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Man has lived in New Guinea for about 50,000 years. His history has been dominated by New Guinea's geography, unique for the natural barriers which it placed in the way of human movement. A vast cordillera runs the length of the island of New Guinea, enclosing the montane valleys of the Highlands; subsidiary mountain chains run parallel to it to the north; and to the south, in the west of Papua, is one of the largest swamps in the world. New Ireland, Manus, New Britain and Bougainville, the main offshore islands, are all mountainous.

The people of Papua New Guinea are the descendants of successive waves of immigrants from South-East Asia, and the inheritors of complex and varied cultural traditions. They speak about 700 languages. They build houses, plant gardens, marry, organise family life, and hold beliefs about the world in ways which reflect the country's continuing diversity. But beneath the diversity Papua New Guineans hold much in common from the past. Virtually all their languages belong to two broad groups, Austronesian and non-Austronesian. Virtually all Papua New Guinean peoples are gardeners living in settled rather than nomadic communities. All but a few peoples recognise achievement rather than birth as the fundamental qualification for a man who wishes to exercise political authority.

In Papua New Guinea the findings of modern scholars about the distant past influence current debates; they give people a pride in the depth of their history and in past achievements; they link apparently disparate communities; they show how Papua New Guinean groups are related to each other; and they provide evidence for land claims before the courts today.

Scholars now believe that people had begun to hunt and gather food in parts of the Highlands 26,000 years ago and were living there
20,000 years ago. Over the millennia these early New Guinea Highlanders, living in valleys between 1400 and 2000 m above sea level, evolved patterns of life which may well have been revolutionary in the history of Man. Recent archaeological research in the upper Wahgi valley near Mount Hagen suggests that New Guineans were among the world's first agriculturalists, growing bananas, pitpit, green vegetables, and possibly sugar cane 9000 years ago. These ancient farmers also appear to have kept domesticated pigs and developed complex drainage systems.

New immigrants arrived about 5000 years ago and occupied the coasts. They constructed elaborate seaborne trading systems, such as the Hiri between the Motu people of the Port Moresby area and Gulf peoples to the west, and the Kula ring linking south-east mainland Papua to the Trobriand Islands and the Louisiade Archipelago. Other trading systems, such as the Te of the western Highlands, linked inland communities with each other and ultimately with coastal peoples. Men involved in such trade exchanged not only articles of direct usefulness such as pottery, sago, canoes, stone adze blades and pigs but also intricate and prized shell-ornaments. They traded both for economic and ceremonial reasons, and observed complex rituals in the preparation and completion of exchanges. However hard life may have been for Papua New Guineans before modern times, it was not dull. Ritual, ceremony, dance, song and feasting recurred through every part of their lives in cycles which reflected the significance of planting, trading, marrying, going to war, dying, and much more.

Ancient Papua New Guineans were not as isolated from each other as the multiplicity of their languages seems to suggest; nor were they wholly cut-off from the outside world. Indonesian traders made frequent contacts with west New Guinea and possibly reached east New Guinea centuries before the coming of European explorers, and the Chinese apparently knew of New Guinea at the time of Marco Polo. The Europeans, however, were the foreigners whose interest in Papua New Guinea would eventually transform it.

Some Papua New Guinean communities first encountered Europeans 450 years ago; others made contact only after the Second World War. From the first landings of the Portuguese and the Spanish in the sixteenth century until the founding of the British colony of New South Wales in the late eighteenth century, Europeans and Papua New Guineans met rarely and in total ignorance of each other, with no idea of the others' language, customs, gestures or intentions.

Torres and Prado, sailing west from Peru in 1606, wanted fresh food and water. They reached Mailu Island on the Papuan coast. They made what they thought were signs of peace, but the Mailu Islanders responded by brandishing spears; so, saying the Lord's
Prayer and a war-cry, the Spaniards attacked, 'shooting them as they fled'. The Papuans lost the battle, and Captain Prado chose 'fourteen boys and girls of from six to ten years and sent them on board'. Those children became the first Papua New Guinean Christians. They were taught the Lord's Prayer, the ‘Ave Maria’, the Creed and ‘the Commandments and Articles of the Catholic faith’ by Spanish fathers in Manila, and were baptised ‘to the honor and glory of God’. The Mailu Islanders had fought the Spaniards without any desire to convert them to Mailu beliefs. The Spaniards, by contrast, were
early representatives of a European proselytism which continues to this day and which aims to save Papua New Guineans from the error of their traditional ways.

Once New South Wales was established, European ships en route to Canton or London sailed more frequently through the Louisiade Archipelago and past New Ireland. As early as the 1840s Pako of Woodlark Island to the east of the mainland had joined the crew of a whaling boat, visited Sydney and other ports, and returned home. Other islanders in the south-east living close to whaling grounds and shipping routes between Australia and Asia had become accustomed to canoe-to-ship trading. They took coconuts, garden foods and fish to foreign boats, and in exchange they obtained metal, cloth and trinkets. An observer in a ship of the Royal Navy anchored in the Louisiade Archipelago in 1849 reported that the people were ‘greedy for iron’. In fact, by the 1870s so much iron had been obtained by the south-eastern islanders that the villagers on southern Woodlark had ceased to quarry, chip and polish the stone axes which had circulated widely through the islands and along the south coast of Papua.

For much of the nineteenth century foreigners preferred their visits to New Guinea and its islands to be brief. But in the 1870s some decided on longer visits, regardless of the drawbacks, and a few settled permanently. Scientists went to observe. Traders began to work the reefs and lagoons for pearl-shell and bêche-de-mer (an edible sea slug) and to buy coconuts from villagers. Missionaries arrived to convert. A hundred miners rushed to Port Moresby in search of gold. A thousand European emigrants attempted in vain to found a new French colony in southern New Ireland. And blackbirders scoured the coasts of the islands in search of men to work on the plantations of Queensland, Fiji and Samoa.

The numbers of foreign boats in New Guinea waters increased in the 1870s. Pearlers and traders operating out of Thursday Island and North Queensland ports recruited crewmen from the Fly estuary and the coastal villages to the west, and travelled widely in northern waters. The scientists on H.M.S. Challenger spent a week on western Manus in 1875. They could find no record of any European visitor to the area since an American boat in 1843, yet immediately the villagers sighted the Challenger they came out in their canoes with their tortoise-shell made up in bundles ready to trade. On their return to England the Challenger scientists found that two museums and one private collector already had collections of Manus artifacts. The scientists guessed that they had been obtained by north Queensland traders. Men had obtained iron axes and tortoise-shell breast ornaments by commerce long before they knew of the communities that actually produced those goods.

Pearlers, traders and bêche-de-mer fishermen, working several hundred miles from their home ports, invited island men and
women to work on their boats for periods of two or three months. A few men from maritime communities chose to become crewmen for much of their working lives. They learnt to speak Pidgin English and lived and worked among the other Pacific Islanders, Malays, Greeks, Cape York Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, Japanese and Australians who manned the small boats operating to the north and east of Australia.

The first anthropologist to live in New Guinea was embarrassed at his own presumption in going to observe its people. He was a Russian aristocrat, Nicolai Mikluho-Maclay, who spent more than a year among the people of the southern Madang district in 1871-72. Soon after his arrival Maclay wandered by mistake into a strange village. The women and children hid, and Maclay was left facing a group of warriors armed with spears. Two arrows narrowly missed him. He did not reach for his gun, as so many Europeans in later years were to do in similar circumstances. Indeed he had decided to go unarmed, and had left his revolver at home, carrying only a pencil and notebook. In his diary he wrote of this meeting in the entry for 1 October 1871:

I looked around me — nothing but dark, hostile faces and unsettled looks, which seemed to say: why have you come to disturb our peaceful life? . . . I myself felt somehow embarrassed: why in fact have I come and bothered these people?

Maclay not only made observations about New Guineans, he made friends with them and was invited to stay permanently. In 1884 his was the only voice raised on behalf of New Guineans against the planting of the German flag. ‘The natives of the Maclay-coast,’ he informed Bismarck by telegram, ‘protest against German annexation.’

Captain Eduard Hershein was a different, more typical, foreigner of the precolonial years. A German trader who lived in the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain from 1879 to 1892, Hershein was in New Guinea to make money. For the sake of his business he endeavoured to keep on good terms with Papua New Guineans. He could not order them to make copra, but had to be satisfied with whole coconuts. These were the only terms on which village people were willing to trade. He supplied clay pipes, tobacco and guns of the quality demanded by his Papua New Guinean trading partners. But Hershein could also see profit in imposing German order on the islanders. He became Imperial German Consul in the western Pacific in 1882 and when his steamer the Freya was attacked in the Hermit group, he was glad to have two warships despatched to the islands ‘to investigate and to punish the natives’.

A majority of those who first brought Christianity to Papua New Guinea were South Sea Islanders: Loyalty Islanders, Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders and Fijians. In 1871 English missionaries of the
London Missionary Society placed Loyalty Island teachers among Torres Strait communities, and in the next year Loyalty Islanders opened the first two mission stations on the mainland, one bordering Torres Strait and the other further east of Manumanu. By 1884 Polynesian pastors or teachers manned stations from Wari Island east of the mainland to the Gulf of Papua in the west. Others worked for the Methodists in New Britain and the Duke of York Islands. Supervised by few English missionaries, the Polynesians suffered long periods without receiving stores or guidance from district mission headquarters. By 1889 half of the 187 Polynesian teachers and their wives had died of sickness or been killed. The impact of the teachers on the villagers had been uneven. Some teachers had lacked the qualities to enable them to influence others, and some villages or clans within villages chose not to believe the teachers. But by 1884 the teachers had had a profound influence at many points along the south coast. At Hula, east of Port Moresby, 100 children could read, and at other villages it was already the custom for children to sit in dusty schools. The teachers introduced songs and dances; and some villages still sing peroveta (prophet songs) in Rarotongan, the language of many of the early teachers and not understood by the villagers. Living in European-style cottages, wearing European clothes, possessing steel woodworking and gardening tools, introducing new crops, using different cooking techniques, and possessing new craft skills, the teachers imposed pressure across a culture. The structure of village leadership changed. Church deacons chosen from each descent group to administer church affairs discussed general village business. Previously many villages had had no formal institution linking the clans. Where mission influence was greatest and strong groups within a village were ready for change, the transformation took place with little apparent distress.

Foreigners, and sometimes the villagers, saw the Polynesian teacher as the richest and most knowledgeable man in the village. Most foreigners who wanted something went to the pastor. They could speak to him, and they hoped that he could speak to and influence the villagers.

Believing that they came from a ‘higher’ culture and that they had a duty to change the villagers’ beliefs, the teachers were sometimes dogmatic and arrogant. In areas where the villagers decided not to change their beliefs, a teacher’s behaviour could lead to prolonged intermittent feuds during which the villagers threw stones at the teacher’s house, damaged his food garden and urinated in his water supply.

In 1884 the first Papuans graduated from the London Missionary Society training school in Port Moresby. Like the Polynesians who had preceded them, the Papuan pastors had more European goods and knew more about the outside world than most other villagers.
The Papuan pastors tended to behave like Polynesians, the only other pastors that they and the villagers had known.

Before 1884 several thousand men from New Ireland, northern New Britain and south-eastern Papua had experienced a dramatic encounter with foreigners: they were taken to Queensland, Fiji and Samoa to work on plantations. Few of these islanders were actually kidnapped, but most who agreed to go on the recruiters’ boats did not know where they were going, how long they were going to be away, or what work they were going to have to do. Accustomed to trading with passing vessels and working for short periods for bêche-de-mer fishermen, pearlers and copra traders, they went out to meet the recruiters. When told, ‘you like tomahawk? You come on boat, you get them,’ they went on board. Some did not know what was expected of them until they were set to work on plantations. On their return to their home islands, the labourers carried boxes of trade goods, they knew foreign ways, and they could speak Pidgin English.

The coming of the foreign traders and missionaries had changed relationships between different groups of Papua New Guineans too. In one extreme case, Brooker Islanders, many of whom had worked on foreign boats and some Solomon Islander crewmen who settled with them, carried guns when they raided other communities in the Louisiade Archipelago. Generally, coastal communities living close to safe anchorages and shipping routes increased their wealth and power relative to inland people and isolated coastal villages. Once a community had formed a close relationship with a trader, missionary or government official, its members tended to become his spokesmen as he attempted to extend his influence, and they approached the foreigner on behalf of other communities wanting to meet him.

When Germany and Britain claimed control of the New Guinea region in 1884 a small number of Papua New Guineans knew a lot about Europeans, their goods and implements, their power and their beliefs. But most Papua New Guineans knew nothing of Europeans.

In October 1884 ten men from the Bogadjim area of what is now the Madang province of Papua New Guinea, put their marks on a piece of paper shown to them by Germans who came in a steamship. According to the piece of paper, which the Germans called ‘a treaty,’ those New Guineans allowed Germans to settle, obtain land, lay down plantations, and mine from the earth without hindrance; promised the Germans that their property and lives would be safe; and undertook never to dispute the Germans’ ownership of the land they acquired under German law. Near modern Madang men wearing elaborate, symmetrical pendants and armlets of teeth and shell signed a similar treaty. The New Guinean signatories to these documents did not get copies of them. There was no point in giving them
copies, a German official noted, because ‘even if a translation into their language had been possible, which, however, was not the case, they would not have been able to read it, and besides it could fall prematurely into unauthorised hands’.

The people of the Madang coast were pleased about the Germans’ visit, not because they perceived its significance but for the opportunity it offered to trade. They understood the visit in traditional terms and used it for traditional purposes: no other interpretation was conceivable. The mariners of Bilbil Island, renowned as makers of pottery in the region, sailed south in their ocean-going canoes to trade with the German expedition. Above all, they wanted iron, the hard metal which was to revolutionise their technology and halve their burden of work. The Germans watched as the Islanders quickly discarded stone axe-heads in favour of iron ones.

The Madang coast is on mainland New Guinea. The Germans were equally interested in New Guinea’s offshore islands. On 3 November 1884 the black-white-red flag of Imperial Germany was raised on the island of Matupit in east New Britain, which had been the home of a German copra trader for half a decade. For form’s sake, the farce of making a treaty was repeated. Whether they knew it or not, ten Tolai men ceded the vast area of Blanche Bay to Germany. They watched the ceremonial of the age of European expansion: the boats landed, 250 German marines formed ranks, Captain Schering read out a proclamation, and as the marines called three cheers for His Majesty the Emperor of Germany the flag was hoisted aloft. At Mioko in the nearby Duke of York Islands the following day, the Germans succinctly explained the significance of the flag-raising: ‘Bye and bye you kill white man,’ the Islanders were told, ‘man of war kill you.’ Germany was a new power seeking new influence, and annexed a whole colonial empire in 1884 and 1885 to prove it.

Britain was different. Not eager to extend her overseas domain further, but forced to do so because Australian colonists feared having Germany as an immediate neighbour, the British planted the flag in Papua in 1884 for reasons of imperial strategy: to protect the Australian colonies. To publicise the proclamation of the British protectorate at Port Moresby, Commodore James E. Erskine decided ‘to collect the chiefs of the neighbouring villages, to be present at the ceremony’. Using an interpreter the Commodore told the assembled ‘chiefs’ that they were now placed under the protection of Her Majesty’s Government; that men disposed to evil would not be able to occupy the country, seize land, or take people away from their homes; and that the British had come among the Papuans as their friends:

Always keep in your mind that the Queen guards and watches over you, looks upon you as her children, and will not allow any one to harm you, and will soon send her trusted officers to carry out her gracious intentions in the establishment of this Protectorate.
Commodore Erskine appointed a man of influence in the village of Hanuabada, Boe Vagi, as head chief of all the Motu people. Boe Vagi was given an ebony stick with a florin let into its head, which was meant to be a symbol of his authority and mediating role between people and government. In fact Vagi had no authority outside his own village.

The proclamation ceremony itself failed to arouse the interest of the people for whom it meant most of all. A British official wrote: I don't think I was ever so hot in my life, and we were very glad when it was over. The natives, who are beginning to get accustomed to seeing the flag hoisted, were apathetic, and only a few stragglers turned up. The distribution of knives and tobacco on the preceding day amused them far more.

Many of the men of the coastal villages near Port Moresby were away on the annual Hiri trading voyage to the Gulf of Papua, where they exchanged their Motu pots for sago.

The people of eastern New Guinea and its offshore islands now lived in German and British protectorates, though most were not aware of the fact. South-eastern New Guinea and its islands south of 8°S latitude became first the Protectorate of British New Guinea, then in 1888 the Crown Colony of British New Guinea, and in 1906 passed into Australia's control as the Territory of Papua.

The borders of the German possession changed a number of times. In 1884 it consisted of north-east mainland New Guinea (Kaiser Wilhelmsland) and New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover, Manus and other islands of what has since been called the Bismarck Archipelago. The islands of Buka and Bougainville in the Solomons Group were added in 1886 and remain as part of Papua New Guinea in 1979, but the Shortland Islands, Choiseul and Ysabel were German only from 1886 until 1899. In a deal by which western Samoa became German and Britain assumed influence over Tonga, concluded in 1899, Britain extended her Solomons border northwards to the Buin Strait south of Bougainville.

**NOTES ON CHAPTER 1**

In the massive compilation *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History Prehistory to 1889*, Jacaranda Press, 1975, J. L. Whittaker, N. G. Gash, J. F. Hookey and R. J. Lacey have made available evidence from hundreds of sources on the prehistory of Papua New Guinea, the intrusion of Europeans, early foreign settlement and the partition of eastern New Guinea between Britain and Germany. The extensive bibliography includes material published up to 1969.

