) SO THE INDONESIAN ARMY CONTROLS THE URBAN AREAS BUT ONCE IT LEAVES THOSE SORT OF PROTECTED FORTRESSES, ITS EFFECTIVENESS RAPIDLY DROPS?

(RR) That is the reality in West Papua. In fact the Indonesians don't want to conduct any more operations outside of the cities because they know that they will never get anywhere, and in fact never get any co-operation from the population. Some people pretend to assist, to be guides and lead them to where the Free Papua Movement (OPM) troops are, and in fact they lead them to an ambush. It happens all the time so now the Indonesians don't depend on any local support. That's one of the reasons that they have the transmigration programme, to bring their own people to be set up in very strategic areas throughout the country for communications and for checking the movement of the Free Papua Movement people.

(Q) SO IN EFFECT THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO CREATE A TWO RACE SITUATION WHERE INDONESIANS ARE COMING IN AND EFFECTIVELY INCREASING THE POPULATION AND TAKING THE LAND AWAY FROM THE WEST PAPUANS, THUS REDUCING THEM TO A SORT OF SECOND RATE STATUS?

(RR) That is true. That is one of the aims of transmigration. It is not to reduce the overpopulation in Java as claimed but to increase Indonesian presence in the country in order to outnumber the indigenous people and at the same time take the land. They know that to us the traditional land is so valuable, that that land is almost a part of our lives and that we feel that we cannot survive without the land.

(Q) WHAT KIND OF MATERIAL SUPPORT DO YOU RECEIVE FROM OUTSIDE WEST PAPUA?

(RR) We don't have any material support from anywhere. We depend on our own traditional weapons and whatever we can get from the Indonesian army.

(Q) SO YOU'RE HERE IN CANADA THEN TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TO SOLICIT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR YOUR FREE PAPUA MOVEMENT?

(RR) That is correct. We really need international support morally but if any good people wanted to give us material support, that would be welcome.

(Q) IS THERE ANY OUTSIDE INFLUENCE IN THE FREE PAPUA MOVEMENT OR IS IT COMPLETELY INDIGENOUS?

(RR) It is completely indigenous. A number of organizations affiliated with the extreme left have tried to influence our organization to adopt some of the Marxist ideals and so on, but we claim that we are not borrowing anyone's ideology. We are traditionally a socialist culture since our forefathers; we remain that way, and we would like to develop it our own way. Also, most of us are Christians and a lot of people are what they call conservatives. Many of those conservatives in our community - being Christian - do not accept violence. But they realized that if we do nothing we will just wait for our death. We have to do something to defend our people. Because of the increasing oppression of the Indonesians more people accept armed struggle as a reality and their only choice.

(Q) WHAT HAS BEEN THE ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED NATIONS TOWARDS OPM? HAVE THEY ACCORDED IT OBSERVER STATUS LIKE THEY HAVE THE PLO?

(RR) No attempts have been made so far to approach any country to sponsor us in that kind of debate at the UN, but we are moving that way gradually.

(Q) CAN YOU TELL US WHAT EXACTLY WEST PAPUA CONSISTS OF IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC VALUE TO THE INDONESIANS?

(RR) Well the first reason why Indonesia claimed the country was a feeling of insecurity with having the Netherlands next door. They feared that the Dutch would always make attempts to destabilize their republic and come back. That was one of the main reasons why they claimed the country. But after a while they found out that the country was rich in minerals.

CONTINUED...

(Q) IS THERE A LOT OF OIL IN WEST PAPUA?
OR A POSSIBILITY OF OIL?

(RR) Oil has been exploited since the Dutch time (1936) but more was recently discovered. In 1982, it was found that the oil reserves are huge, perhaps the biggest in all of Indonesia. Indonesia has also discovered copper, gold, silver and other kinds of minerals in the country.

(Q) IS THERE A GREAT DEAL OF
MULTINATIONAL PRESSURE ON THE INDONESIAN
GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO PACIFY AND CONTROL
THE SITUATION IN WEST PAPUA?

(RR) Yes, because of the fact that the multinationals see a future bonanza in this area. Therefore they would like to see the country controlled and these companies then become very good co-operants with Indonesia in that reality.

(Q) HAS THERE BEEN ANY INVOLVEMENT FOR
WEST PAPUANS IN THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
THAT IS GOING ON IN THESE MINERAL RICH
AREAS? GETTING A SLICE OF THE PIE, SO TO
SPEAK?