Archaeologists' views about the life of Man in prehistoric Papua New Guinea change from year to year as fresh evidence is dug from the ground. Our conclusions rest mainly on recent unpublished


CHAPTER 2
BRITISH NEW GUINEA 1884-1906

A British Protectorate 1884-1888

The name ‘British New Guinea’ was written across the map of a quarter of New Guinea when most Papuans were untouched by foreign ways and when several thousand villagers were undergoing profound changes. For a few communities who had been meeting foreign boats for nearly one hundred years, the changes came slowly; others suffered dramatic encounters with a sudden disruption of old ways.

The raising of the British flag had little immediate effect on the speed and direction of change. The governments of the Australian colonies were anxious to keep non-British governments from New Guinea, but they showed no desire to foster the exploitation of their new lands. In fact, until 1942, governments in British New Guinea had to fight persistently to obtain sufficient funds to maintain basic administrative services. Before long only the three eastern Australian colonies contributed to the £15 000 annual grant for the administration of British New Guinea. Great Britain agreed to supply a steamer so that the head of the administration could inspect his domain.

General Sir Peter Scratchley, the Special Commissioner appointed to establish the administration of British New Guinea, arrived in Port Moresby in 1885. A retired British army officer who had advised the Australian colonies on defence, Scratchley met the seven white residents then living in Port Moresby, inspected the buildings of the missionaries and the storekeeper, and decided Port Moresby would be his capital. Situated against a narrow range of grass-covered hills, with a prolonged dry season, Moresby was thought to be healthier than other parts of the coast, it had a superb harbour and it was well-placed for communication with Australia. It was also the
only point on the coast where Whites had set up permanent residences. Scratchley then faced the more difficult problem of imposing peace. His immediate task was to stop violence between villagers and foreigners.

During the eight years before Scratchley's arrival in Port Moresby foreigners had been killed in eighteen reported clashes along the south coast. In some cases one man had been speared or axed; in others entire crews of ten or twelve men had been surprised and killed. The number of times that foreigners had fired on villagers who were thought to be hostile is unknown. Scratchley, after investigating six cases in which white traders had been killed, decided that there was evidence that all had either provoked attack by seizing women or cheating, or they were the victims of villagers out to revenge a wrong committed by a previous foreign visitor. Scratchley was usually unable to capture guilty villagers or explain to them the new rules they were to observe. One man involved in the killing of the trader Miller in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, dramatised the conflict between two sets of laws by coming on board the government boat and tendering wealth in items of ceremonial trade to ‘pay’ for the trader’s life. In other places the people fled at the sight of a foreign boat. Scratchley could inflict punishment on the group by firing on them or by destroying their houses and canoes; but this, he knew, punished the innocent as well as the guilty and it gave him no chance to explain why he acted against them.

Scratchley was also hampered by not having adequate powers to make and police laws. The declaration of a protectorate was sufficient to keep other European nations away, but it did not give Scratchley power to interfere in village affairs. He looked for a ‘tribal chief, who would also be a British official, as a trustee for the lands and responsible for the conduct of the inhabitants of his district’. In most coastal communities men inherited or attained positions of influence in particular clans, but few men had power over all clans within a village, and only a very rare leader could control events beyond his home village. Scratchley appointed some government ‘chiefs’ in areas where the missionaries knew the people well, but Scratchley was aware that his ‘chiefs’ could do little to expand and enforce British rule. Unlike many other areas which the British administered through chiefs, sultans or kings, white officers in New Guinea would have to take the new ways to the villages. As a result, the number of officers would be high and they would interfere more frequently at the village level than they did in most other British colonies. Once it was established — over the next eighty years — that foreign officials worried about family quarrels and pigs trespassing on food gardens, it was difficult to return responsibility to the villagers. The practice of dependence is not the path to independence.
Scratchley contracted malaria while in south-eastern New Guinea and died in December 1885 before the government boat reached Cooktown. ‘Blackwater fever’ — a severe form of malaria — had deterred foreigners from going to New Guinea, it kept many traders and visitors from spending time ashore, and it continued to inhibit them until 1942. The white inhabitants knew quinine reduced the effects of malaria, but tended to take it only after they were suffering from the disease. Quinine taken consistently would have protected them, but most were unable to keep to the recommended timetable of dosages. From 1899 they could read the findings of the British doctor Ronald Ross, who told them that *Anopheles* mosquitoes carried malaria, and therefore the incidence of malaria could be reduced by keeping mosquitoes from houses, especially sleeping areas, and by destroying mosquito breeding grounds. Drainage projects made some towns healthier, but Europeans continued to die of malaria and blackwater fever into the 1930s. Health authorities then generally agreed that it was impossible to protect the Papua New Guinea villagers from malaria.

Scratchley’s successors struggled under the same burdens that Scratchley had known. They had few and uncertain powers; they had little money, which they obtained with difficulty from the Australian colonies; and they had few staff members, some of whom were always sick or without the means of travelling to places where they were most needed.

The main problems faced by officers of the Protectorate attempting to impose peace can be seen by looking at one violent incident in 1886. Sudest and Pana Tinani Islanders from south-eastern Papua killed Captain J. C. Craig and his crew of three Europeans and five Malays, and looted his boat, the *Emily*. Henry Forbes, the government officer at Samarai, mounted a gatling gun to a schooner and hired Nicolas Minister and his cutter. Minister, a trader already notorious for his disregard for government regulations and his ruthless treatment of islanders, collected and armed a troop of villagers. Under Forbes’ general instructions, Minister and his troop shot people on Pana Tinani, burnt houses and destroyed gardens. Forbes and Minister had arrived at Pana Tinani three months after the looting of the *Emily*; they probably punished some people involved in the attack on Craig and his crew, but they also injured the innocent and some of the guilty went free; and they were still uncertain why the *Emily* had been attacked, although Forbes thought that the most likely explanation was that the assault had been instigated by an angry villager. One man believed that he had been promised a gun as payment, but it had not been given to him. After Forbes left the area the Pana Tinani and Sudest Islanders, now much weakened, were attacked by their traditional enemies. Some men who had served in Minister’s troops returned in the raiding parties. The government’s
action had been late, based on little knowledge, ill-directed, and it may have increased violence in the area.

A British Colony 1888-1906

In 1888 the British Government decided to assume power to make laws for all people in British New Guinea. William MacGregor was appointed to proclaim the change from Protectorate to Colony, and to become the first Lieutenant-Governor. Unusual among senior officials in the British colonial service, MacGregor came from a poor Scottish family, and he had trained as a doctor of medicine. Before going to New Guinea MacGregor had spent fifteen years in the Seychelles, Mauritius and Fiji, and he had broadened his experience from medical officer to general administrator. In Fiji he had confronted the fundamental problems of land, labour and the imposition of British laws on alien cultures. Possessing a fine mind and extraordinary physical energy, MacGregor was able to get things done in spite of scarce funds and a cumbersome system of superior government. MacGregor was dependent on the £15 000 provided by Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, and he was expected to submit estimates, reports and drafts of laws to the Governor of Queensland, who then passed them to the Secretary of State for Colonies in England and to the premiers of the Australian colonies. The system worked because MacGregor was confident and determined, and because governments in London, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne were usually uninterested in British New Guinea.

After MacGregor had been in British New Guinea for nine years he and other senior colonial officials were asked to comment on proposed model regulations on flogging. MacGregor replied that as a young medical officer he had witnessed flogging. He was convinced that it reduced men to 'stolid brutality' or 'contemptible cringing servility'. No adult prisoner in British New Guinea, MacGregor said, had been flogged, in fact the prisons had been the 'best educational establishments in the country'. MacGregor told the Secretary of State that flogging was a practice unknown to the people of New Guinea, and he would not sanction its introduction, except in the case of an assault on a white woman. Always expressing his opinions clearly and forcefully, MacGregor was both tough and humane. On his arrival in Port Moresby he passed legislation preventing Papuans from obtaining firearms, liquor or drugs; prohibiting the sale of land except to government officers; and stopping Papuans from being employed away from their home districts. The legislation was sufficient to show editors of north Queensland newspapers that MacGregor was a 'nigger-lover', a prisoner of the 'maudlin' policies of the missionaries and without sympathy for white
pioneers who risked all to civilise new lands. The editors were soon to applaud MacGregor’s toughness.

A trader, Captain Ansell, was killed and his boat looted just to the north of Milne Bay in 1888. By using armed white miners as special police, forming alliances with communities neighbouring the area from which the murderers were supposed to come and seizing hostages, MacGregor was able to make several arrests. In the process four or five Papuans were killed, about ten wounded, a village burnt and the people forced to submit to ‘much humiliation’. MacGregor took some leading men from the area to watch the trials of the arrested suspects in Samarai. After the trials six men were imprisoned for short periods and four were hanged before assembled crowds, one in Samarai, two at Chads Bay and one in Milne Bay.

MacGregor did not believe in using indiscriminate punitive expeditions which injured a community; he attempted to arrest the individuals thought responsible for particular crimes. But he also believed in meeting force with force. Encountering a group of warriors recently engaged in raiding, MacGregor would not retreat to avoid conflict; he was ready to use the occasion for the police to demonstrate the power of their rifles. If, for tactical reasons, a small government party was forced to retire, MacGregor was keen to return quickly in strength. He was frustrated by communities that chose to continue to fight their traditional enemies, but avoid direct clashes with government patrols.

MacGregor spread widely a knowledge of the *gavamani* (government), and in some areas the ‘once for all’ use of the ‘strong hand’ which he advocated worked. But his policies were not as successful as his crisp dispatches indicated. The small size of Papuan communities meant that although the government could inflict its ‘one sharp lesson’ on a group, another community only a few miles away would be uninfluenced. People living about twenty miles from where MacGregor had hanged the murderers of Ansell, killed a European miner. The people along the Mambare required many harsh lessons. Also, MacGregor’s punishments could have effects beyond his intentions. The death of five or more adult men could permanently damage the power of a clan; it would be less able to defend itself, form alliances or acquire wealth through work, marriage and trade. By using local communities in alliance with the police, MacGregor increased the prestige of one group while humiliating another. MacGregor’s patrols did not merely kill a few people in a total population of perhaps two or three thousand; they transformed relationships between groups which normally lived and acted separately.

At the end of his ten years in British New Guinea MacGregor said, ‘As a matter of simple fact the administration has practically had to
subdue by force almost every district now under control.’ But for many communities he could not argue that there was no other way for the government to assert its control. After all, missions were extending their influence and they were rarely involved in killing people.

When MacGregor left in 1898 few settlers or companies had attempted to exploit the resources of British New Guinea. A few men from many nations were still pearling, collecting bêche-de-mer, trading for copra and rubber, and cutting sandalwood. The total annual value of the products that they exported was only about £20 000.

Gold was the main export, the reason why most foreigners went beyond the beaches, and goldminers were the main employers of Papuans. Prospectors first discovered gold worth working on Sudest Island in 1888, and later they made strikes on Misima and Woodlark Islands. At their heights both the Louisiade and Woodlark fields attracted about 400 Australian miners, and, especially after the finding of gold on the upper Mambare in 1896, several hundred miners attempted to find and work gold on the mainland. Although some Islanders suffered a massive disruption to their lives, they did not attempt to fight the miners, and the miners were rarely guilty of brutality. To the surprise of the miners, some Islanders acquired the skills of washing alluvial gold and sold their gold in the traders’ stores. The Islanders continued to work the old fields long after white miners found them no longer profitable. On the mainland, people along the Mambare, Gira and Kumusi rivers fought the miners in a series of violent clashes, forcing MacGregor to try to quicken the spread of government influence. By 1898 the miners on the northern rivers were still in advance of government control and the Orokaiva warriors of the area were challenging the miners’ attempts to travel and work in their lands.

MacGregor conquered the land of New Guinea. Before and during his years of government others attempted inland exploration and often failed; but by adapting his means of travel to the nature of the country and by dogged persistence he demonstrated that foot patrols could penetrate deep into the interior. He used boats to map the coast and he ascended all the principal navigable rivers. MacGregor set the practice that government officers would travel and see the people in their home villages.

Over 100 Papuans were serving in the Armed Native Constabulary in 1898. Often recruited from among communities who spoke no English and never handled rifles, the police quickly became an effective force. As the police at government stations and on patrols were most able and willing to talk to villagers they became intermediaries explaining the aims of governors and governed to each other. The police acquired prestige and independent power. By
selecting the information that they passed from one side to the other, the police could influence both government officers and villagers. Men were eager to join the police, and those who had served a term in the force returned to their villages with increased status.

In villages where the government’s power was known, MacGregor appointed Village Constables. A separate body from the Armed Native Constabulary, the Village Constables had no special training: they were clan leaders who had assisted government officers, or men who had acquired some knowledge of the outside world by going away as policemen, labourers and prisoners. Such men were given a cap, a uniform and £1 a year to act as government representatives. They met government officers on patrol, reported disputes, sickness and problems. The government officers expected the Village Constables to encourage their people to keep the villages clean, maintain the government rest houses, carry the stores of government patrols and surrender suspected criminals and deserters from labour contracts. The Village Constables had no authority from the central government to settle disputes or impose penalties, but like members of the Armed Native Constabulary, strong men added to their power by using their position as informants to government officers.

Waiting for Australia 1898-1906

Sir William MacGregor was succeeded by Lieutenant-Governor George Le Hunte, 1898-1903, Acting Administrator Christopher Robinson, 1903-04, and Francis Barton, 1904-07. All three were hampered by coming to office in a time of transition. The agreement between Great Britain and the Australian colonies for the funding and direction of the administration in Port Moresby ran out, and it was replaced by a temporary arrangement pending the federation of the Australian colonies. The new federal government was expected to take sole responsibility soon after its formation. In the meantime no new policies were to be introduced. Atlee Hunt, the secretary of the Department of External Affairs, wrote after a survey of the area in 1905, ‘the Possession is now at a standstill’.

Hunt and others who said that British New Guinea was stagnant were thinking of it as a colony of white settlement. But for many peoples there was radical change. About 400 Papuan men were signing-on each year to work at the mines on Woodlark Island where the first gold-crushing machinery serving the reef mines at Kulumadau had begun hammering in 1901. Most of the men were recruited in the D’Entrecasteaux Islands, and they signed-on for one year at 10s. a month. The death rate was low – only eighteen labourers died in the three years 1903-05 – and by 1914 there were villages on Goodenough Island where all the men had spent time as a
'sign-on boy'. Labourers who went away to the northern goldfields, the Yodda and the Gira, were less likely to return home, and some survived to tell horrific tales of hard work in wet cold streams, long treks carrying stores from the beach to the mining sites, and fights with local villagers.

Every year between 1895 and 1910 some community living between the Waria and the Musa in the Northern Division was involved in a bloody clash with miners or government patrols. One government officer and at least seven white miners were killed. The total number of villagers and Papuans from other areas who died is unknown. Some patrols were savage. William Armit in 1900 acknowledged that he and his police had killed fifty-four people. Alexander Elliott shot forty in 1901, and Allen Walsh shot thirty-two in 1902. Six months after leading a patrol during which his police had fired 200 rounds 'all at close quarters', Archibald Walker wrote that the people along the Kumusi had attacked all government patrols to enter their lands and nearly every week for eighteen months they had raided the carriers supplying the mining fields. They had suffered crushing defeats and been driven from their gardens, Walker said, but spurning all offers of peace, they continued to muster men for further attacks. At the same time the Orokaiva practised the warfare among alliances of clans that had been going on before the foreigners entered the Northern District. As the Orokaiva gradually accepted peace, young men joined the police where they were much praised for their bearing, courage and tenacity.

Although MacGregor would have accused them of brutality, officers who led the most violent patrols claimed that they were continuing MacGregor's policy of maintaining the prestige of the government and delivering the one lesson. When questioned about the number shot on one of his patrols, Armit replied, 'Sir William MacGregor's instructions to me on more than one occasion were “never to allow a native to poise a spear preparatory to launching it, but always to fire before the spear could be thrown”.' Many Papuans died because officers extended MacGregor's practice of meeting force with force.

The violence in the Northern Division was rarely mentioned in Australian newspapers or parliaments but another incident attracted much attention. In 1901 the Reverend James Chalmers, one of the best known missionaries in New Guinea, the Reverend Oliver Tomkins and ten Papuans were killed at Goaribari Island in the Gulf of Papua. Le Hunte led two expeditions to Goaribari, but failed to arrest all the people involved and he did not recover all the remains of the victims. Robinson led another troop of officers and police to Goaribari in 1904.

When wild reports of mass killings reached Australia, the new
Commonwealth Government decided to hold a royal commission. After hearing of the inquiry, Robinson, who was already suffering from malaria, committed suicide. While it is unclear how many people were shot at Goaribari, more were certainly killed on several patrols in the Northern Division. The fickleness of Australian concern in demanding an inquiry into the ‘Goaribari affair’ and being uninterested in the shooting in the Northern Division was to recur. Australians were often content to have no knowledge of events in Papua New Guinea, but it was an ignorance broken by brief moments of passionate concern.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

Protectorate of British New Guinea records are held in the National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby; Australian Archives, Canberra; Public Record Office, London; and in the papers of the Royal Navy, Australian station. Much of this material has been published in Annual Reports and in the parliamentary papers of Great Britain and the Australian States. Some papers from the Royal Navy and the Public Record Office have been microfilmed.


MacGregor’s years in New Guinea have been examined by Roger Joyce in Sir William MacGregor, Melbourne, 1971. Many of MacGregor’s despatches are reprinted in Annual Reports. MacGregor’s diary from 1890 to 1892 is in the National Library, Canberra. The letters of John Green, government officer, microfilmed by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, A.N.U., are a valuable source of information on the early years of MacGregor’s administration.

Little has been written about the period from 1898 to 1906. One article is H. J. Gibbney’s ‘The Interregnum in the Government of Papua, 1901-06,’ The Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol. 12, no. 3, 1966, pp. 341-359. In addition to providing a biography of Chalmers, Diane Langmore, Tamate – A King: James Chalmers in New Guinea 1877-1901, Melbourne, 1974, gives some general history. Outstation records, particularly from the main centres such as Samarai, are available from before 1906. Held in the archives in both Canberra and Port Moresby, the outstation records give much information about what was happening at the point of contact between government officers and villagers. C. A. W. Monckton’s books are sometimes inaccurate, but they are also interesting and revealing.

The four Christian missions to operate in British New Guinea, the
CHAPTER 3
AUSTRALIAN PAPUA 1906-1942

Australia Takes the Burden 1906

In 1901 the newly formed Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia considered a motion expressing the Commonwealth’s willingness to pay £20 000 a year to meet the cost of administering British New Guinea, and to make British New Guinea an Australian Territory. After failing to persuade the British government to pay part of the costs, the House of Representatives agreed unanimously to provide the annual grant of £20 000. The members were less certain that they should accept a part of New Guinea as a Territory of the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, had spoken of ‘a continent for a nation and a nation for a continent.’ Tasmania was part of the nation; New Zealand was not. But New Guinea? Barton and some other members implied that the Territory would one day be an Australian State, yet on other days members were declaring that Australia must be white, its migration laws must exclude Pacific Islanders and Asians. When members finally decided they would add a tropical territory to the Commonwealth most seemed unaware of the questions left unanswered. Would white Australians accept a predominantly black State? Did members think that by the time the Territory became a State it would be dominated by white settlers? Were members going to give freedom of movement and full political rights to Papuans? Would Australian tariffs and bounties be extended to goods produced by Papuans?

In 1901 the members did not have to answer those questions; and they certainly thought that Australia should extend her power into the Pacific. Australia’s defence and trade, members believed, depended on exerting Australian influence in the arc of islands to the continent’s east and north, and they thought that Australians somehow would be more efficient, more just, than the old European powers were in their colonies.
The members talked at greater length about the land to be their first territory when they debated the Papua Bill. The Papua Bill, in effect, proposed the constitution for the government of the Territory and gave British New Guinea the new name ‘Territory of Papua’, and proclamation marked the formal transfer of authority to the Commonwealth of Australia. Many members saw New Guinea as the place where Australians would make amends for their crimes against the Aborigines. The people of New Guinea were not to have all their lands taken, be sold alcohol or be reduced in numbers. Generally ignorant of the legislation already in force in British New Guinea, some members thought that they were pioneering benevolence for ‘natives’ when they inserted basic protective clauses in the Papua Act. The continuity of practice from the British to the Australian administration was not a deliberate taking over of British policy. Changing the name from ‘British New Guinea’ to the ‘Territory of Papua’ was part of the members’ concern to mark what they thought were the differences to be expected now that south-eastern New Guinea had passed to new managers. Delayed by ardent members who wanted to include a clause preventing all residents, black and white, from drinking alcohol, the Bill was not passed until 1905, and not proclaimed in Port Moresby until 1906. The members did not realise what a difficult task they had set Australian administrators: they wanted to protect Papuans from harm, and wanted Australians to settle and prosper in an Australian territory.

The Papua Act had provided a legal framework for Australian administration. But the three royal commissioners, Kenneth Mackay, W. Parry-Okeden and Charles Herbert, who arrived in Port Moresby in 1906 were expected to investigate the work of the public service and recommend a policy for the future. The commissioners travelled widely in Papua and the transcript of the evidence they collected is a remarkable record of the diverse views of the white population. William Durietz, a miner working in the Northern Division, said that the only way to deal with troublesome ‘boys’ was to ‘disperse’ them. When asked what he meant, Durietz explained that ‘they should be fired at, or something like that’. Albert English, who had worked as a government officer, planter and trader, complained that the Papuan was becoming more ‘slothful’. ‘I cannot,’ he said, ‘help noticing the lazy, lolling way of the natives. They will not even get out of your way.’ Charles Abel, a missionary at Kwato, showed the commissioners his workshops where skilled Papuans were using steam-powered equipment to build boats. The Kwato Papuans further demonstrated their mastery of European ways for the commissioners by beating the whites from Samarai in a cricket match. Henry Griffin, an experienced government officer, said that the Papuan ‘was fit to take his place alongside any Negro troops in the world’. But when they submitted their report the commissioners
decided that Papua was the country for Australians with pluck, energy and capital; most Papuans could be no more than unskilled workers.

The commissioners said that the 'hour has struck for the commencement of a vigorous forward policy, as far as white settlement is concerned'. The soil, they said, was well-watered, 'rich, virgin and easily worked'. Copra, rubber and sugar, they were sure, would be profitable crops. Coffee, tobacco, hemp, maize and cotton would probably flourish. The government was already preparing to make cheap land available. Australians would be owners and managers, and the Papuans, very few of whom had the innate capacity to acquire skills, would be labourers. By a neat piece of argument the commissioners then concluded that the development of plantations and mines would be the saviour of Papuans. Since warfare ceased and steel tools were introduced, the men were often idle, they were losing their vigour, and perhaps the population was already declining. Work, the commissioners proclaimed, was the answer. Papuan men were to sign-on as indentured labourers, the moral decay was to end, the Papuans would acquire new needs that could only be met by earning cash, and they would be caught in a healthy, useful cycle. The commissioners did add that from the 'pick and flower of Papuan manhood' the Commonwealth would recruit 20,000 to 30,000 black troops equal to any in the British Imperial Army. The Commonwealth, the commissioners thought, ought to be aware that it possessed this raw material of war if it ever faced an eastern aggressor.

**Hubert Murray, Lieutenant-Governor 1908-1940**

By recommending the resignation of many of the senior officers in the public service, the commissioners prepared the way for new men to implement their 'forward policy'. The man appointed by the Commonwealth government to be the first Lieutenant-Governor of the Territory of Papua, John Hubert Plunkett Murray, had been one of the most important witnesses to give evidence before the royal commission. Aware that he would be hated by many of his colleagues in the small white community in Port Moresby, Murray told the commissioners that government officers had offered 'passive resistance' to white settlers and miners, discouraged Papuans from working for cash, and admitted shooting 'a great number' of villagers on patrols. Barton, the Administrator, Murray said, was a weak man who favoured his friends among the senior officials. Murray did not adopt those views because he knew that the commissioners wanted to hear them: he had expressed them before in letters to his family. But in his letters he had given greater praise to the government for its concern for the welfare of Papuans.

From the time of his appointment as acting head of government in
1907 Murray faced extraordinary difficulties. Within the government service and among recently resigned officers who had taken up land were men who were made intensely angry by the mere mention of his name. The Australian government appointed Staniforth Smith to the second highest position in the Territory’s public service. Smith was ambitious, he believed that he had been promised the Lieutenant-Governorship, and he communicated directly with senior public servants and politicians in Australia. And the royal commission, encouraged by Murray’s evidence, had set a hopeless goal: the rapid development of the plantation industry.

Possessing many physical and mental talents, Murray had the capacity to withstand his enemies. Born in Australia and educated in schools in Australia and at Oxford University, he excelled at study and sport. He returned to Sydney having won the amateur heavyweight boxing championship of England and qualified in law. After failing to prosper as a barrister, he took positions in the New South Wales government service as a legislative draftsman, crown prosecutor and county court judge. He was often bored, despondent and drunk. He was given a respite by the Boer War when he was a successful officer in action, although he found much soldiering to be monotonous or repugnant. Appointed chief judicial officer in British New Guinea in 1904, he was then forty-two years old, a teetotaller, aloof, unpretentious, and a man who was conscious that he had not used his superior talents to advantage. He may have thought New Guinea was his last chance to fulfill the promise that he had displayed, but allowed to decline.

White Settlers Disappointed in Papua

For the first five years of Murray’s administration, public servants, white settlers and those few Australians who wished to judge the Territory’s progress looked at the figures for the area leased to planters, the acreage under crops and the tonnage produced. Murray and Smith (who was Director of Mines, Agriculture and Works) advertised the richness of Papua’s natural resources and the cheapness of the land for the white settler. The area under lease increased rapidly until 1911, but then declined as despondent settlers abandoned dreams. In 1940 the area under lease was still less than it had been in 1911. The area under crops reached nearly 24 000 ha in 1918, and stayed at about that level for the next thirty years. Most of the settlers had planted coconuts with smaller areas under rubber and hemp. While the planters’ hopes were high, the white population grew steadily to reach 1219 in 1913. It was about the same in 1939.

The settlers often blamed the government in general, and Murray in particular, for making Papuan labour expensive and inefficient, not building roads and wharves to service new industries, and failing
to find markets for plantation products; but these were minor factors in the failure of many plantations. The truth was that any products that could be grown in Papua could be produced more easily elsewhere and arrive at the main markets of the world costing less. Many of the white planters who remained in Papua were bitter men. They felt that they had been promised wealth and importance, they had carried the burdens of pioneers, and they had invested heavily in time, work and money; but their returns were low, they were constantly in debt, they were criticised for exploiting the blacks by people they thought of as ignorant do-gooders, and they had no effective voice in the government.

Most mining ventures in Papua also disappointed investors and diggers. The reef mines on Woodlark declined and a new alluvial field opened on the Lakekamu provided fair returns for a few diggers only. The cost in labourers' lives on the Lakekamu was high: over 200 Papuan indentured labourers died in a dysentery epidemic during 1910, the first year that the field was worked. Investment in coal and oil prospecting returned nothing. A copper mine developed inland from Port Moresby flourished briefly in the 1920s. The most profitable Papuan mine was Umuna, on Misima Island, where a company worked a rich gold lode first prospected by alluvial miners in the late nineteenth century. The Umuna mine employed about 700 Papuans during the 1930s and returned high dividends until it ceased production with the threat of Japanese invasion in 1942. At times the Umuna mine was probably the only company operating solely in Papua to be showing a profit.

When Murray gave his evidence before the royal commission in 1906 he supported trial by jury in cases involving white men, and, although he was not enthusiastic, he agreed that settlers should elect representatives to the Territory's Legislative Council. But throughout his lieutenant-governorship he resisted all the white residents' attempts to gain the right to elect members to the Legislative Council, and made sure juries were called rarely. Murray soon learnt that most of the Australians he encouraged to come to Papua opposed his attempts to protect or promote the welfare of Papuans. In 1913 he wrote to his brother, 'I am coming to the conclusion that any white community left with absolute power over "natives" would resort to slavery within three generations.' The white residents made few sustained attacks on basic legislation passed in the Territory, but whenever a plantation overseer was convicted of ill-treating a labourer, especially if Papuan witnesses had spoken against him, they wrote letters to the press and members of parliament in Australia distorting facts and making hysterical claims that Murray was oppressing the white community. The campaign against Murray reached its height in 1919 and 1920, but the venom and extreme racism of the most aggressive whites lost the sympathy of some of
the settlers and excluded effective support from Australia. Although Murray outlived his most bitter enemies, he always had to reckon with a section of the white community that was easily moved to intense hostility, and he frequently worried about being replaced by someone less able and less inclined to protect Papuans. Murray may sometimes have allowed the passing of petty regulations which gave privileges to the white community in order to placate his critics while he maintained what he thought were the basic rights of Papuans.

The Papuan Villager

Murray did not want to see Papuans, a ‘race of peasant proprietors’, turned into a ‘landless proletariat, entirely dependent on the plantations for their livelihood’. He consistently opposed demands by employers to be allowed to recruit women and children, and lengthen work contracts. Murray succeeded in allowing Papuans to remain villagers and gardeners who could choose whether or not they worked for wages. But Murray would have been under much greater pressure had plantations flourished as Murray himself once thought that they would.

Murray was more directly responsible for instilling into officers and police that they must limit the use of force. In 1909 he issued a circular, ‘Firing on Natives’, informing officers that they were never to fire on villagers to punish them, and listing the occasions when a police officer could lawfully fire on another person. It was, Murray said, the government’s policy ‘not to resort to force except in cases of necessity when all other means have failed’, and even though an officer might have a good defence against a charge of manslaughter that did not mean that he would necessarily escape censure. Subsequently government officers and police did use their guns, but they knew that they would have to justify their actions before an inquiry. Officers and police accepted the ideal of patrols succeeding by calm, persistent bushwork. The ideal was attained by Charles Karius and Ivan Champion in their crossing of New Guinea from the Fly to the Sepik, a long journey through difficult country among previously uncontacted people and achieved without violence. When Murray issued his instructions against ‘Firing on Natives’, the Germans in New Guinea were using heavily armed patrols as a normal means of punishing unruly villagers, and Australians later used punitive patrols infrequently against Aborigines in northern Australia and against villagers in the Mandated Territory of north-east New Guinea.

In 1920 Murray wrote that ‘chopping wood and scrub and picking weeds at ten shillings a month’ might be a satisfactory way of introducing Papuans to wage labour, but it was not to be the end of
government policy. In words that did not win him friends among the settlers, Murray went on to argue that ‘if the whole race can hope for nothing better than to be, till the end of time, hewers of wood and drawers of water for European settlers, I do not think they will have much cause to be grateful to the democracy of Australia’. He proposed to start village plantations from which half the value of the produce returned, in cash, to the villagers and the other half financed welfare programmes throughout the Territory. If the Papuan, Murray said, was shown how to use his land productively, taught to read and write, given the chance to learn a trade, and instructed how to keep his family healthy, then he would have been given ‘as good a chance as any native ever had’.

At the same time as he wrote publicly of the need to provide greater opportunities for the Papuan villager, Murray was advocating in dispatches to the Commonwealth Government that Papuans be nominated immediately to the Legislative Council, and in five years or so Papuans who had passed standard two in the mission schools be permitted to elect their own representatives.

The Papuans gained little from Murray’s plans for their advancement. The village plantations suffered alongside those of the settlers during the low world prices of the 1930s. Most villagers received less from their share of copra, coffee and rice sales than they could have earned as unskilled labourers. Many always thought of the plantations growing alongside their villages as something belonging to the government, and they kept them in production only because the gavamani gaoloed them if they did not.

Money obtained by the government from the plantations and taxes on adult males brought minor benefits to the villagers. The government subsidised mission primary and technical schools (at a cost of about £4500 a year), increased village health services (£5000 a year), provided a newspaper (The Papuan Villager) which circulated among those who could read English, paid the salary and expenses of an anthropologist, gave 5s. a year to each mother of at least four children, assisted village agriculture, and provided a few footballs and other objects that might entertain or uplift the villagers. The total expenditure was sufficient to anger some white men who forgot that the money came from the Papuans themselves, but the amount going to any one village had slight effect. No Papuan was given a vote for the Legislative Council and no Papuan became a member. Murray, it seems, had used the threat of giving Papuans representation to counter settler arguments for increased and elected representatives. Village councils were formed in some areas but the councillors had practically no funds to spend and no power to make or enforce decisions.

A casual visitor seeing a village near Daru or Port Moresby or Milne Bay in 1910 and returning again in 1940 would have noticed
few changes. Perhaps there would have been more kerosene lanterns, trade-store cooking bowls, and European tools, a better church and a cricket pitch. But the clusters of thatched houses, the swept ground, the ornamental plants, the tracks leading to gardens and the canoes pulled up under shade on the beach would have looked much the same. While the material life of the village remained fairly constant, important and less obvious changes were taking place in the beliefs of the villagers and in their ceremonial life. The changes were most marked across the Papuan Gulf where the people abandoned the building of the giant *erave* houses and the staging of the dramatic festivals centred on them. About two-thirds of all villagers lived free of the fear of hostile raiders, but they still believed that their enemies inside and beyond the village directed sorcery against them. Their opportunities to earn cash or find a way of life outside the village had scarcely changed. They were only slightly healthier, and some communities suffered a population decline due to the impact of new diseases – these were clearly less healthy.

**Restraints on Government Activity**

There are several reasons why missionaries and government officers provided little assistance to Papuans wanting to change village economies, direct their own affairs and acquire the highest skills of Europeans. Firstly, they thought that there was no point in giving a Papuan an education he could not use. Given the slight economic development and the low level of government activity, there were few jobs for educated people of any race. Further, as Murray pointed out, Australians at home and in Papua placed a 'colour bar' against the educated Papuan. They would not employ him or allow him to use his talents as the French permitted a black African or New Zealanders allowed Maoris. Some members of the white community found repulsive the suggestion that a white woman might be treated by a Native Medical Assistant. Their repugnance had little to do with their distrust of the Papuan's medical knowledge. Murray thought the 'colour line' undesirable, and he hoped it would disappear in time, but while it remained he thought it sensible to spread elementary schooling widely rather than educate selected Papuans into conflict with most of the white community.

Secondly, many Europeans accepted the simple argument that as the Papuan was born with little ability it was foolish to expect him to do much. Some missionaries believed that while Papuans would never understand the finer points of theology, they could accept Christianity with a pure and childlike faith. Murray himself rejected the idea that the Papuan was a 'child', an argument also used by employers who wanted the right to chastise labourers. He thought that if a comparison had to be used then it was with the peasant: the
Papuan was ignorant of the outside world, superstitious; but a man. In 1938 Murray wrote that "Papuans could be found who could be educated to the standard of an ordinary professional career". Most of the white community thought that his assessment of Papuan ability was ludicrously high, but Murray did not think that Papuans were equal to Europeans. After much reading and personal observation he had concluded that while some Papuans had the ability to become doctors and lawyers, the average Papuan was born with less intelligence than the average European. Murray's judgement was supported by the first government anthropologist appointed in Papua, but by 1938 other and more eminent anthropologists were saying that people of all races were born with the same mental capacity.