(RR) I was a graduate in technology with a diploma in business management and the first in West Papua at that time, and I was involved in the initial stages of planning for this mineral exploitation. That was one of the reasons why I was disappointed and ran away. The fact is that the initial planning involved the UN development agency and it was stated that local people should be trained as assistants in technical fields for the operations of the exploitation of the mineral resources. But Indonesia never followed this plan. Soon they changed everything. They only agreed with the UN to get the projects completed and as soon as it was done they changed to using their own people. So the initial plan was that every position must be seconded by a local person, to understudy until the time when he is capable to take over. Now the situation is completely changed. All the positions are held by Indonesians, even the manual work. Not very many people even in the surrounding area who have the right to the land are allowed to work in the mine. This is especially so after 1977 when the OPM (the Free Papua Movement) blew up some of the copper mining supply pipes. It cost the company about 8 million dollars to fix. So now all the local people are barred from working in the companies.

Photo by PNG Times



OPM Bush Camp

(Q) YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU LEFT OUT OF FRUSTRATION AND HOPED TO BETTER THE INTERNAL SITUATION FROM THE OUTSIDE. IS THERE MUCH OF A REFUGEE PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA?

(RR) There are about 12,000 refugees in Papua New Guinea. They come from villages that are afraid of Indonesian reprisals so they run away, but when things calm down they sneak back to their home villages. About 10,000 still live in the camps and for that reason the PNG government internationalized the refugee issue, so now the UN is involved.

(Q) WHEN THE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL, WHO INSTRUCTS THEM? ARE THEY TAUGHT BY INDONESIANS? ARE THEY TAUGHT AN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE?

(RR) There are a number of West Papuan teachers involved in the lowest level of education but the curriculum is prepared and they just follow programmes set out by the government. There are a lot of local people involved in the lowest level of teaching and throughout the structure you find some local people, but the numbers - compared to the Indonesians - are very, very tiny.

(Q) AND THE EMPHASIS IN THE SCHOOLS IS DEFINITELY ON A MORE PAN-INDONESIAN CULTURE RATHER THAN AN INDIGENOUS CULTURE?

(RR) Yes, in the small scale it is oriented toward Indonesia but in general it is oriented toward Asia to make the people feel they are Asians or Indonesians, and nothing else but Indonesians or Asians. But the reality in the people's lives is very different. They feel that they are not at all part of Asia or Indonesia and they feel closer to the Pacific and Papua New Guinea.

(Q) THIS POLICY OF ISOLATION AND RESTRICTIONS OF LOCAL CULTURE AND EDUCATION - HAS THIS HAD A GREAT EFFECT ON THE CHILDREN OF WEST PAPUANS AND ON THE TRADITIONAL TIES AND CULTURE IN THE VILLAGE AREAS? YOU MENTIONED THE RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT - HAVE THERE BEEN ANY OTHER EFFECTS AS WELL?

(RR) The immediate effects are that families are cut off because of this restriction of movement. We have a family system unit and the extended family relations are strong, but with the introduction of this restriction it truly affects our family relations, especially for the children - they don't know who their uncles are, their distant relatives and so on.

(Q) HOW IS THE CULTURE, THEN, BEING TAUGHT OR PASSED ON TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND MAINTAINED?

(RR) During the Dutch time there were efforts and encouragement by the Dutch education system for our people to put things down in writing, because most of our history is passed down by telling stories. Nothing had ever been written. It was the Dutch who started off helping people to write their history. But now Indonesia completely stopped such activity so it is difficult for the children to learn their history.

(Q) IS THE OPM INVOLVED IN TRYING TO PRESERVE THIS AT ALL?

(RR) Yes, we have programmes in education and programmes in development. Where the government has failed to achieve anything we step in and do something. For example, in the case of health care, the Indonesians concentrate on selling very expensive medicine, we concentrate on preventive methods by teaching people more about looking after their health and so on.

CONTINUED..



(Q) WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE TRANSMIGRATION POLICY OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IN AN EFFORT TO INTRODUCE MORE JAVANESE AND OTHER INDONESIANS INTO WEST PAPUA IN ORDER TO INCREASE THEIR POPULATION THERE. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS HAS BEEN FUNDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND OF THE WORLD BANK (THE IMF). CAN YOU TELL US SOME MORE ABOUT THIS?