Thirdly, when Murray first took up his position as Lieutenant-Governor he may well have believed that his primary task was to see that the Papuans survived. The Australian Aborigines, the American Indians, Fijians and some other Pacific Islanders had declined in numbers, and might, it seemed, soon be extinct. Anthropologists who carried out fieldwork before 1925 showed that Melanesian cultures were not simple but complex, integrated and possessing a richness unknown to outsiders. Some fieldworkers and many armchair commentators decided that the disintegration of a group's culture was the main cause of its numerical decline. The conclusion drawn by many colonial administrators was that change must be imposed slowly; there could be no dramatic disruption to a way of life. Had Murray in the 1920s been told that he had protected Papuans from harm, but done little to transform their basic economic and social conditions, he would probably have thought that both protection and slight change were worthy achievements. But, by the late 1930s, the population in some areas of Papua (and in other parts of the Pacific) was clearly increasing, and fear of depopulation could not justify a failure to provide opportunities for Papuans who wanted change.

Fourthly, the Papuan administration had little money. Its total revenue (including the Commonwealth grant) was £85,000 in 1913-14 and £166,000 in 1938-39. The administration of the Mandated Territory had an income of just under £500,000 in 1938-39. The Papuan government secretary was frequently forced to instruct officers to make petty reductions in expenditure: medical assistants were told to use less cotton wool and carry empty bottles back to the government station so that they could be re-used. The Papuan government's decision to pay a small subsidy to mission schools rather than start their own was largely an attempt to make funds go further. Senior officers would have preferred to develop a system of government village schools, but knew it was impossible.

Hubert Murray died in Samarai in February 1940. His last letters showed that he was still reading widely, suffering from boredom,
and eager to get away from Government House to visit more isolated parts of the Territory. He was seventy-eight years old. He had been knighted. His books and lectures on the administration of Papua had been praised by social scientists. He was known widely as a great Australian. His enemies had either died or become almost reconciled to his 'native policy'. In fact, some of the white residents had come to feel that the acclaim given to Murray's policies extended to them; that they treated 'their natives' better than other colonists treated theirs. Murray, it is true, had protected Papuans from gross abuse by employers, had ensured that Papuans could use the courts, and had attempted to extend government control peacefully. During his years as Lieutenant-Governor the Papuan was treated better in these ways than the Aborigines of Northern Australia or the people of north-east New Guinea. But when Papuans speak in praise of Murray they remember him as a man they could talk to; he seemed to care about them. His letters and diaries show that he did indeed know and care about particular Papuans. Before he went on leave he received men and presents at Government House; and when he arrived in Brisbane he sent cards to Oala, Laria, Gava, Goata, Kabua, Lohia, Mala... To his discredit, Murray administered and extended a long list of discriminatory legislation. A Papuan on a street or in a public place could not behave in a threatening, abusive, insulting or disrespectful manner towards any European, and he was not to beg or loiter. A Papuan who signed on as an indentured labourer had to be in the quarters assigned to him from 9 p.m. till daylight, he could be gaoled for 'neglect of duty', and he had to have permission from senior government officers before he indulged in any dancing, beating of drums or other noisy pursuits after 9 p.m. A Papuan not under a work contract was not allowed within 5 miles (8 km) of Samarai or Port Moresby unless he had evidence that he could support himself while in the town area. A Papuan could not attend entertainments with Europeans. The penalty for the attempted rape of a white woman was death. A Papuan could not wear clothes above the waist unless he belonged to a special group such as mission teachers or he had a permit. Most of the regulations were petty, but for those Papuans in the cash economy they were pervasive. They reflected and enforced the European community's demand for privileges, and for protection against a people whom they thought of as 'primitive'.

In spite of the 'colour bar', the legislation inhibiting Papuans, and the slight economic development of the Territory, the number of Papuans leaving their home villages increased. Nearly all who did so were men and they left temporarily as unskilled indentured labourers. But in all the main administrative and commercial centres there were 'new' families. Men, perhaps serving as non-commissioned officers in the police force or working as skilled tradesmen, married
women from other districts, then brought up their children where they worked most frequently: in Port Moresby, Daru, Samarai and Bwagaoia. The families formed close relationships with local villagers, but the children, not having a clear path to prestige or land ownership in the villages, were likely to spend much of their lives in the cash economy.

Because Murray was head of the administration for so long and because he wrote so frequently and persuasively about his government, events between 1906 and 1940 are often seen through his eyes and explained by his actions. Yet it seems clear in the case of the medical assistants that the initiative lay with one of his officers, and it is generally true that a part of the ‘Murray policy’ was sponsored by his senior assistants and largely implemented by them. As one of them wrote in a review of Lewis Lett’s biography of Murray:

Sir Hubert was the head of that administration, and the guiding hand largely, but he was not the sole force in it – he was not ‘the horse, the wagon, and the little dog running behind’.

The Papuans themselves also initiated change and resisted plans which others tried to impose on them. The people on Woodlark Island would not sign-on to work as indentured labourers for the mining companies but they did acquire the skills of the alluvial miners and continue to earn cash for themselves through the 1930s when the prices for copra and shell had collapsed.

The Minister responsible for Territories and other politicians in Canberra rarely interfered directly with Murray’s administration. One exception was James Scullin’s 1929-32 Labor government, which instructed the Papuan government that two men who had been sentenced to be hanged were to be imprisoned. The influence of the Scullin government was much greater in the Mandated Territory. Thirteen men were hung in the three years before Scullin came to power, none were hanged in 1931 and 1932, and thirty were hanged in the next three years.

Murray has been criticised for attempting to force Papuans to accept Australian legal and political systems, for not adapting sufficiently to Papuan ways. But, until his death, Murray assumed that he had to prepare Papua to become in the distant future a state of the Commonwealth of Australia. If that was the aim of the Australian government in the Territory, then Murray could argue that it was desirable for the legal and political systems of Papua to become like those of the various states. Murray cannot be held responsible for failing to prepare Papuans for independence when he did not think it was his job and his superiors did not tell him to do it. He and Australian politicians can be criticised for not extending to Papuans some of the benefits enjoyed by citizens of the states, and, perhaps, by the late 1930s Australians should have begun to redefine their
aims in Papua and New Guinea. Unlike most others, Murray did contemplate the problem. He wrote to his brother in 1939:

in Papua the ultimate fate of the natives is as part of an Australian State — in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea it is independence. It may seem rather ridiculous that New Guinea natives should ever be independent — yet we contemplate the independence of the Philippines, and in a hundred years the New Guinea natives might easily be the equal of the Philippinos today.

In another thirty-six years an independent Papua New Guinea government was hiring Filipinos to take positions in its public service.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates record the public attitudes of Australian politicians during debates on the motion to make Papua a Territory and on the Papua Bill. The ‘Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Present Conditions, including the Method of Government, of the Territory of Papua, and the Best Method for their Improvement’ is published in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1907, and the transcript of evidence is attached. It is a rich document.

Hubert Murray’s despatches are in the National Archives of Papua New Guinea and the Australian Archives. His judge’s note books and some other papers are also in the Australian Archives; much family correspondence is in the Australian National Library, Canberra; and a manuscript of memoirs is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Murray wrote two substantial books, Papua or British New Guinea, London, 1912, and Papua of Today, London, 1925; and most of his lectures were published. Francis West’s careful biography, Hubert Murray: the Australian Pro-Consul, Melbourne, 1968, has a bibliography; and West also edited an excellent collection of Murray’s letters, Selected Letters of Hubert Murray, Melbourne, 1970. L. Lett wrote an earlier biography, Sir Hubert Murray of Papua, Sydney, 1949. Amirah Inglis in her study of the passing of the White Women’s Protection Ordinance, Not a White Woman Safe . . ., Canberra, 1974, says much about Murray, the peoples he administered and the forces he confronted. Edward Wolfers, Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea, Sydney, 1975, has a general outline of the legislation passed to control meetings between Papua New Guineans and foreigners.

Several government officers (Beaver, Champion, Hides and Humphries) and missionaries (Abel, Butcher, Chignell, Dupeyrat, Holmes, Newton and Saville) wrote books. Anthropologists pioneered their discipline and told us a lot about themselves and particular Papuan communities: Armstrong, Fortune, Jenness and Ballantyne, Landtmann, Malinowski, Seligman and Williams. Full

CHAPTER 4

GERMAN NEW GUINEA 1884-1914

Company Colony 1885-1899

The first European government of New Guinea was run by a private business firm, the New Guinea Company of Berlin. The German government granted the Company a charter to administer the colony and to occupy so-called 'ownerless land'.

Adolph von Hansemann, the wealthy banker in charge of the New Guinea Company, knew nothing about the Pacific and never visited New Guinea. But he was determined to invest heavily and reap handsome profits. He decided to concentrate the Company's activities not on the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago – New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover and so on – but on the mainland, which was given the name Kaiser Wilhelmsland. And his original intention was to found a colony of German settlement in Kaiser Wilhelmsland populated by thousands of industrious German immigrants. The land which Hansemann had got from New Guineans for a few paltry trinkets would then, he hoped, be re-sold to the settlers at much higher prices. Hansemann was a land speculator on a grand scale.

The first New Guinea Company expedition set out from Berlin in June 1885, reaching Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula in November. The Finschhafen villagers almost certainly mistook the Germans for ancestors returned from the dead. They welcomed the Germans and were delighted to sell them land. One old man threw his arms around Captain Dallmann of the expedition. Both New Guineans and Germans were new to imperialism.

On the mainland coast the company men were among the first Europeans ever seen by villagers. Traditional village life had hardly been touched by foreign influences. The people used stone axes, wore bark clothing, and had travelled no further than trading canoes took them – to Siassi or southern New Britain.
The situation was different in parts of the offshore islands. In the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain and in New Ireland there were village men who knew about the Europeans, men who had already spent years as plantation labourers in Queensland, Fiji and Samoa, who could speak Pidgin, who wore cloth laplaps and leather belts, and who in 1885 had long since adopted steel in place of stone. The islands, unlike the mainland, had a tradition of contact.

The year in which iron came, 1886, was a time of novelty for the people of the villages near Finschhafen. Whole families and clan groups besieged the German settlement offering to work, clearing bush and carrying rocks in a great uproar. In return they earned hoop-iron, axes, beads and mirrors. The Germans were pleased at first. The governor thought the New Guineans seemed to be aware of the advantages which Europeans brought them and was confident they would become willing labourers. The future of the colony appeared to be assured.

But the Germans were soon disappointed. Instead of working in the regular, disciplined manner of the European working classes, the New Guineans came to work at their own convenience for short periods. They were not compelled to work by the need for bread because they did not live in a money economy. After they had replaced their stone axes and obtained cloth and beads for decoration they began to lose interest in working for the Europeans at all. The Germans grew desperately short of labour.

To add to the company’s difficulties, no more than a handful of settlers came to Kaiser Wilhelmsland. The colony of white settlement never materialised, and the company had to turn to plantations as a way of recouping the enormous investment in buildings and shipping services which it made up to 1888.

New Guinea remained a company colony until 1899. During the 1890s the company’s development of the mainland coast deteriorated into a fiasco; in the islands, by contrast, a different group of independent foreign settlers managed to become successful planters and traders. In both parts of the colony power continued to be more in the hands of New Guineans than in those of Europeans.

The Germans’ colonisation of the mainland was based on the disastrous illusion that New Guinea could become another Java or Sumatra. Vast cacao and tobacco plantations were laid down on the coast south of Madang, expensive processing machinery imported, and thousands of labourers recruited in Sumatra, Singapore and the New Guinea islands. An army of foreigners landed on the shores of Astrolabe Bay in the early 1890s.

But that army was soon struck down by disease. Malaria and dysentery were followed in December 1891 by an epidemic of influenza which brought work to a standstill for weeks. A German planter recalled hearing ‘croaking and groaning’ from within the labourers’ huts when he disembarked at Madang at this time:
The Melanesians were especially affected by the sickness. It was really shocking to see how quickly often the strongest workers were carried off by influenza... One sick man, to whom I gave a glass of red wine, shook his head and said to me: 'Master, I drank it because you gave it to me, but it will not help me — I will be dead tomorrow.' And the poor fellow was right. He died the following day.

At the German settlement of Stephansort in southern Astrolabe Bay sick labourers lay with the pigs under the makeshift 'hospital', too weak to climb the stairs. Often corpses lay for hours beside labourers still living. About one in every two labourers on the mainland died in 1891 and 1892.

Conditions hardly improved during the 1890s. A visitation of smallpox which began in 1894 wreaked havoc among labourers and the mainland coastal villagers. Between March 1895 and February 1896 a quarter of the labourers on the plantations died, 537 out of 1946. Enfeebled by disease and drugged with opium, the Asian labourers were a burden to the company and a threat to the local population. But when many of the Asians were sent home in 1897 and 1898, there was no one left to take their place. The country where there was 'no kaukau [food], no Sunday, plenty fight, plenty die' no longer attracted even adventurous men from the New Guinea islands. As for the people of the Madang district, where the German plantations were centred, they remained fiercely independent of the foreigners, and unwilling to work for them. The Madang people were beginning to realise by the end of the 1890s that the Germans wanted to take more and more of their land; but at the same time the Germans seemed to be leaving. Plantations had been abandoned and were overrun by the jungle, the labour force was diminishing, machinery lay rusting and unused. In fact the Europeans' retreat on the mainland was only temporary; they were to come back in force after the turn of the century.

The colonisation of the New Guinea islands developed differently. The expatriates who settled on the coasts of the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain were not Prussians on two-year contracts like their counterparts on the mainland. They were a mixture: Hamburg seafarers and traders, British colonials, Chinese, Scandinavians, and most important of all, mixed-race Samoans who formed a community around the legendary Samoan-American planter Queen Emma. They were old hands of the Pacific frontier, without the New Guinea Company's illusions about the islands' economic potential, and they concentrated their efforts on copra. Unspectacularly but successfully, they traded with New Guinean villagers for coconuts and pearlshell, and planted coconut palms for copra. By the end of the 1890s they were exporting thousands of tonnes of copra annually while the tobacco plantations of the mainland languished. Hundreds of New Guinea Islanders worked as labourers on the plantations of New Britain.
The people whose land was used for foreign plantations in east New Britain were the Tolai. At first they resented loss of land and the encroachment of the foreigners upon their sacred places. Coastal Tolais killed a Filipino overseer in March 1890 as he attempted to build a road west of the small settlement of Kokopo. They claimed to own the land on which the road was being built. The expatriates organised a retaliatory expedition against the district of Bitarebarebe, and for a few days war raged in the eastern Gazelle. The foreigners’ army of New Guineans from elsewhere in the colony could be relied upon to burn down Tolai villages with relish, and did so. Solomon Islanders with axes and bows and arrows, New Irelan-
ders with spears and a few of the most trusted labourers with guns went into battle for their European and mixed-race employers. Significantly, peace was negotiated by the Tolai, not forced upon them. The foreigners burnt houses but they took no prisoners; instead they received peace payments from the Tolai in shell-money and had to promise in future to discuss compensation with village people before roads were built. The war of 1890 was not one of colonial conquest; it was more akin to traditional wars between roughly equal combatants.

Conflict flared up again in 1893. When a man from the village of Ulagunan said he had discovered a bullet-proof ointment, warriors flocked to buy it from him. On 17 September 1893, 300 warriors from different villages entered the main plantation at Kokopo and began pulling the cotton plants out of the ground. They were beaten off but continued to threaten the foreigners for months. Even the intervention of a German naval cruiser, which bombarded villages from offshore and landed sixty German troops, was not decisive. The Tolai decided to make peace with the foreigners for different reasons, probably mainly because they did not like being without the tobacco, cloth and other trade-goods which only the foreigners could provide.

A further war between the coastal Tolai and the foreigners may have occurred had not Albert Hahl arrived in New Britain as Imperial Judge in 1896. Hahl was a Bavarian who had spent his boyhood in a small village near the border with Austria-Hungary. He understood village life. After legal training and experience as a civil serv-
ant, he had come to New Guinea on his first colonial posting at the age of twenty-seven. Like his contemporaries, he believed in asserting the authority of the white man: that, after all, was what colonial governments were meant to do. Unlike many of his fellow colonists, he also believed that New Guineans had rights, and that recognising those rights would prevent needless bloodshed. He therefore set aside Tolai land reserves and persuaded planters not to press all their claims to Tolai land. Many coastal villagers decided to cooperate with Hahl in building roads because they improved communication
and trade. And from 1896 onwards Hahl appointed men in the
villages who were both minor magistrates and government
functionaries, responsible for settling minor disputes, bringing big-
ger ones to the government and enforcing the government’s will.
These men were first called lualuas and later luluais.

The New Guinea Company gave up governing the colony and
handed it to the German government in 1899. The company, which
lost millions of marks on plantations, had been trying for years to get
rid of the extra expense of running the administration. By that time
ordered colonial rule had been established in the coastal Gazelle
Peninsula. But the problem now facing the Germans was that the
Gazelle was in this respect an exception. Everywhere else in their
colony New Guineans rather than Germans were in control. If the
German writ were to run, the New Guineans’ independence would
have to be destroyed.