(RR) Yes, the IMF was the funder of this project and I understand that the Canadian government also contributed to the IMF. There are now a number of organizations in Europe - especially Amnesty International - campaigning to lobby all these governments who are contributors to the programme to stop funding or assisting this programme because it is genocidal. When we establish contact with organizations here we will supply them with the information and details, especially calculations of how much is spent on each Indonesian family.

(Q) DID THE IMF ORIGINALLY FUND THIS BECAUSE OF THE STATED INDONESIAN REASON OF RELIEVING POPULATION PRESSURE? DID THEY NOT REALIZE THE EFFECT THIS WOULD HAVE ON THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF WEST PAPUA?

(RR) Well, Indonesia claimed that it wanted assistance from the IMF in order to decrease or relieve its over-population problem in Java. And, while it was also the rules of the IMF that this money should not be spent in destroying a culture or effecting the economic life of any indigenous people in the area where the money is spent, they overlooked this. So there are now efforts to remind the members of the IMF that their money is being used to destroy another people. That was the main information in the campaign. We would like more people to be involved in pressuring their governments and making them aware of the reality of what is happening with their money; it is being spent to destroy our people.

(Q) DO YOU FACE PERSONAL RISK BEING THE EDITOR OF THE FREE PAPUA MOVEMENT NEWSLETTER?

(RR) Our struggle is always a risk but we have to take the risk because there is no other way that we can make the issue known to other people. We have to produce; we have to supply information. We used to supply information to all kinds of newsletters, newspapers and interested organizations. Some published it and some did not. But the problem is when you get information from another person, the influence is not as strong as when you get it directly from us. So we prefer to produce it ourselves although I know there is a lot of risk involved.

(Q) I UNDERSTAND THE GOVERNMENT OF VANUATU HAS INVITED YOU TO USE VANUATU AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR INCREASING WORLD AWARENESS ABOUT THE OPM AND THE STRUGGLE IN WEST PAPUA. COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT MELANESIAN SOLIDARITY BEHIND THE OPM?

(RR) The solidarity throughout Melanesia is quite strong. I am talking about the people, not the governments. The population all throughout the island of New Guinea including PNG are very supportive. There are a lot of things that they hide from the government because they are supporting our organization. So far Vanuatu is the only government in the region of the Melanesian countries that officially recognized the Free Papua Movement and it is willing to raise our struggle in international forums. For example, Vanuatu has brought it up at the non-aligned movement conference, at the Commonwealth conference and also at the UN General Assembly.

(Q) I UNDERSTAND THAT BESIDES THE SOUTH PACIFIC PEOPLES FOUNDATION HERE IN VICTORIA THERE ARE OTHER CANADIAN ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED IN YOUR STRUGGLE, FOR EXAMPLE, CUSO.

(RR) Yes. My affiliation with CUSO has been a very long one - since 1973. In fact, CUSO is one of the organizations that is involved in development in PNG and some of the countries in the South Pacific. At some stage when I was at university on my last semester - every course I took at university was paid for by my own pocket - but for my last semester CUSO was willing to contribute toward my fees to complete my studies at university and also sponsored me for

short courses in Malaysia and the Philippines in 1974 and 1975.

In the South Pacific when you deal with development at the grass roots level, you have to discuss human rights issues and all issues that people are concerned with like nuclear issues and so on. So these two agencies, though their aim was development, were forced by the conditions in the society and they have to take up other issues like the nuclear issue and this liberation movement as well because they are really concerned for the people that they work with.

(Q) WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR CANADIANS? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE CANADIANS TO DO?

(RR) Well I would like interested people to keep contact so that we can supply more information. We would like more people to know about our struggle and the more people who know about it, the better for us in our struggle to organize and speed up the process of liberation in West Papua.

(Q) THANK YOU VERY MUCH REX.

Subscriptions to the OPM Newsletter are \$US 5 for individuals and \$US 8 for institutions. Address: P.O. Box 807, Port Vila, Vanuatu.



Robert Milton/The Lost World of Irian Jaya

“By 1969 Indonesia’s leaders were faced with the necessity to hold the promised Act of Free Choice and the concurrent likelihood that the vote would go against them. Their way out was to organize a mini-referendum to elect 1,025 representatives from all parts of Irian. This process was meant to have been closely monitored by a UN team under the control of a Bolivian diplomat, Fernando Ortiz-Sans. In practice the officials were impeded from visiting many of the polling sites. They criticized some of the voting that they did observe. More critical were the foreign press who were allowed rare access to Irian. In August the 1,025 members convened to vote on the future. Most admitted privately that they had been intimidated by Indonesians. Others received offers of bribes. Indonesia went to the trouble of stocking the shops in Irian’s cities, especially the capital, to make things appear prosperous. In fact the local economy was in chaos.”