Imperial Colony 1899-1914

From 1899 German New Guinea was an imperial colony adminis-
tered by government officials. It belonged to that same colonial
empire in which the first wars of Wilhelmine Germany were waged:
16 000 out of 70 000 Herero people survived the suppression of their
uprising in German South West Africa; another 75 000 Africans died
before guerilla resistance in German East Africa collapsed in 1907.
The Germans did not go as far as this in New Guinea. With so
fragmented a population, with New Guinean political organisation
on such a small scale, they had no need to. But the Germans had the
same aims in Melanesia as in Africa. They sought to create a colony
for the white man, who should be able to survey his docile black
labourers from the comfort of a plantation bungalow. The New
Guinean’s part in the scheme was to do what he was told, to abandon
fighting and superstition and above all to sign a three-year labour
contract. Overwhelming force was to be used against any New
Guineans who objected.

With ten times as much money to spend on administration as the
company, the new government began to effect this plan im-
mediately. After fifteen years in New Guinea, the Germans in 1899
had only two government stations, one for the mainland at Madang,
and the other for the islands at Kokopo in New Britain. New stations
were rapidly established. The first, at Kavieng in New Ireland in
1900, was chosen mainly because the area was a rich source of
plantation labourers. Luluais were appointed in the villages by
Kavieng’s first district officer, Franz Boluminski, and were given
portraits of the ‘most powerful Luluai of all Germans’, Kaiser
Wilhelm II. Under Boluminski’s supervision, the northern New
Irelanders began to build roads, 100 km by August 1902. Three more
stations were added up to the end of 1905, all in the islands: Namatanai in central New Ireland (1904), Kieta in Bougainville (1905) and Rabaul in New Britain (1905). From 1906 the emphasis switched to the mainland coast and the Admiralty Islands: Aitape (1906), Morobe (1909), Manus (1911), Angoram (1913) and Lae (1914).

Under the company, German control had depended mainly on retaliation. If New Guineans attacked Germans or refused to cooperate, they were visited by a punitive expedition which came to kill and burn. Such expeditions were a response to New Guinean initiatives. The coming of a network of government stations after the turn of the century meant that the Germans could intervene before New Guineans attacked them. Foreign rule was no longer merely retaliatory, and the district officer carried out peaceful patrols as well as punitive expeditions.

The district officer’s job was to make his district safe and profitable for Europeans. He had to protect European lives, extend government through luluais, build roads, ensure that labour recruiters were getting all the villagers they wanted and return escaped labourers to their masters. He commanded a resident force of up to eighty armed New Guinean police. If hostile New Guineans were too much for his police, German naval vessels came to his aid with offshore firepower and landing detachments of German troops. And from 1911 he had the assistance of the mobile expeditionary troops based in Rabaul, a force of 100 to 125 New Guineans available for service anywhere in the colony. This was the armoury of the Germans’ conquest of coastal New Guinea.

The impact of that conquest on New Guineans varied enormously from place to place. Some New Guineans fought bloody battles which ended in catastrophic losses of kinsmen and land. Others submitted peacefully and lost little. But the results of the conquest were favourable for European enterprise everywhere. In the fifteen years of German Imperial administration, coastal New Guinea was transformed from a raw frontier into a plantation colony. In 1899 plantations were centred on the Madang coast and the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain. By 1914 they were to be found on the atolls of the North-Western Islands, on Manus, northern and central New Ireland, west New Britain, the Vitu Islands, eastern Bougainville and at points on the mainland coast from Finschhafen west to Aitape. For plantations to succeed, Governor Hahl wrote in 1911, the government had to suppress the ‘predatory and bloodthirsty tribes’, establish peace, incorporate the New Guineans into a system of rule and accustom them to work. And looking back he thought that these things had already been done in parts of the colony, at first ‘by numerous and difficult battles and endless cruising on the part of the Navy and the government steamer’ and afterwards by establishing government stations.
New Guineans in village after village on the advancing frontier of control experienced the same German tactics. The patrol, a German officer with thirty or forty armed police, would arrive, persuade one man to accompany them to a centre of settlement to learn Pidgin, or if there were Pidgin speakers already, appoint a luluai and a couple of tululs or interpreters. The cap and stick, badges of office for the luluai, would be presented to him. He would be told he was to help the labour recruiters, and that the government wanted every unmarried man to work at least one contract of three years for the whites. Then all the young men might be conscripted to build roads. Orders would be given that twenty new coconut palms had to be planted for every able-bodied man in the village. Some New Guineans responded to these demands with the arguments of independent people: why should they go away to work when there was plenty to eat at home? Why should they lose men who were needed to fight in local wars? Others were defiant. A Tomanairik villager, To Vagira, was said to have killed a man for doing roadwork for the whites. The southern New Irelander Gege threatened in 1906 to kill two luluais, eat them and feed pigs out of their luluai caps. The Bougainvillean Dwas prevented people from doing forced labour for the Germans south of Kieta in the same year. Two villages near Hatzfeldthafen on the coast west of Madang in 1910 sent a message to the district officer saying that they would kill him if he came with his police. People near Aitape killed a policeman in 1913 as he tried to catch escaped labourers. There were many such minor acts of defiance. Invariably the Germans met resistance with force: with a surprise dawn raid by police, naval bombardment or the landing of German marines to march through the villages.

To the planter, the New Guinean was useless unless he was a labourer. As one planter put it in 1912, ‘these natives are idlers almost without exception unless they are in the service of Europeans’. Governor Hahl was less adamant. He believed that New Guineans would benefit by working on plantations, but he was afraid that they would die out if recruited too rapidly. He wanted to preserve the New Guineans so that they might labour for future generations of German settlers, and his labour policy aimed at controlled, systematic recruiting. Districts were to be temporarily closed to recruiters when too many villagers were away from home. Asians were to be imported in thousands as contract labourers. The health of the population was to be improved. All these ideas were embodied in proposals which Hahl repeatedly put to the settlers and the German government in Berlin. But the governor was not the only maker of policy in the German colonial system: settlers and plantation companies were able to obstruct Hahl when he threatened to raise labour costs, the Reichstag was unwilling to spend money on New Guinea and from 1912 the German government diverted funds from the colonies to the army. Hahl did succeed in limiting and later prohibit-
ing the recruitment of women, whose employment by the Germans was helping to infect the villages of New Ireland with gonorrhoea and syphilis, and was contributing to depopulation. Against the protests of planters, he closed a number of areas to recruiters altogether, notably southern New Britain, the Tench Islands and some villages near Aitape. But these were minor victories. Much of his labour policy was never implemented. The Asian labourers whom Hahl had meant to take the load off New Guineans never came; planters found them too expensive. A vast army of New Guineans was pressed into service instead. About 42,000 contract labourers were recruited in the years 1908 to 1913, all of them from the easily accessible parts of the possession, the islands and a narrow coastal strip on the mainland. An inquiry into the possibility of universal forced labour, completed in 1913, showed that few men in controlled areas had still not worked for the whites. Governor Hahl estimated 100,000 people had been recruited in the colony up to 1913, of whom possibly 25,000 had died while under contract. About 6000 New Guineans went to the German plantations in Samoa, and 20 per cent of them died on the job. The Germans never controlled more than perhaps a fifth of the population, but those whom they controlled were made to pay for the blessings of civilisation.

The luluai who wanted to keep his job made sure the young men of his village volunteered as labourers and carriers. Under the forced labour regulation of 1903, New Guineans were required to work up to four weeks a year for the government, usually on building roads. From 1907 villagers could pay the head-tax instead. They had the choice of earning cash on a plantation or working off the tax on the roads. And in the last year of German rule the government began to conscript men into the police force. Some New Guineans welcomed the new opportunities brought by the white man and made careers away from home as police, personal servants, boats' crew and mission catechists. Whether they made a virtue of it or not, however, the obligation to work for the Germans became unavoidable for the people of controlled coastal villages.

The Germans used more force than the British or Australians in Papua, and they killed more people. Islanders of the St Matthias group who killed a party of two German explorers and nine carriers in 1901 lost ninety-three dead in battles with a punitive expedition. The avenging German force lost no one. The people of Paparatava in the Gazelle Peninsula and their allies who killed a planter's wife and child in 1902 mourned eighty to ninety kinsmen after the end of hostilities. District Officer Berghausen of Madang thought that about forty mountain warriors died in a single battle against the Germans and their Buang allies on 1 February 1911. A German expedition into the mountains of southern New Ireland in December 1913 consisted of five Europeans, ninety-two police and fifty-one
carriers. The fully-equipped New Guinean ‘police-soldier’, as the Germans called him, with his M/88 rifle or carbine and bayonet, was a deadlier foe than the New Guinea villager had ever known, especially when he was joined by German troops with machine guns.

The Germans had 650 police in New Guinea and the islands by 1913, twice as many as were employed by the Australians in Papua. It is ironic, in view of their trust in firepower, that the Germans’ control of New Guinea was so uneven. The government’s writ ran out fifteen kilometres inland in most parts of the colony; and on the coasts themselves the people’s obedience to the authorities varied enormously from place to place. Firepower made a difference, obviously. But alone it did not create the relationship between a New Guinea village and the German administration. New Guineans were not simply cowed into submission. Each community’s attitudes toward the foreigners grew out of colonial experiences unique to its particular people. Some saw advantage in cooperation with the government, especially if the government helped them fight traditional enemies. Their cooperation was welcomed by the Germans as evidence of ‘control’. Others, who were supposed to be under ‘control’, would suddenly refuse to provide carriers or build roads. Still others were crushed.

Two examples out of many may illustrate the argument. The first is that of the Yabem- and Kâte-speaking peoples of the Huon Gulf. They had been among the first mainland New Guineans to have dealings with the German colonists in the 1880s, when the capital of the colony was at Finschhafen. Yabem men worked on the plantations of the New Guinea Company in Astrolabe Bay to the west. In 1891 the German officials suddenly abandoned Finschhafen because of an outbreak of malaria, and the only Germans to remain were Lutheran missionaries. After the turn of the century government officials regularly visited the Huon Gulf; government police came to the aid of the Gulf peoples by repulsing the murderous attacks of the inland Laewomba; and a police post was put at Lac just before the war. But most of the Germans encountered by the Yabem and Kâte were missionaries rather than district officers or planters. The important foreigners were the missionaries.

Beginning in 1904, mass conversions among the Kâte people took place. Up to 800 onlookers crowded to the baptisms of new converts, and when a violent earthquake struck Finschhafen in September 1906 many saw it as a sign of the power of the Europeans’ God and flocked to the mission stations to become Christians. The mission, not the government, brought the outside world to the Huon Peninsula and the lower Markham Valley before 1914. European missionaries entered new territory unknown to government officials. Scores of New Guinean mission helpers went inland to carry the Gospel to the heathen. Villages were run as theocracies by
church elders who enforced church laws. The central event in the history of the Yabem and Kâte before World War I was not being conquered but being converted.

The second example is that of a people who did experience conquest, the Vitu Islanders. Possibly half the Islanders died in the smallpox epidemic which swept from the mainland up the coast of west New Britain in the mid-1890s. The New Guinea Company occupied the main island of Garove in 1897, finding the numerous coconut palms of the group a vital source of copra and seed coconuts. The Company trader on Garove was a Dane called Peter Hansen. When the islanders killed nine of Hansen’s labourers in 1900 and 1901 a German expedition retaliated by destroying villages, shooting resisters and making arrests. Trouble flared up again two years later when the New Guinea Company began to lay down plantations and mark native land reserves. This time islanders escaped to West New Britain in the New Guinea Company steamer after murdering thirteen people. Many later died in battles with police. Hansen, who had accumulated a harem of nine wives and was accused by islanders of rape and violence, was removed from the islands by order of the governor. But the administration ensured that the company had a free hand to exploit the area intensively. Police were stationed on the Vitu Islands, and in 1905 further arrests were made.

More and more of the Vitu Islands now became plantations. By 1913 30 per cent of their entire land surface was under cultivation, and 850 labourers – mostly foreigners to the islanders – lived there. The report of a district officer who visited the Vitu Group in 1913 reveals the extent of the people’s subjection to the Germans:

The young people are not against signing on, but they are held back by the old people, who claim to be unable to do without the working strength of the boys in exploiting resources of copra . . . On the island of Mundua one native put up fierce resistance to his son’s signing on and finally wanted to use force against me. His immediate arrest and sentencing, which soon became known on all the islands, will not fail to make its impression on the natives.

Head-tax at the rate of 10 marks is collected on all the islands. The only possibility of raising the tax money is for the natives to trade with the New Guinea Company and, indeed, on all islands except Unea, copra is the exclusive trading product. The New Guinea Company, which possesses the trading monopoly on the islands, pays the natives the amount of 50 marks for a tonne of green copra, whereas on the Gazelle Peninsula the natives get about 200 marks.

While some New Guineans may have had cause to rejoice at the ending of German rule, most New Guineans who had lived within the area marked on maps as part of the German Empire passed to new masters without ever meeting any Germans or agents of German imperial rule.
The records of Germany's Imperial Colonial Office are in the Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Potsdam, German Democratic Republic, and those concerned with German New Guinea are on microfilm in the Australian National Library, Canberra, and the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Some local records of the German administration in New Guinea are in the Australian Archives. German naval records are held at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, Federal Republic of Germany. The papers of the New Guinea Company and of Albert Hahl have been lost, though Hahl has left us an account of his governorship in Gouverneursjahre in Neuguinea, Berlin, 1937.


Observers of Papua New Guineans in German New Guinea published many of their findings in German academic journals. Important anthropological books were written by Richard Parkinson, Richard Thurnwald, Georg Thilenius, Hans Nevermann, Richard Neuhauss, and (jointly) Enril Stephan and Fritz Gräbner.
CHAPTER 5
AUSTRALIAN NEW GUINEA
1914-1942

Military Rule 1914-1921

German rule in New Guinea ended abruptly on 17 September 1914. The first Australians to go to England's aid in World War I sailed north to capture German colonies in the south-west Pacific. In the brief campaign at Rabaul New Guineans fought and died for their German overlords before His Majesty's Australian Naval and Expeditionary Force of 1500 troops took possession of the colony. A New Guinean observer described events in these words:

Whites shot at other whites . . . The English said to us: 'You have us to serve now; for the Germans are beaten and will never come back . . . ' The English plundered the Germans' store here and invited us to do the same: ' . . . take what you want!' I took one bundle of cloth . . .

That New Guinean, a man called Lokicne from the Kate-speaking people near Finschhafen, was literate in his own language. He had learnt to read and write in a Lutheran school. Hardly an Australian soldier in New Guinea during the seven years of military occupation would have believed that such New Guineans existed. To most Australians the New Guineans were an undifferentiated mass of 'kanakas', a 'backward branch of the human race' characterised by deceitfulness, cowardice, avarice and laziness. Even the official historian of Australia's campaign in New Guinea, S. S. Mackenzie, who served as Judge of the Central Court of occupied New Guinea and Acting Administrator, believed that the traditional form of government of 'native tribes' was based on 'usually hereditary' luluais. In fact New Guinea societies governed themselves in a wide variety of ways, usually not through hereditary chieftains, and the luluai system was a German invention imposed upon them.

'No More 'Um Kaiser. God Save 'Um King': in these phrases of
broken English, not Melanesian Pidgin, the Australians announced the new order to people at Rabaul. The Germans had been tough masters. The Australians were to be ignorant ones.

Australia's interest in New Guinea was not in the New Guineans, except as labourers; it was in the strategic value of controlling western Melanesia and the potential economic benefits of taking over German plantations after the war. Very few Germans were deported. Most were encouraged to develop their businesses so that the prize for Australia would be even fatter. German planters stayed on their plantations and German missionaries on their mission stations. New Guinea copra from 1914 went to Sydney rather than Hamburg, and government centres became base camps for Australian military garrisons, but the German plantation economy was undisturbed. For Australia the policy paid off: copra prices were high and planters extended their holdings considerably; copra exports almost doubled between 1914 and 1921; and when the time came for expropriation the value of German property was possibly 50 per cent more than it was at the start of the war. Ex-governor Hahl's fear was realised. His life's work in developing New Guinea was done, as it turned out, for the 'evil enemy' - Australia.

The first months of the occupation brought chaos to the colony's administration. The soldiers caroused and looted without restraint. 'Discipline,' as one officer put it, 'had never been their strong point, and as time went on it became more slack.' The commanding officer, Colonel William Holmes, saw his job as one of 'keeping things going and controlling natives, who are an ever present danger'. Holmes and his force were replaced in January 1915 by a garrison of 600 men under Colonel S. A. Pethebridge. A civil administration was now restored. Garrison commanders became district officers. Australian soldiers on outstations fought beside New Guinean police in keeping colonial order. For Pethebridge, colonial order meant doing with the natives what the Germans had done with them: taxing and recruiting. He decided to tax them all at the highest German rate, 10s. a year. As under the Germans, the man who could not afford to pay was able to work off the tax at the rate of 1s. for a week's labour. And men who signed-on as indentured labourers did not have to pay tax. Often not knowing what else they should do, some Australian district officers undertook patrols into remote villages for the sole purpose of collecting tax.

Recruiters were given a free hand. Armed recruiting parties roamed unchecked in areas remote from government influence, such as the Sepik and the Markham Valley. An apparently impressive body of labour legislation drawn up in Rabaul did nothing to stop fraud and kidnapping, because the military administration valued labourers above everything else. One officer admitted all the district officer could do if
the whole economic machinery of the Possessions were not to come to a standstill [was] . . . to make the boy touch the top of the pen, while he himself made the cross . . . . Apart from this he could do nothing but trust to the Lord that the recruiting agent had got the labourer in a fair and square way.

The number of labourers under contract rose sharply from 17,500 in 1914 to 28,000 in 1921.

Neither Pethebridge nor his four successors as military administrators had a philosophy of colonial administration. Their resources of men and money were far greater than those of Murray in Papua, but government influence actually receded under the occupation. District officers remained at their stations and undertook few patrols. Many of them seem to have found their duties in New Guinea tedious and irksome, unworthy of the men who volunteered to save an empire. They were not interested in New Guinea.

While missionaries and recruiters pressed inland, the military men stuck to the coasts. The Germans’ only inland government station, at Angoram on the Sepik, was abandoned by the Australians in 1915. The new Australian stations, at Vanimo near the Dutch border and at Talasea and Gasmata in west New Britain, did not come until 1918 and 1919 under the more energetic Brigadier-General G. J. Johnston. But even Johnston’s aim was limited. He wanted to ‘open up the back country and impose the collection of head tax’. And it was Johnston who introduced Field Punishment No. 1 as discipline for labourers when Australian public opinion forced the abolition of flogging in 1919. Having previously been put over the box and thrashed, the disobedient New Guinean was now strung up by the wrists and left to dangle as a warning to others.

Between the New Guineans and their Australian masters there was a vast gap in simple communication. Lacking understanding, many Australians resorted to bluster: ‘I told them I would crush them if they did not obey me’, a district officer wrote of the Laukanu people near Salamaua in 1919. He went on:

making suitable actions to express my meaning. I finished up by reciting ‘The Island Race’ – of which not even the interpreter understood one single word – but it was most effective. Each headman gave me his weapons in token of his absolute and complete subjection.

If an officer told his police to rush a village and shoot until his whistle blew he would have been sacked by Hubert Murray in Papua; in New Guinea he was doing what the Administrator expected of him.

The Mandate 1921-1942

Hubert Murray in 1918 wrote that the

Australian administration of German New Guinea is not very encouraging – the same old flogging seems to go on, with the same old imprisonment in dark rooms without
By ‘cleaning it up’ Murray meant introducing his Papuan methods of governing to New Guinea. He had been Lieutenant-Governor of Papua for a decade and his ambition was to become governor of a united Australian territory embracing both Papua and New Guinea. An amalgamated administration, he thought, would save money and act with greater humanity. New Guinea’s fate was not decided by Murray, however. It was decided by conservative Federal politicians and bureaucrats, whose principal adviser was the islands firm Burns Philp.

When Billy Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, went to Europe in 1918 to help the victorious nations sort out a new world, he was determined that Australia should annex New Guinea. The evil Hun was to be kicked out of Melanesia and the decent Australian put in his place. Hughes returned from Versailles the following year without having secured annexation; the Covenant of the new League of Nations made that impossible. But he had the next best thing: a ‘C’ class mandate for New Guinea. This meant that although Australia would have to submit to international supervision of its administration by reporting each year to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, it could govern New Guinea virtually as part of the Australian Commonwealth. One senator thought the mandate was ‘just as good’ as annexation.

A royal commission on late German New Guinea was appointed in 1919. The Hughes government wanted expert advice on depriving the Germans of their property and setting up a new civil administration, and it chose as commissioners W. H. Lucas, islands manager of Burns Philp; Atlee Hunt, Secretary of the Department of Home and Territories; and as chairman, Hubert Murray of Papua. Murray hated Lucas and Hunt. He once said he had ‘great difficulty in not killing them’; for where Murray believed that one of the main aims of a colonial government should be the ‘well-being and development of the native race’, his colleagues’ only concern was for the well-being of Australian businesses in New Guinea. As a Catholic, Murray was at a disadvantage in advising Billy Hughes from the beginning. And when he submitted a minority report which recommended a better deal for the New Guinean labourer, the nationalisation of the big German companies by the Australian government and the establishment of a government shipping line, his advice was inevitably ignored. It was the majority report which became the basis for the administration of New Guinea between the wars. New Guinea was to be administered separately from Papua; New Guineans were to be kept in their place; Burns Philp was to hold its subsidised shipping monopoly; and the German plantations were to be sold to ex-servicemen.
'It seems to me,' a government senator said in October 1921, 'there is too much Burns Philp entering into the administration, and too little regard for the real welfare and advancement of the Territory.' The scandal was obvious. W. H. Lucas had been appointed chairman of the Expropriation Board in charge of disposing of German property. It was a position more powerful than that of Administrator, and Lucas's resignation from Burns Philp did not alter his sympathies.

Article 2 of the mandate to administer New Guinea required Australia to 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory', and in its reports to the League of Nations Australia claimed to be doing much to educate, cure and assist New Guineans. League representatives were not fooled. Lord Hailey, a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission, writing after World War II, concluded that throughout the period preceding the Japanese invasion, administration would appear to have been directed largely to dealing with the conditions arising from the expansion of European commercial activity, rather than to any constructive attempt to deal with the needs of the native community.

Australian policy was to make the Territory pay for itself, and that meant leaving development to European private enterprise.

'Country under complete government control' appeared on official Australian maps of New Guinea between the wars in red or pink just as the British Empire did on school maps. In 1922 the red of government authority covered the smaller islands of the Bismarck Archipelago, and was confined to the coasts of New Britain, Bougainville and the mainland; it had begun to creep up the river valleys of the Waria and the Markham, but it represented little more territory than the Germans had claimed as under their influence. By 1931 the colour of control could be painted on both sides of the Sepik beyond Ambunti, which had been established as a District Office in 1924; it went further up the Markham and appeared on much more of the Morobe District; and it almost covered the inland of the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain. Splotches of blue, yellow and green showed that patrols had penetrated the upper reaches of the Sepik, Ramu and Markham. In 1939 pink covered more than half the Morobe District. And for the first time the colour of 'partial government influence' was drawn through the Highlands, filling the Asaro Valley, the Chimbu Gorge and the great Wahgi Valley as far west as Mount Hagen.

The extension of control sometimes caused needless deaths. After four white prospectors were killed by people from Nakanai in New Britain in 1926, a punitive expedition was assembled with fifty European civilians from Rabaul, a machine-gun detachment and ninety-eight police. Twenty-three Nakanai lost their lives in the unequal battle. The whole vengeful affair was reminiscent of Ger-
Taken from Annual Reports of the two Territories, the maps concede that over half of the people were beyond the Australian administration's control, but they still exaggerate the extent of government power. Some peoples of central New Britain were not under 'partial control' and no government officer had been close enough to the Papuan Highlands to make an intelligent guess of the population of those intensely gardened high valleys.
man expeditions of the 1890s. Seventeen Kwoma people died under fire from a punitive patrol in the Sepik in 1928.

Such slaughter was, however, the exception rather than the rule in Mandate New Guinea. Some deaths were unavoidable as Europeans penetrated the homelands of people who considered it their duty to kill all trespassers, but the best men of the field staff always strove to avoid hostilities. One of the best, J. L. Taylor, thought he had failed if he was forced to shoot. His huge Hagen-Sepik Patrol, which lasted for fifteen months in 1938 and 1939, completed the Australians' initial exploration of the Western Highlands and upper Sepik and, though not without incident, was a model of humane patrolling.

Peaceful contact was one of the few achievements of the Mandate Administration. It was encouraged by the Uncontrolled Areas Ordinance of 1925, which prevented Europeans from creating havoc in villages beyond the government pale. But it would have been impossible without a number of able patrol officers who endeavoured to understand and sympathise with the New Guinea villager, men such as Taylor, John Black, J. K. McCarthy, G. W. L. Townsend and Albert Nurton. The training course for patrol officers, introduced in 1927, helped to produce an educated administrative staff, and the competition among bright young men for a post in New Guinea became intense during the depression of the 1930s.

Much of the patrol officers' time was spent not in making peaceful contact but in administering the colonial system in controlled areas. This mainly involved supervising the recruiting and employment of labour, and collecting the head-tax. In Pidgin, recruiting was called baim boi ("buying boys"). The recruiter paid the recruit 15s. when he agreed to sign-on and gave him a laplap, blanket, spoon, bowl and box. Then he took the recruit to the nearest district office, where he was medically examined, given a dose of powdered quinine and castor-oil, and signed-on by having his fingerprint recorded. Administration officials found themselves enforcing labour law when they presided over the minor Courts of Native Affairs, because the most frequent charge was brought against labourers who broke the curfew between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. And collecting tax also, on occasion, meant impelling village people to work for Europeans. Lack of money forced men to sign on. The Director of Native Affairs admitted in 1937 that if the head-tax were abolished or even reduced, 'many industries of the Territory would be unable to carry on for want of labour'.

The colonial system worked in favour of the cash economy controlled by Europeans and Chinese. No New Guinean owned a plantation, gold mine or trade store. Most Europeans could afford to employ a personal servant, but New Guinea was no haven of guaranteed status for them either. When the German plantations were sold to ex-servicemen in 1926 and 1927, copra prices were high and
bidding was fierce. Firms put up dummy ex-servicemen to tender for plantations and lent others the money to buy. Then came the depression. Copra prices fell disastrously and the ex-serviceman, deeply in debt to Burns Philp or W. R. Carpenter, became little more than an unpaid plantation manager, forced to sell all his copra on his creditor’s terms. New Guinea exported the same amounts of copra in the years 1928 and 1934: 63,500 tonnes. In 1928 it was worth £1,760.040; in 1934 its value had fallen to £283.329. The area under plantations expanded in the inter-war years. Its expansion was built on the sweat of New Guineans and debtor Australians alike.

The Australian ex-servicemen had gone to New Guinea to take up plantations as part of their reward for services given to their country; they expected to be prosperous pioneers, respected in Australia, and liked and obeyed by their labourers. They made no money and found their labourers as hard to control as Australian soldiers on leave. Planters found that they were forced to behave in ways that they had previously despised: they treated their labourers harshly or they pretended to belong to a superior class of humans who directed a rigid class society. Instead of receiving the respect of other Australians they spent a lot of time justifying their behaviour and explaining their poverty. Many were bitter men.

Like the plantations, the gold industry ended up in the hands of the big companies. An extraordinarily rich alluvial gold field was discovered by Bill Royal and Dick Glasson on the upper reaches of Edie Creek, a tributary of the Bulolo, in January 1926. Prospectors raced to the strike, the biggest New Guinea had ever known, and by the end of 1926 200 of them had pitched tents at Koranga Creek, 1000 m up, or at Edie itself, a further 1300 m above sea level. The rush for gold caused a rush for labourers. ‘We have just got to get those coons,’ wrote a miner. Recruiters could get as much as £30 a man, and they scoured the villages in search of labour, persuading, cajoling and threatening. Within two years 3200 New Guineans were supporting the gold mines as labourers. One of those labourers, a man from the Huon Peninsula called Jonae, warned his compatriots not to sign on in an article published in a Lutheran mission magazine in 1927:

You lads of Heldsbach, Kpolahalu, Kpembung and Wareo, I write this in our paper so that no more of you come here! This place is bad. So do not listen to what your chiefs, church elders and teachers say, and stay away! Many beatings take place here. Enormously heavy pieces of iron have to be dragged about. Often the earth slips away when the mountainside is being dug and buries the labourers alive. . . . The whites use the streams as toilets and yet we have to drink the water and use it for cooking. But they say: ‘The blacks are worthless’ and so they do everything possible to us.

By the 1930s most men like Jonae were no longer in groups of ten or twenty, working for individual miners. They worked instead for the companies. The small prospectors had moved on to the High-
lands, the Sepik and Bougainville, lacking the capital to exploit low-grade alluvials and officially discouraged anyway. The big money was made by shareholders of the Bulolo Gold Dredging Company, which was paying 60 per cent dividends by the late 1930s. Together with New Guinea Goldfields Limited, it dominated production of gold. For the thousands of New Guinean labourers on the goldfields, Wau-Bulolo had the attractions which now draw men to Port Moresby, Lae, and Arawa: money and excitement. Some men spent their three years’ wages in hiring a plane to fly over the goldfields for half an hour. In 1938 over 7000 New Guineans were indentured for service in mines; nearly 21000 worked on plantations.

Gold made the mandate administration wealthy compared with Papua. But the administration was spending less on education for New Guineans in the 1930s than in the 1920s, and its much greater expenditure on health care benefited the labourer much more than the villager. The one success at village level was the campaign against yaws. The old German priorities were maintained by the Australians: business first, and all else afterwards. Every aspect of the Australian presence in New Guinea reflected these priorities. The extension of control was guided by the quest for labour and gold, just as in German times the lures had been labour and copra. Government posts were placed where recruiters and goldminers were already at work or where they intended to go. When Assistant District Officer Jim Taylor entered the Wahgi Valley of the Highlands for the Administration in 1933, he did so together with Mick and Dan Leahy, gold prospectors who were acting for the New Guinea Goldfields Company. Menyamya, opened as a patrol post soon afterwards, was closed again when gold prospectors reported that prospects were poor. ‘New Guinea,’ wrote the man who established the post, J. K. McCarthy, ‘was run on a pittance, and there could be no expenditure on new posts unless dividends followed in the shape of gold.’

Plantations and gold mines needed low-paid, obedient labourers. The government made sure that such labourers were available in tens of thousands. The number of New Guineans under indenture grew from 17500 to over 41000 between 1914 and 1939, as recruiters pressed further into the Sepik, Aitape and Morobe Districts, and maintained their activities elsewhere. Indentured labourers could be gaoled for refusing to work, for deserting their masters and (from 1938) for ‘causing disaffection’ among their workmates. A maximum wage of 10s. a month, justified on the grounds that New Guineans should not be encouraged to fritter away their money, applied until 1933. New Guineans were the ‘boys’, legally forbidden to strike; Australians were the ‘masters’, secure in their economic dominance.
An administration which put business first was sensitive to businessmen’s views. The district officer who encouraged village cash cropping or kept employers to the strict letter of the labour laws could expect at best to be mocked by the Europeans as a ‘kanaka man’, at worst to be demoted. Planters and traders were always ready to complain about anything which smacked of mollycoddling the natives, such as health care and education. A proposal for hospitals to halt the depopulation of New Ireland was denounced in the Legislative Council as a scheme of ‘maternity homes for stone-age mothers’ and nothing further was done. In 1929 seven young men in Rabaul were selected to go to Queensland for further education. They were to become the first properly trained New Guinean teachers in government schools and the administration hoped that more might follow them. But after the Citizens’ Association protested, the Administrator dropped the plan. Those Australian citizens correctly suspected that education was revolutionary: once educated, the New Guinean would no longer be the manageable unit of labour he was. The Bulolo Gold Dredging Company in the 1930s had similar motives in constantly moving men from one job to the next so that they could never acquire special skills. Men with skills might strike.

The Australians held the power in inter-war New Guinea. They frequently showed their contempt for New Guineans, and their pride in the white race, by enforcing a social separation of the races. This was not universally the case: patrol officers often treated their police with respect, some missionaries lived as equals with their converts, and planters on isolated out-stations were not always rigid upholders of white supremacy. But in the towns social life was ruled by apartheid. The New Guinean was allowed near the European only to serve him. The black man at a dinner party was there to serve the dinner; he entered the bedroom to make the bed; he was at the tennis court to field the balls. He could expect to be beaten for disobedience, even though this was against the law. Writing from New Guinea in 1921, the young Marnie Masson commented that all the planters and district officers she met relied ‘on a good hard bang to cure an unwilling boy’.

Where the Germans wanted to be feared and obeyed by the Melanesians, and the British to be respected and obeyed, the Australians, coming from a society which made much of social equality, wanted to be liked and obeyed. It was an impossible combination, as the new chum arriving in the territory soon discovered. A young Australian, newly arrived in Salamaua in 1929, wrote in his first letter to his parents:

I employ a boy and he is bound to me for three years, if I require him, at the rate of 4 shillings a month... He calls me at 6 a.m. — sets out my whites and bath water,
makes the bed — that is smoothes out the sheet and stands at attention with the shoe-horn in readiness.

When the Australian’s servant, Nagele, failed to live up to expectations as a loyal and grateful ‘boy’, his employer quickly adopted the standards of other Australians in Salamaua. To try and make friends with a ‘coon’, he wrote, was to invite him to take advantage of you. Nagele proved ‘the one fact recognised in this Territory — that all natives are thieves, liars and have no sense of gratitude’. The Australian wanted gratitude from a man he was paying 4s. a month.

Forbidden to strike, without trade unions and suspicious of men who did not speak his language, the indentured New Guinean labourer rarely protested about his working conditions in an organised way. Desertion from work was usually the act of an individual, not a group. The great exception to this was the Rabaul strike of 1929.

When the Australians of Rabaul awoke on the morning of 3 January 1929 they found their servants missing. ‘My coon’s not here,’ one European told a neighbour, ‘and the damned stove’s not even lit.’ ‘Me too,’ said the neighbour. ‘My boy is gone. I’ll teach the young bugger when he comes back.’ ‘Washboys’, ‘cookboys’, ‘gardenboys’, even the ‘policeboys’: all were absent. About 3 000 New Guineans, virtually every native employee in the town, had gone on strike. Overnight they had marched to the Methodist and Catholic missions outside the town, where their leaders asked for an increase from the usual wage of 5s. to 6s. a month to £12 a month. They hoped the missionaries would transmit their request to the employers. White men were taking gold from the country, a strike-leader explained, and the labourers wanted more pay.

The strike failed. About 190 police were sentenced to six months’ hard labour; twenty-one leaders got three years’ imprisonment. Many served their sentences carrying on the terrible track from Salamaua to the goldfields at Wau. Many died.