(AFCOA BRIEFING)

PNG Prime Minister Piais Wingti's Statement on West Papua

We must be realistic in dealing with the historical fact that in 1969 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by 84 votes to none (with 30 abstentions) that an Act of Free Choice had been conducted in Irian Jaya. What especially disturbs me is that some politicians, who know the practical facts of the situation, still choose to mislead our own people. They continue to use independence for Irian Jaya as an electoral issue when they know that there is nothing we can do.

Irian Jaya is now an integral part of Indonesia. They are playing on the emotions of our people to secure their own political positions without due regard to the false hopes they are raising among our own people and among the people of Irian Jaya.

The current leadership recognized the complexity of the real problem on the border and determined to reach an early solution as past indecision had only aggravated the problem and no visible progress was being made. As it turned out, the current policy was reached in just 12 hours after thoughtful deliberations with advisors, Foreign Affairs staff and the others involved. There was resistance in the early stages. But in the end, after fully considering the practical situation and the strengths and weaknesses of other alternatives, we were all convinced that this solution was the best possible one for the complex situation facing us and enthusiastically endorsed the policy.

Decisions were therefore taken for Papua New Guinea to accede to the United Nations convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees as well as to invite the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to participate in the administration of border-crossers and refugees.

Under the agreement, border-crossers are to be interviewed to determine whether or not they are refugees. Refugees would then be moved elsewhere in Papua New Guinea prior to resettlement where possible in third countries. The others, who had crossed into PNG but did not qualify as refugees, would be encouraged to return home.

The UNHCR agreed to provide financial assistance for relocating the border-crossers and for assistance in building facilities for the genuine refugees.

We are also convinced that this solution provides the best possible channels for us to fulfil our moral and social obligation to the people from Irian Jaya. There is much more that we can accomplish through a cordial relationship of mutual respect and trust with the Government of Indonesia than we could possibly accomplish without it.

Prime Minister Piais Wingti writing in the POST-COURIER of Papua New Guinea, Friday, September 5, 1986.



West Papua: This Is What We Believe

By John Momis
Deputy Opposition Leader, PNG

On Friday September 5, newspapers published a statement from the Prime Minister on Irian Jaya. He wrote: "We must be realistic in dealing with the historical fact that in 1969 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by 84 votes to none (with 30 abstentions) that an Act of Free Choice had been conducted in Irian Jaya. What especially disturbs me is that some politicians, who know the practical facts of the situation, still choose to mislead our own people. They continue to use independence for Irian Jaya as an electoral issue when they know there is nothing we can do. Irian Jaya is now an integral part of Indonesia."

We should be thankful to the Prime Minister for setting out his views so clearly. He obviously believes that the UN General Assembly's resolution conferred legitimacy on the 1969 Act of Free Choice. He also believes that politicians - like myself - who challenge this are misleading the people. There is nothing we can do, he says. Irian Jaya is now an integral part of Indonesia.

Irian Jaya is about as integral a part of Indonesia as Indonesia was an integral part of Holland and Papua New Guinea as an integral part of Australia. Mr. Wingti talks about the practical facts of the situation. These are the practical facts:

In the early 1960s, Indonesian political movements were mobilizing around a campaign to "liberate West Irian" - West Papua/Irian Jaya - from the Dutch rulers. West Papua had never been linked with what was then Indonesia culturally or ethnographically. Indonesia's only claim to possession was that West Papua, like Indonesia, had once been part of the Dutch East Indies - an argument which would presumably have prevented Pakistan's separation from India as they had both once been ruled by the same British administration.

Such campaigns would probably not have had a great deal of success had Indonesian-US relations not recently deteriorated. President Kennedy considered their improvement vital. The US correctly assumed that their interests in the region would improve if Indonesia was granted sovereignty over West Papua.

The president's brother, Robert Kennedy, urged Indonesia and Holland to negotiate over the territory and in March 1962, Washington's special ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, began moves which produced the New York Agreement between Indonesia and Holland. There was no West Papua involvement.

The New York Agreement was immediately ratified by the UN General Assembly and put into motion in six weeks. It specified the details for the handing over of power from Holland to Indonesia. Neither country had a legitimate claim on the land they were negotiating over.

The Council of Foreign Relations, a highly influential US think-tank, said of the New York Agreement in its 1962 report:

"No one regarded the stipulations for 'free choice' by the Papuans as more than a formality. Outsiders could only hope that their progress under Indonesian rule would not fall far behind what it might have been if the Dutch had remained."
(p209)

After the agreement had been ratified, preparations began for the transfer of power. A decolonization programme had been in operation since the early 1950s and a number of local assemblies and political parties (with wide-ranging views) had been established. The framework in which these groups operated was the planned Dutch declaration of self-determination in 1970.

Any hopes of self-determination were dashed by the New York Agreement. Self-determination was to be "under arrangements made by Indonesia" (Paragraph 5, Explanatory memorandum). The role of the UN was restricted to "advice, assistance and participation" (Paragraph 5 and Article XVIII).

For a six month period, from October 1962 to May 1963, a United Nations Temporary Executive Administration (UNTEA) held power. The UN external security forces consisted of 1537 Muslim troops from Pakistan. 1500 Indonesians paratroopers who had entered the country during earlier incursions were allowed to stay to "help police the transfer". Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Subrandio, said that Indonesia had ample experience to "guarantee against any possible disturbance by the indigenous people of West Irian". A plebiscite on self-determination was to be held by 1969.

The first Papua policeman was killed on November 15, 1962. Indonesian became the medium of instruction; the Papuan flag, anthem and the Papua Barat (West Papua) began to be labelled rebellious. The UNTEA withdrew permission for a Papuan demonstration against the takeover, despite the agreement specifying that it would "guarantee fully the rights, including the rights of free speech, freedom of movement and assembly, of the inhabitants of the area".

On May 2, the day after Indonesia took formal control of West Papua, symbols of Papua life, textbooks and Papuan flags were destroyed on a giant bonfire in Jayapura. The next day, the popularly elected New Guinea Council was replaced by an Indonesian-appointed Regional People's Assembly, controlled by appointed representatives, Indonesian department heads, military officers and religious officials.

In that month, Presidential Decree No. 8 banned all political activity excepting 10 Indonesian parties, none of which existed in West Papua.

By the mid 1960s, some West Papuans were engaging in armed resistance to the Indonesian regime. Reaction was savage - by the end of 1967 it was reported that whole villages had been razed in 'Operation Destruction' and that 3500 villagers had been killed.

In April 1969, a major uprising occurred in Wissel Lakes/Panai region. 95 Papuan police defected, Indonesian officials were driven from their posts, the West Papuan flag was raised and airstrips were occupied. Indonesia sent in paratroops to put the resistance down.

The Act of Free Choice took place in 1969. Papuans called it "an act of no choice". A plebiscite was rejected on the grounds that the Papuans were "too primitive" or "too simple" to vote. Instead Indonesia "appointed" 1025 local "representatives" who, not surprisingly, unanimously voted to "remain with Indonesia".

And that is how the legitimacy of Indonesian rule over West Papua was confirmed.

I do not believe that Indonesia has any sovereign right over the territory of West Papua. Nor do I believe that expressing such views is "empty idealism". I do not wish to see our relationship with Indonesia unnecessarily damaged but I feel that a considerable injustice has been done to the West Papuan people. I feel this injustice has been encouraged by the refusal of many in the international community to stand up to Indonesia and I feel that it would be a particular betrayal of principles for Papua New Guinea politicians to abandon the West Papuans in the name of "realism".

There is a point where we as individuals and as a nation, have to stand up and say "This is what we believe". Papua New Guinea policy toward Indonesia is a farce. It is based on the dubious belief that vocal opposition to Indonesia's occupation of West Papua would encourage an Indonesian invasion of Papua New Guinea. Such a scenario is our of the question. The Indonesian government has repeatedly stated that it respects Papua New Guinea's territorial integrity and independence.

John L. Momis, Deputy Opposition Leader
writing in THE TIMES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
Week September 12-19, 1986.

“They take my parcels of land without proper payment. People lose their lands. People are not paid much attention by the government, only transmigrants. And then they become slowly separated from their lands . . . We feel that slowly, in future, we will become aliens in our own environment. And our culture, the values of our culture, are being broken by outside culture from Java or other Indonesia islands. And later we will become a minority in our own land. And also the influence of Islam because many of the transmigrants are Islamic people.”