For the Australians it had been a frightening experience. While she was peacefully asleep, one European woman wrote, ‘only a mile away there were thousands of blacks just needing the slightest thing to make them finish us up properly’.

Some Australians had one comforting belief: the New Guineans could not possibly have organised the strike themselves. Brigadier-General Wisdom, Administrator of eight years’ experience, thought that anyone ‘with any knowledge of the native mind would have known at once that it was incapable of planning a revolt’. He attributed it to ‘white influence’, ‘a religious fanatic or some other fanatic or Bolshevik influence’. In fact the strike was carefully organised by a boat’s captain from the Tanga Islands called Sumsuma, together with police Sergeant-Major N’Dramei, originally from Manus. Another sergeant-major, Kateo, from Walis Island, joined
in spreading plans of the strike to the police force and to the ‘boss boys’. Once the word was passed, it was enough to bring out New Guinea’s first urban proletariat en masse.

Australian colonial attitudes did not change between the wars. A commission of enquiry into labour policy in New Guinea recommended in 1941 that flogging be brought back for male labourers under sixteen years of age. Two of the commissioners called for New Guineans to get lower pay, longer hours and fewer holidays. Before the report could be considered, the Japanese bombed Rabaul and the Mandate Administration collapsed.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

The main records of the Australian military administration 1914–21 are held in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, as records of the New Guinea Campaign, and in the Australian Archives, Melbourne. Many Mandate files, including most outstation reports, were lost during World War II. The surviving official documents on the years 1921–42 are in the National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, and the Australian Archives, Canberra.


The best books by government officers are those by J. Lyng, G. W. L. Townsend and J. K. McCarthy, and the best anthropological studies of the inter-war years are by Margaret Mead, Reo Fortune, Gregory Bateson, Beatrice Blackwood, Hortense Powdermaker and Raymond Firth.

The quotation from an officer about labour recruiting in the military period is from Rowley, p. 131; the quotation from the officer at Salamaaua in 1919 is from Ian Willis, *Lae Village and City*, 1974, p. 67; Murray’s description of the Australian administration of German New Guinea is from West, *Selected Letters* . . ., 1970, p. 103; Lord Hailey’s judgement comes from the 1948 edition of L. P. Mair, *Australia in New Guinea*, p. xvi; for the statement of the Director of Native Affairs in 1937 that the head-tax made men work we are indebted to Dr C. W. Newbury; Jonae’s 1927 warning to his friends appeared in the Lutheran magazine *Aakesing*; the quotation from J. K. McCarthy is from his *Patrol into Yesterday: my New Guinea years*,
CHAPTER 6

THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

Villagers Meeting Change

The building of a new order in the villages, a process underway in some communities before 1884, continued in the 1920s and 1930s. But the character of the change was as various as the communities themselves, for it depended on local factors: the values of a people before contact with foreign ways; their proximity to missions, plantations and gold fields; their experience of the government; their judgment about the value of the new ways compared with the old; their meetings with other Papua New Guineans who acted as agents and interpreters; and the effect of contact with the wider world on traditional social structures. Nowhere were these things the same.

Generalisations about the colonial experience of Papua New Guinean communities mean little unless they are made with a knowledge of what happened in particular communities.

For the societies of Buin in south Bougainville colonial rule signified a political revolution. Until after World War I these societies were hierarchical. A chiefly class, possibly descended from earlier invaders, ruled over a lower class of bondsmen and a middle class of minei or people born of mixed marriages between the other two classes. A bondsman was his chief’s property, and could be sold simply for the use of his severed head; he was not permitted to look at the wife or daughter of a chief, and partly for this reason the people lived in scattered hamlets rather than villages. Australian patrol officers were soon insisting, however, that the people live in villages, and that the houses be built in straight lines. A ‘lined village’ was the Australians’ idea of neat, orderly living, but it was bitterly resisted by the chiefs because they feared the indecency of their women being seen by bondsmen.

The imposition of the head-tax in Buin in 1918 led to the murder of two policemen. And when Mota, a kukurai (government-
appointed chief), attempted to enforce the building of a lined village in May 1919, the chief Perokana of Morou had him and his two assistants killed. The Australians hanged or imprisoned the Morou chiefs, and the position of the *kukurais*, who were men drawn from the ranks of the commoners, was strengthened. Thereafter, the Buin people embraced the Europeans' religion as well as obeying their police. Conversions to Christianity brought by the French Marists were rapid in the early 1920s.

The Europeans had less impact on the way of life of the people of Woodlark Island or Murua. It was not that the Muruans saw few Europeans. On the contrary, Murua was the richest goldfield in Papua from 1895 until the 1920s. At the height of the rush there were about 450 white miners and 1600 Papuan labourers on the island, almost as many 'foreigners' as Muruans. And even after the reefs were taken over by companies hundreds of foreigners remained. The Muruans were prepared to work as casual labourers for the miners and the government, and some supplemented their cash income by panning for gold themselves. But they were not willing to sign contracts as indentured labourers for mining companies or plantations. Methodist missionaries made no converts among the Muruans before World War II. And though a decline in their population from about 2500 in 1900 to 800 in 1940 must have tempted the Muruans to doubt the value of their old ways, they clung to tradition, measuring their wealth in necklaces and armshells, trading with other villages and islands, constructing finely carved canoes, and judging men by traditional rather than European standards. The Muruans had been forced to stop warfare, bury their dead in the prescribed way, and abide by other government regulations; they had chosen to do some mining, sell copra and shell, and work as casual labourers to acquire the few foreign goods that they needed; and in spite of strong pressure they chose not to be Christians or indentured labourers.

The Elema people of the Papuan Gulf, by contrast, dramatically rejected tradition. For thirty years after the first visit of a missionary in 1879 the peoples of villages from Biaru and Moveave in the east to Orokolo in the west continued to build their tall, sweeping temples and to celebrate their *semese* and *hevhe* festivals with splendour. Apart from putting an end to warfare and sending a few children to mission schools, the Elema changed little. The coming of 1000 miners and labourers to the Lakekamu goldfield in 1910 involved only a small minority of Elema people directly in working for Europeans, because most labourers came from elsewhere in Papua. Then, in 1919, a movement of change was organised in a number of Elema villages, led by men who were deeply impressed by the wealth and success of the Europeans. Traditional ceremonies were banned and masks burnt. They were replaced by European-style tables set up in the middle of the villages, flagpoles which were
believed to possess special powers, and new temples. According to one European observer:

the natives were saying that the spirits of their ancestors had appeared to several in the villages and told them that all flour, rice, tobacco and other trade belonged to the New Guinea people, and that the white man had no right whatever to these goods; in a short time all the white men were to be driven away, and then everything would be in the hands of the natives; a large vessel was also shortly to appear, bringing back the spirits of their departed relatives with quantities of cargo, and all the villages were to make ready to receive them. Platforms were being erected in the villages, and these were being loaded up with presents.

The movement, known as 'the Vailala madness' was opposed by the Administration but did not die out until the 1930s. It was remembered and romanticised by the Elema, and the old culture was never fully revived.

By 1940 about two-thirds of the people of the two Territories were governed by patrol. If they lived close to administrative centres or good anchorages they might be visited twice a year, more distant villages might see a patrol once every two years, and some people were visited rarely. A government officer, Ivan Champion, wrote in 1932 that the inland people of Sudest Island had not been visited for twelve years; they had first come under government supervision in the 1890s. For the villagers, gavamani was one or two Australian patrol officers, a troop of about eight police and a line of carriers gathered from a previously visited community. Unable to speak the language of the villagers, the patrol officer was dependent on what he could see and what interpreters were prepared to tell him. The government officer wanted the village to look clean, well-built and laid out in an orderly way. He burnt houses that he thought dirty and likely to harbour infection. He checked that proper latrines had been dug and that the people were burying their dead in a suitable area. He asked about the general health of the people although there was little that he could do to prevent epidemics or relieve suffering. He took anyone suspected of having venereal disease away with him for treatment in a special 'lock' hospital. He entered births and deaths in the census book, collected taxes, and paid the family bonus money to mothers of large families. If the people had land suitable for cash crops and a way of getting their produce to market he compelled them to make a 'village plantation'. He reprimanded the luluai or village constable and the villagers if the walking tracks and the government rest house were in need of repair. He told the people of any men from the village who had died while away as an indentured labourer, and he distributed any wages due to the dead man to his next of kin. He enquired about men from the area who had deserted from their place of employment or were wanted in connection with some crime. He held court, usually to sort out cases of assault or adultery.
The villagers were normally warned by neighbouring communities when a patrol was on its way, and they had a chance to prepare for government inspection. The *luhui* or village constable, wearing his hat of office, met the patrol and attempted to ensure that the *gavamani* arrived in good humour. Some villagers tendered food and men offered or were compelled to carry the government's stores to the next village. Most villagers were apprehensive while the patrol was in the area; it was not always possible for them to predict what would move the *gavamani* to anger. A militant *kiap* (government officer) or a *kiap* who thought that the people needed 'livening up' might order the police to *lain* a village quickly for census and instruction. The slow and the protesters were yelled at and perhaps a rifle butt was dropped on a bare foot. Members of government patrols were sometimes met in festivity or as equals, but such occasions were rare. Though fascinated by the behaviour of the police and the government officers, their strange foods and folding deckchair, most villagers were still relieved to see the patrol disappear in the direction of the next community.

**Leaving the Village**

Men who left the villages in 1940 did so in much the same way as those who went away in 1910: they signed-on as indentured labourers for plantations, mines and Europeans households; they went to gaol; or they worked for short periods without a written contract. The indentured labourers' pay, 10s. a month in Papua and 5s. in New Guinea, had not increased and the basic conditions had scarcely changed. Papuans usually signed-on for eighteen months or two years, but New Guineans, perhaps responding to the £1 fee allowed to long-term men, were more likely to agree to *mekim pepa* (sign a contract) for three years. About 10 000 Papuan men, 40 000 New Guinea men and 335 New Guinea women worked under indenture in 1940. Most learnt the routine of the plantation bells and curfews: rising early in the morning, lining for breakfast, hearing the call for the sick, assembling in gangs, and then being set a 'mark' — a certain task to be completed during the day. The labourers were not to work more than fifty hours in a week (it was fifty-five in New Guinea) or ten hours in a day. Unless there was an emergency they were not to work on Sundays. They were to be given a new blanket every year and a new laplap (loin cloth) every three months. They were to be fed 1½ lbs (0.7 kg) of rice a day, or a lesser amount of rice supplemented by beans, sago, yams, taro or sweet potatoes. Each week they were to receive 1 lb (0.45 kg) of meat, one-and-a-half sticks of tobacco, 2 ozs (57 g) of soap and 1 oz (28 g) of salt. Most labourers rarely spoke to a white man. A planter wrote in 1926,
Never talk to your boys themselves under any circumstances, always do it through your bossboys... Apart from your houseboy and bossboys never allow any native in your employ to approach you, either in the field or on the bungalow verandah.

Some men escaped the labour gang by being put in charge of a horse and cart, made a cook for the other labourers, or becoming a *subboi* ("shootboy") and supplied with a gun to hunt game to add to the labourers’ rations. On Sundays the men talked, smoked, hunted, fished, did their washing, looked after their own gardens, and perhaps visited villages near the plantations. The labourer learnt to communicate with men from other districts, either in Hiri Motu or Pidgin, and he exchanged knowledge with them. Often he took back to his village songs, dances, magic and useful new plants to cultivate. When asked what they learnt on the European plantations of the Gazelle Peninsula before World War II, the Maenge people of New Britain first mentioned the love magic of the Tolai. The Maenge also brought home Tolai songs and dances, different medicines and new varieties of betel-pepper, banana and other plants. And they remembered with gratitude the generosity and hospitality of the Baining villagers who invited plantation labourers to their festivals. A small number of men settled in villages near where they had worked or they took wives back to their home villages with them.

The miners’ labourers often worked harder and their pay was only slightly higher, 12s. 6d. a month in Papua and 10s. in New Guinea for a new recruit. The men working underground at Misima had little power equipment and they laboured in cramped conditions. Men hired as carriers transporting stores from beaches to inland mining fields were given some protection by regulation: they were not to carry more than 50 lb (22.6 kg) packs or carry more than 30 lb (13.6 kg) over 12 miles (19 km) a day. Carrying was still an exhausting task. Miners’ labourers could sign-on months but many chose to work for one year only. Work on the Morobe goldfields for *Kaindi* (New Guinea Goldfields Co. Ltd) or *Bulolo* (Bulolo Gold Dredging Co. Ltd) was more attractive for many men in the 1930s than the endless drudgery of plantations. Wages were higher, the companies set up football and cricket teams, labourers were given garden land to grow food, and on Saturday afternoons hundreds of men visited *wantoks* in other lines. Between 1936 and 1940 twenty-one New Guinean workers died in accidents on the Morobe goldfields, and a further seventy-six were injured. But for those who avoided accidents health conditions were good; the Bulolo company hospital was the best in New Guinea. By 1940 over 7000 New Guineans were employed in mining, many of them coming from areas in the Sepik newly opened to recruiters.

In foreign households Papua New Guineans did the washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking and grass cutting. On occasions they
wound the gramophone while the *masta* and *misis* took their *kaikai*. Over 3000 New Guinean men worked as domestic servants in 1940. The *Official Handbook of the Territory of New Guinea* observed,

Native women (‘marys’) and young boys (‘monkeys’) are commonly employed to take care of children, but a very nice discrimination is recommended in the selection of natives for such responsible tasks.

All of the 335 New Guinean women who signed-on were domestic servants or gardeners, except ten who were nurses or hospital orderlies.

The trip to and from work was often slow and uncomfortable, especially in the wet season, when hundreds of people would be soaked by driving rain as they huddled together on the deck of a Burns Philp steamer; and, as now, travel for Papua New Guineans was frequently interrupted by long delays. A man might be stranded in Samarai, Madang or Kavieng for weeks before continuing his journey home, and in doing so might lose all his belongings to thieves, gamblers or women. Penniless, he would sign on again for another three years.

A few groups of Papua New Guineans worked on plantations close to home and commuted daily. The Tolai and the Karkar islanders did this between the wars. For most Papua New Guineans, however, being at work for the expatriates meant being away from home for at least three years at a time. Village life was inevitably affected. Thousands of women were without their husbands for long periods. In one Sepik village women complained to the district officer in Angoram when an overworked *tultul* said he was too exhausted to go on sleeping with them. Traditional cycles of ceremonies, feasts, dances, rites and exchanges – which presupposed the presence of everyone in the community – were interrupted and questioned.

**Papuan New Guineans beyond their homes in 1940 also** followed much the same paths as the *uKerameria* who left their homes in 1910: they became policemen, mission teachers, priests or pastors, boat captains or craftsmen. Papua New Guineans captained many of the small boats that traded along the coast and Papuan New Guinean crewmen maintained the diesel engines. Papua New Guineans set the type of the *Papuan Courier* and the Government *Gazette*; were carpenters and plumbers in the Department of Public Works; and completed building, painting and stone-working contracts for private employers. A few Papua New Guineans became clerks in government offices. By 1940 the first villagers had purchased motor vehicles.

But one new position opened to Papua New Guineans was that of medical assistant. In Papua, where the medical assistants were given greater responsibility, the medical assistants went on long patrols unaccompanied by white officers, collected statistics, gave injections...
against yaws, and provided general medical aid. The training of the Papuan medical assistants had been largely the work of Walter Strong, the Chief Medical Officer. He was supported by Murray and the whole plan was carried out in the face of strong opposition from many of the white community. The sending of three groups of students to Sydney University for short courses in 1933, 1934 and 1935 convinced many whites that the government was wasting money and that the Papuans involved would be 'spoiled' by life in Australia.

Both the Papuan and the New Guinean administrations fined or imprisoned white men for bashing labourers. For example, in 1938 and 1939 thirty-six Europeans from the Mandated Territory were tried for assaulting New Guineans and thirty-two of them were found guilty. This is evidence that government officers tried to enforce the legislation protecting labourers, but as officers found it difficult to find proof of assaults, it may also indicate that it was not unusual for labourers to be beaten.

New Guineans Comment

Some Kâte people of the Huon Peninsula have left a fine record of their pre-war experiences in letters which they wrote to the German Lutheran missionary Christian Keysser. Copies of the letters, translated into German, have survived. Many literate Kâte became mission evangelists and took the Gospel inland; others found jobs as labourers, hospital orderlies and luluaïs. What follows is a selection from their writings.

In 1919 two evangelists, Bazakiec and Basape, were accused by a Chinese labour recruiter of illegally stopping a man from leaving his village to work on a plantation. Bazakiec wrote:

The official had me brought before him and said: 'Tell me, has a luluaï given you the right to keep back the boy?' I answered: 'No, his parents asked me to help.' The official shouted: 'That is a lie! The boy told me he wanted to go but you two held him back.' The fact is, however, that he did not want to go away; but when he was taken and stood before the white official, he was afraid.

Bazakiec and Basape were sentenced to gaol and arrived in Morobe on 15 January 1919. They recalled what the warder told them and the conditions:

'You have the toilet pans in the whites' houses to empty and the whole place to keep clean. You collect the firewood, draw the water, dig out the weeds and wash the houses.' That then was our work. We were nearly sick from taking the toilet pans away each day, which we carried on our shoulders, and from the evil smell. We also become hungry and so we ate wild pawpaws.

A man called Sai described the first visit of an Australian patrol officer to the Kâte people in 1922. He complained that the Australians deceived the people by pretending to be their 'good friends' yet
all goods were rising in price and the people were becoming poorer. When the Australian came, the village elders discussed what to say to him:

But he made their speeches count for nothing and was hard on them. In the village of Kpalangko [Balangko] two women ran away from him. They were afraid he would waylay them as he has done elsewhere. There he reprimanded the luluai Hatanao and struck him. Everywhere he went he abused people.