West Papuan refugee, Blackwater Creek Camp, PNG.

(Photo by PNG Times, March 1984)



West Papuan women and children arrive as refugees in PNG after escaping the fighting.

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM DECISIONS

Media publicity prior to the 17th South Pacific Forum meeting in Suva, Fiji made it clear that the questions of independence for New Caledonia and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty would be the main items on the Forum agenda. And the communique issued by the thirteen member nations at the end of the 8-11 August meeting addressed these two areas in greater detail than any others.

NEW CALEDONIA

In a carefully worded statement, Forum members traced developments in New Caledonia since their previous meeting in Raratonga and concluded that "the change in French policy towards New Caledonia over the previous year was a significant backward step". Their decision to bring the question of New Caledonia before the United Nations (through reinscription on the UN list of non-self-governing territories) reflected "a consistently expressed desire to see New Caledonia move to independence by peaceful means". The Forum also urged the French government "to give careful attention to the question of those eligible to vote, so that the result accurately reflected the aspirations of the Kanak and other peoples who had a long-term residence in and commitment to New Caledonia". As well, the Forum members "strongly urged that appropriate measures be introduced to protect the land rights of the indigenous people".

NUCLEAR FREE ZONE TREATY

The Forum communique noted that ten members had signed the text of the treaty presented in 1985 in Raratonga and four had ratified it. The treaty will come into force when eight countries have ratified it. In an effort to secure signatures for the protocols to the treaty (states eligible include France, China, USA, USSR), the Forum agreed to include a specific 'withdrawal clause' which allows parties to the protocols to withdraw "in the event of any unforeseen circumstances arising which would jeopardise their national interests".

Members of the Forum discussed progress in negotiations on a SPREP convention (South Pacific Regional Environmental Program) which complements the treaty in banning nuclear waste dumping and

nuclear testing. (Ed: the draft so far excludes the northern Pacific and therefore says nothing about dumping off the northern Marianas). Continuing negotiations will endeavour to obtain "general agreement" from France that the SPREP convention "will prohibit environmental pollution from nuclear testing".



FISHERIES

"Recognising the vital importance of fisheries resources to the region, the Forum expressed its disappointment and concern that the multilateral fisheries treaty with the United States had not, as yet, been concluded despite the best efforts of Pacific Island states."



France's Pacific valley of shame

JAMES McNEISH, in New Caledonia, reports on a growing scandal after the release of killers involved in a tribal massacre.

NOT SINCE the manhunt of Aborigines 100 years ago had the Pacific seen anything like the massacre by white settlers of indigenous tribesmen in France's Pacific territory of New Caledonia, revealed last week.

Journalists from English-speaking countries listened in shocked silence to the testimony of survivors of an ambush two years ago in which 17 unarmed Kanaks—half the adult males of the local tribe—were stopped by a felled tree while driving home in the mountains, then caught in a crossfire and hunted down by settlers armed with automatic weapons, dogs and searchlights as they fled for cover and tried to escape across a river.

Survivors told how the killers, among them a boy of 14, walked among the wounded and systematically finished them off at point-blank range as they lay groaning or struggling in the river. Ten Kanaks, indigenous Melanesians, died—among them, two brothers of the Kanak independence leader, Jean-Marie Tchibaou.

Bernard Maepas, 29, was shot in the abdomen; he hid under a patchouli plant, then crawled to safety. 'I kept hearing more shots,' he testified, 'then silence, then the dogs would bark and the men would find another wounded man and finish him off.'

'When I realised they had

gone away, I came out. The whole river was red with blood. I was walking on bodies. I felt I was going mad.'

Subsequently, more than 200 spent cartridges were collected at the scene. The shooting had gone on for half an hour. Five miles down the valley, French gendarmes, alerted within that time, did not move; they arrived only the following day, 16 hours after the massacre.

The ambush took place in the valley of Hienghene, 250 miles north-east of the capital, Noumea, on the night of 5 December, 1984. A week later, seven of the killers, third and fourth generation members of settler-families named Lapetite and Mitride, gave themselves up and were jailed.

Two weeks ago, after 21 months of investigation, the examining magistrate, François Semur, dismissed all charges against them, declaring that they had been acting quite properly in 'self-defence.' On 1 October, the seven self-confessed authors of the ambush were freed without trial and are now at large in Noumea, albeit in hiding.

News of their release has stunned diplomats and foreign residents here. But in settler-dominated Noumea (pop. 56,000), where not a single Kanak owns a shop or business enterprise, the seven killers have been allowed to go on State television to defend their



Death valley: Survivors return to the scene of the ambush where their friends were not so lucky.

actions, and the settler newspaper *Les Nouvelles* has greeted their release in terms of jubilation normally reserved for popular war heroes.

The Kanak side had not been heard until last week—hence the press conference, called by the New Caledonian chapter of the League of Human Rights.

One of the conference organisers, Jean-Pierre Deteix, described the dismissal of charges as 'a perfect illustration of French colonial justice in the Pacific.'

He declared: 'At no stage in his judgment did magistrate

Semur take into account evidence presented to him by the seven survivors. He relied only on the evidence of the accused.'

At least six other settlers implicated, including the local French postmaster, who had been cited by gendarmes or recognised and named by survivors, 'have not even been questioned,' Deteix added.

Magistrate Semur's judgment, 153 pages long, is a remarkable document. It describes the men who died, members of a small, poverty-stricken tribe pushed back to

the mountains during 133 years of French annexation, as 'aggressors' and 'terrorists.'

Basing his findings on a forgotten law relating to brigandage in pre-Napoleonic times, the magistrate claimed that the Kanaks had burned and pillaged the settlers' houses, after subjecting them to threats almost daily in the previous few days. The shooting, he ruled, was carried out in the 'exceptional circumstances of a war situation.'

The period of the massacre, December 1984, was certainly unsettled throughout New

Caledonia. But this particular valley was generally regarded as peaceful. The only settler's house burned may have been deliberately set on fire by the settlers themselves just before the ambush.

When the Semur verdict became known here on 30 September, it was expected that the public prosecutor in Noumea would lodge an appeal as was his right within 24 hours. He remained silent. According to the conference organisers, the prosecutor did not appeal 'because an hour before the deadline he received

a telex from Paris ordering him not to.'

In Paris, four lawyers representing the victims have gone on television and urged President Mitterrand to intervene.

Questions are now likely to be asked in the Australian and New Zealand Parliaments. These two countries recently took a leading role in a South Pacific Forum decision to send the New Caledonia case for independence to the United Nations. In reply to this, the French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, has sent a 'hands off' message to both Governments.

Neither Chirac nor the French Governor in Noumea, Jean Montpezat, have commented on the Hienghene case, as yet, although it is believed that Montpezat is privately outraged at the magistrate's decision and sought clarification from Paris before the killers were released.

Chirac's Government, already under pressure because of its nuclear policies in the Pacific and embarrassed by the world calls to grant New Caledonia independence—calls now being exploited by Tchibaou, the Kanak leader, at the United Nations in New York—seem likely to be further discredited as details of the Hienghene case are reported around the world.

François Semur, after 21 months of 'profound investigation,' may not have sunk another Rainbow Warrior but he does appear to have launched, unwittingly, a *cause célèbre* of equally damaging proportions.

UPDATES

Kiribati-USSR Fish Agreement Not Renewed

The one year KIRIBATI-Soviet fisheries agreement, under which the USSR was allowed to fish within the Kiribati 200 mile economic zone, has not been renewed. It seems Kiribati wanted more than the \$1.5 million they received last year under the agreement while the Soviets wished to pay less.

The agreement was noteworthy in that the U.S. touted it as indication of serious Soviet penetration of the region and suggested it was an opportunity for Soviet spying on U.S. missile testing in the Marshall Islands.

Seasoned observers of the Pacific saw it predominantly as an economic arrangement and a practical response by Kiribati to the failure of the U.S. to come to an agreement covering tuna in Kiribati's 200 mile zone.

That the agreement between KIRIBATI and the Soviets fell apart on economic grounds seems to uphold the view of the seasoned observers and to throw water on the "Soviet penetration" analysis of the U.S.

Islands — US Agree on Tuna

Pacific Island governments have finally come to an agreement on U.S. access to the tuna resources of island nations.

Negotiations over this issue have gone on for years, and have been marked by criticism of a U.S. policy which refused to recognize the 200 mile economic zones of island countries. In at least two countries - Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands - American tuna boats were seized and held. Under U.S. law such action brings about an immediate U.S. trade embargo.

Rumour has it that the island governments - working through the Forum Fisheries Agency - and the U.S. have now come to a five year agreement worth \$60 million.

The agreement will do much to heal a festering sore in island-U.S. relations. We hope to have details in the near future.

Belau Court Upholds Constitution

On September 17, 1986 a three-judge panel of Belau's Supreme Court delivered a unanimous decision upholding Belau's nuclear free constitution:

"Specifically, we hold that the four verbs, 'USE', 'TEST', 'STORE' and 'DISPOSE OF' in the nuclear control provision [of the Constitution] were meant to be a brief summation of all that could possibly be done with nuclear substances, in short, a general prohibition against the introduction of nuclear substances into Palau."

THE PALAU SUPREME COURT

The decision is a blow to the governments of Belau and the United States and to the United Nations, all of whom accepted the February 21st plebiscite vote of 72% in favour of the Compact of Free Association as indicating that the U.S. could transit nuclear weapons through Belau as called for in the Compact. The Court held that 75% approval was required.

The Supreme Court went even further in its decision, stating that Belauan land could not be seized by the U.S. for its benefit. Under Compact wording, the U.S. has the right to request sites for military bases and if the Belauan Government disagrees and cannot come up with a suitable alternative site within 30 days, then the U.S. would seize the site it desired.

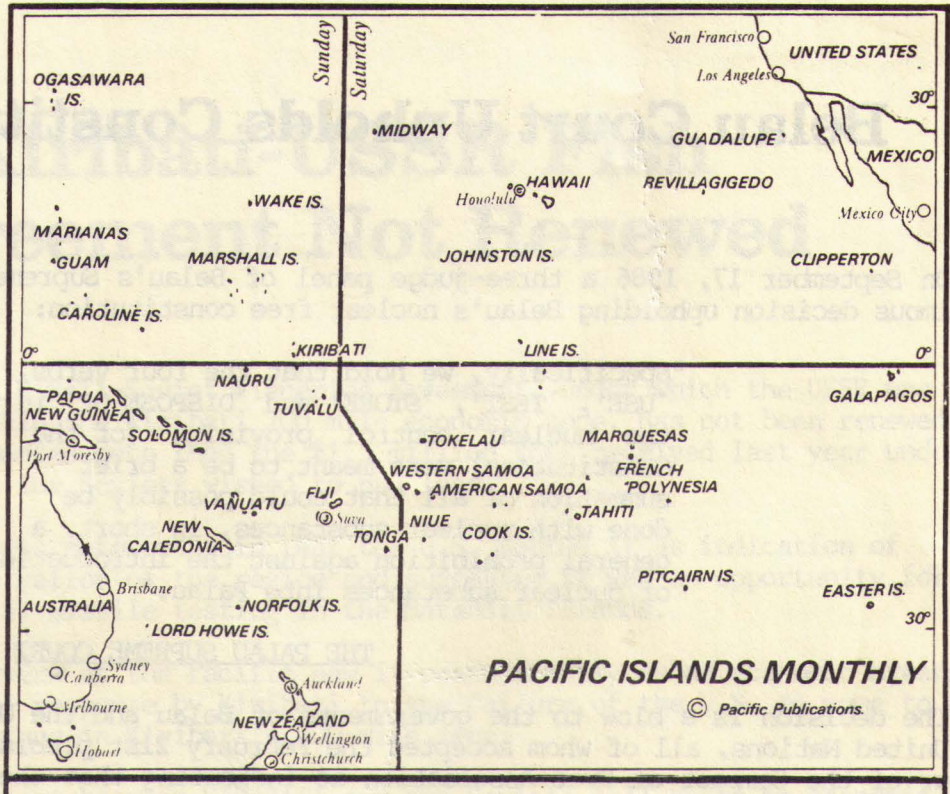
Late Flash — Yet Another Belau Plebiscite

Another vote will take place December ²~~15~~, as the government tries to get the 75% approval to overrule the nuclear free constitution. Word we have received is that many individuals and families are coming under great pressure, including threats, to support the government. Given past history, it is vital that there be an international observation team at the plebiscite.

Upcoming Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Meetings

FEBRUARY 13-15, 1987 at White Rock, B.C., the Fourth Canadian NFIP Support Network meeting.

OCTOBER 1987, in either Belau or the Philippines, the Fifth International NFIP Conference (last one was in Vanuatu, 1983).



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