From another village a man called Limu reported that this Australian wanted to have a woman:

all the young lads are to go away with him as labourers, a pig had to be brought for him and his black soldiers. If every wish was not immediately fulfilled, he became very angry, abused us and shouted. We are now very concerned that by coming here such people could cause us to commit foolish acts.

Manasupe, writing in June 1922 after a journey up the Markham Valley as far as Kaiapit, claimed that people everywhere were angry about the Australians, 'for they come as if they could do what they like'.

The mission evangelists were often frustrated men, disliked both by the pagans among whom they worked and by visiting patrol officers. The evangelist Gapenuo was arrested and handcuffed by a patrol officer in Gazub territory in March 1927 for allegedly hindering the labour recruiters. And when thirteen people were killed in local warfare, Gapenuo's advice was ignored by the white official, who learnt of the incident from the neighbouring Atzera people. Gapenuo wrote of the official:

he appeared with his police. We told him the deed had been done in blood revenge and asked him to refrain from a punitive expedition because the people had to act that way as a result of their beliefs. Nevertheless, he undertook the punitive march. The men took to their arms so that a whole row of them were shot dead. Twenty-six were captured. These he took with him to Salamaua. There on the sea coast fifteen died, the remaining eleven returned after several months to their home, where yet another died. The relatives were furious and wanted to take revenge on us Christians. Only with great trouble did we succeed in calming the angry people. They believed we belonged to the clan of the foreign official and his black soldiers.

Another evangelist, Ngezinu, believed that all his efforts to improve village life among the Hube people of the inland Huon Peninsula were unrecognised by ignorant patrol officers. His letter of 25 October 1931 also shows the people's fear of the head-tax and their efforts to impress visiting officials:

When news came of his arrival the Hube became afraid. They said: 'He will certainly take us away with him because we have no money to pay the tax. But in strange country we will all die.' Others said: 'If he takes us with him, on the way we will throw ourselves into the Kua or the Mongi River'. When the kiap [patrol officer] came he saw the beautiful path over the high mountains and in the deep gullies. He also saw the villages and huts of the Hube. He was amazed and expressed great admiration. But he praised Selembe [the luluai], only Selembe. And Selembe had done nothing. But he praised Selembe . . . . He lifted him up to the heights and up to heaven. He said: 'I have
been in many kanaka villages, but I have nowhere found one like this here. Yes, Selembe, you are a man, your people from Sattelberg right up to here in the high mountains are the best of all I know. I am pleased.' So spoke the official.

His praise was even greater when the people brought him five pigs, five hens, a lot of garden produce, bananas and other things. When the men then put on their feather decorations and danced in his honour he was nearly beside himself with pleasure and praised the people and Selembe. Of us evangelists, who had done all the work, he said: 'You evangelists know that you are good for nothing . . . You may speak in church, otherwise keep your mouth shut. What is outside church does not concern you.'

Selembe described his job as paramount luluai in the region in a letter dated 30 January 1934. The government, he said, had given him the job of

punishing the boys and labourers on the mission stations. I have to report bad cases to the whites. If a white recruiter needs labourers, he also turns to me. I have to help him and arrange things with him.

Writing in August 1934, Ngezinu reported that almost all young people in his village were working for the whites:

Recently a recruiter came to the Wesa people. He did not ask for the village elders, but abruptly sought out the men who suited him and ordered them to accompany him. That was too much for the elders. As the recruiter would not take advice, the two men intervened and grabbed him by the neck. There was a scuffle. The two villagers overpowered the white man, ripped his shirt in hand-to-hand fighting and threw him to the ground. The white yielded. He was then given several young men, so that he was satisfied.

Village people were by no means against recruiting, but they preferred to decide themselves who would sign-on. The recruiter’s mistake in this incident was not that he wanted labourers but that he ignored the advice of the important men of the village.

Papua New Guineans were constant observers of white society. Perhaps they were allowed to see more before World War II because ‘native’ views were of no consequence to Europeans. Gengguc wrote of his time in Rabaul,

When whites danced after a meal I could see that they did things in the dark which never happened among us blacks. We did the bad secretly, so that it was not seen. But the white men and women merely went under the house and did what one otherwise sees only with dogs and pigs. They had no shame in front of us blacks.

Fontanepo, a labourer in Rabaul, wrote down his impressions of Europeans’ behaviour during the earthquake of May 1937:

It rained dust. It became pitch black so that no beam of light could penetrate the darkness. The sun had disappeared completely. The usual night, which God created, is good and always has its light. But the night which came then confused reason. The whites turned out to be extremely timid and spineless. Until now I had always thought they were strong people but I got to know them then. If anything shocking happens their strength disappears. Not a single one remained calm and strong. In the good days they were always boasting: we are capable and brave people. But when the fire shot out of the earth during the earthquake they jumped up and each one sought to save himself. They ran to the car, bicycle or motorbike and drove anywhere. They did not pay attention to each other. With great screams they ran around like frightened
hens. They took their children under their arms. And then came the darkness, so that we were all like blind men. The cars went into the bushes because they lost the road. Trees broke and fell on the street. So the men got out again, grabbed women and children by the hand and felt their way to the nearest house, which they got under. Many whites, Chinese and brown people sat and waited like this until it was bright again. Then it was revealed that not a few were dead. On Sunday 30 May the earth became quiet again.

The huddled collections of people under houses in May 1937 were among the few multi-racial gatherings of inter-war Rabaul.

Sekung, a Lutheran evangelist at work in the Chimbu district of the Highlands, clearly felt a sense of identity with the Chimbu people even though he himself was from the Huon Peninsula. Writing in 1937, he complained about the government's withdrawal order of the previous year, requiring all evangelists to abandon their posts and live at a central mission station:

As far as this order of the government is concerned, namely that we have to leave our stations, we are of the same opinion as the people; that it is to do with our country, the country of the brown Papuans and not of the whites. If the brown heathens want us brown Christians, how can the foreign whites put a wall of separation between us and forbid us to settle with our friends?

Few whites realised that their labourers observed them so carefully, and perhaps none guessed that New Guineans were recording sharp criticism.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 6

Although most writing about Papua and New Guinea before World War II was by Europeans and reflected their interests and prejudices, it can still be used to tell us about some aspects of the history of those Papua New Guineans in contact with foreigners. Particularly valuable are anthropological studies based on fieldwork (listed in the Notes on Chapters 3 and 5) and patrol reports by government officers. The patrol reports, held in the Australian Archives, Canberra, and the National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, are numerous and uneven in value. Most are from Papua as many New Guinea outstation records were destroyed in the war. The surviving New Guinea patrol reports are listed in Pambu, newsletter of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, A.N.U., no. 35, April-June, 1974.

In addition there is an increasing amount of research by anthropologists and historians concerned with particular communities (see Notes to Chapters 3, 5 and 7), autobiographical writing by Papua New Guineans, and collected oral evidence; and historians are finding that some pre-war writing by Papua New Guineans has survived. Since Albert Maori Kiki wrote Kiki: ten thousand years in a
lifetime, Melbourne, 1968, several Papua New Guineans have published autobiographical pieces or works of fiction based on experience. Much of the Papua New Guinean writing and collected oral testimony has appeared in magazines such as the Journal of the Morobe District Historical Society, Kovave, and Oral History.

Statistics about the numbers of Papua New Guineans signing-on as indentured labourers, and going to gaol and school were usually included in Annual Reports. The Native Labour Ordinances and Regulations were published in T. B. Fry (ed.) The Laws of the Territory of New Guinea 1921-45 (Annotated), five vols, Sydney, 1947, and The Laws of the Territory of Papua 1888-1945 (Annotated), five vols, Sydney, 1949.

Taim Bipo

In 1939 there were 1488 Europeans and three Chinese in Papua, and 4445 Europeans and 1838 Asians in New Guinea. No one knew how many Papua New Guineans there were. About half of them had had their names recorded in the village census books: 200 000 in Papua and 581 000 in New Guinea. The Papuan government survived on an annual revenue of just over £150 000, a quarter of it coming from an Australian government grant. The New Guinea government’s revenue was nearly £500 000, all of it raised within the Territory. Part of New Guinea’s greater revenue was spent on a larger staff: in New Guinea there were 450 Europeans in the public service, in Papua there were 140.

White residents of Port Moresby noticed strangers in the streets in 1939: the men concerned with drilling for oil in the Gulf of Papua and building the artillery battery on Paga Hill. The Royal Australian Artillery had taken over the European gaol as a store. Had any European committed a serious offence, the government would have had to find a temporary prison; it was unlikely that any European would be placed in the ‘native’ gaol. During the long dry season the streets of Port Moresby were dusty and the gardens meagre, for the town, in spite of protests that surged and waned, still had no adequate water supply. Copra prices were so low that some of the planters that visited the Papua Club had paid off their labourers, but rubber was profitable and Cuthbert’s mine at Umuna on Misima Island was paying high dividends. The white community of Papua talked about the proposal to amalgamate the Territories of Papua and New Guinea. Most did not want it. They thought that with amalgamation would come the Chinese, ‘cocksure’ young government officers ‘bristling with certificates and diplomas’, labour recruiters
working for New Guinea miners and planters, and ignorant foreigners from the League of Nations in Geneva. Still grumbling that Sir Hubert Murray met their requests for aid with ‘stolid indifference’, the white community wanted to keep themselves separate from the richer Territory across the border. They complained, too, that bureaucrats in Canberra were making more and more of the decisions that affected their lives. Many white residents were uneasy. They thought that because of their race and their positions as pioneers, civilisers and managers they deserved privileges; but they were also conscious that they were a minority without political power and, compared with Australians, with low incomes. They still had cricket: four teams competed for the Port Moresby Freezing Company’s shield, had a fortnight’s break, and then played for Resch’s shield. The Royal Australian Artillery fielded a side, Samarai played Port, the married men played the single, the men (left-handed) played the women, and the whites played the ‘natives’.

Rabaul was richer, busier and more tense. Like their colleagues in Papua, the New Guinea copra planters were suffering from low world prices and in debt to trading companies; but some of the £2 000 000 in gold taken from reefs and river alluvial in the Morobe district was spent in stores and hotels in Rabaul. More cars were parked under the mango trees in Rabaul than in the sparse streets of Port Moresby. Where Moresby looked like a north Queensland frontier town of galvanised iron roofs separated by empty streets, Rabaul was green and exotic. In the bung (market) village gardeners sat by the products that they grew on the fertile soil of the Gazelle Peninsula. People from other islands and the mainland, Europeans in white suits, Asian women in national dress, and basket-carrying ‘houseboys’ moved among the stall holders. The same polyglot crowd met in the cluttered shops of Chinatown, but only the whites took their beer in the New Guinean Club. Showered with mud and ash when the Matupit (Tarvururu) and Vulcan volcanoes exploded in 1937, the Rabaul residents fled, and on their slow return many thought that the main commercial and administrative centre should be shifted from the unstable shores of Simpson Harbour. Two Europeans and over 400 New Guineans died in the volcanic eruption of 1937.

Under the terms of the Mandate the Australian government had agreed not to build fortifications in New Guinea, or give the people military training except for police duties and ‘local defence’. In spite of the shrill cries of those who saw New Guinea as Australia’s bulwark and pointed to the fact that the Japanese had built gigantic military bases in their mandated territory in Micronesia, Australia had built no defence installations in New Guinea when war broke out in Europe in 1939. By the end of 1941 there were still few soldiers in the Territory and almost no fixed defence facilities. No New
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Guineans had been trained as soldiers, but the Australian government’s concern to abide by the conditions of the Mandate was only part of the reason. In spite of the fact that New Guineans had fought and died for the Germans who opposed the Australian landings on New Britain in 1914, senior government officers in Rabaul thought that the New Guineans could be used only as ‘batmen, servants, cooks, mess waiters, runners, sanitation crews . . .’. The Director of Native Affairs, Robert Melrose, reported:

Beneath the surface there is something of racial antagonism in this country — a contempt for the ‘nigger’ on the one hand and distrust of black for white on the other. A native is not capable of distinguishing between the nationalities of white races. With him they are just white men — in which definition he includes the Chinese and Japanese . . . they are all the same to him . . .

In 1941 1200 New Guineans were in the police force. One of the last acts of their Australian officers after the Japanese landed in Rabaul was to attempt to disarm the 350 men then stationed in the area. The committee of senior government and military officers preparing to face invasion accepted the need to maintain racial divisions during disaster. In the event of an air raid Europeans were told to take refuge in the upper part of a gully near Namanula, the ‘Asiatics’ were to occupy a lower section, and the ‘native servants’ were to use a side gully. No instructions were issued to villagers. Chinese men volunteered to enlist in the Australian army, and when they were rejected they formed an ambulance unit.

In Papua Sir Hubert Murray also had some doubts about his subjects in arms. He told reporters in Australia that the Papuan native is a splendid soldier. He is courageous, and he is skilled in the use of some weapons. But I am afraid that the noise of a bombardment would devastate him.

Murray had shown that the Australians in both Territories had some of the same attitudes to the people who listened to their orders. Yet there were differences. Before the Australian and New Guinea governments decided not to train New Guineans as soldiers, Leonard Logan, who had been headquarters officer in the Royal Papuan Constabulary, took command of the first company of the Papuan Infantry Battalion. The company existed for eighteen months before Japan entered the war. But most Papuans were as unprepared for war as New Guineans. The second last issue of the _Papuan Villager_ in October 1941 did tell the few Papuans able to read English that the Japanese were a warlike people with little power compared to the great European nations. For the peoples of both territories the main signs of impending change were the talk of distant war, the men leaving the white community to enlist, the coming of Australians in uniform, the building of airstrips and the placing of a few guns at harbour mouths.
Japanese Attack

On 7 and 8 December 1941 the Japanese attacked Malaya and Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. On 4 January 1942 they bombed Rabaul, and in February they raided Port Moresby and shattered Darwin. The Japanese had come with extraordinary speed and power. European women and children who had been encouraged to leave 'unobtrusively' before 1941, were now instructed to leave immediately. Some nurses and women missionaries were permitted to choose to stay, and a few defied the order to leave. Leaders of the Chinese community asked that their women and children be evacuated, but before the Australian government responded, the Japanese had captured Rabaul and occupied other centres of Chinese population. Most Asians and mixed-race families were able to do little to secure their own safety.

Japanese bombs killed sixteen New Guineans on 4 January. To defend Rabaul the Australian government had provided 1400 troops, fourteen aircraft, 2 six-inch guns and two anti-aircraft guns. Australian pilots, outnumbered by superior Japanese aircraft, offered futile resistance; the six-inch guns were destroyed by dive-bombing; and the crews of the anti-aircraft guns could do little to impede the flights of Japanese bombers and fighters. Pondering the task of the Rabaul garrison, the Australian chiefs of staff decided it unlikely that the troops could withstand the force that the Japanese could direct against them; but the garrison was not to be re-equipped or reinforced or allowed to withdraw. Colonel J. Scanlan, the commander in Rabaul, issued the order, 'There shall be no withdrawal.'

Early on 23 January over 5000 Japanese troops supported by naval battalions and airforce units began landing on the shores of Blanche Bay. Unable to defend the entire shoreline, the Australians concentrated at a few points, but those units that confronted the enemy drew fire and were immediately in danger of being overwhelmed. To continue to exist as fighting units, they had to retreat, and as communication between groups was lost, the withdrawal could not be orderly. Before midday many troops were passing on what they believed were official instructions: 'go bush' and 'every man for himself'. All organised resistance ended by evening on 23 January. With no store or equipment dumps prepared to their rear, men without mosquito nets, bedding, tents or food made their way to the west coast or south over the Warangoi River. Most had no knowledge of the map of New Britain, no training in living off the land, and no plan – except to survive. Within a few days many were sick, hungry and dispirited by the news that the Japanese had already occupied positions to their south. Captain D. F. Field called one group of 59 men together at Keravat and told them that they could either surrender or struggle on. Only six men chose to join Field in
an attempt to escape. Colonel Scanlan reached Waitavalo on the south coast where he found a note left for him by the Japanese: 'If your religion does not allow you to commit suicide it is up to you to surrender yourself and to beg for mercy for your troops.' Knowing that the Japanese had already shot some men who had surrendered, Scanlan began walking back to Rabaul.

Three weeks after the fall of Rabaul, District Officer J. K. McCarthy at Talasea met survivors of the Rabaul garrison on the west coast of the Gazelle Peninsula. His radio reports of the Japanese capture of Rabaul were the first to reach Port Moresby and Australia. No Australian units could provide ships or aircraft to collect survivors, and only about 200 members of the Rabaul garrison escaped from the west and north coasts. Most were carried to the mainland by boats and crews that had served governments and traders in the islands before the war. One group led by Lieutenant B. Dawson walked across New Britain from the south coast to the west, then by canoe and schooner they reached Madang on the mainland. From there they walked to Kainantu, hoping to find an aircraft. At Kainantu they were directed on to Bena Bena where they were sent back to Wau. From Wau Dawson set out on the last stage of his odyssey: he walked over the Bulldog track to the head of the Lakekamu River, and finally reached Port Moresby by boat. About 150 more men were picked up from the south coast of New Britain in April. Nearly all of the rescued men were emaciated and suffering from malaria, tropical ulcers and dysentery. Men without war wounds had died waiting for a boat. The more than 150 men who surrendered to the Japanese at Tol had their hands tied behind their backs, and were led into a plantation in small groups where they were shot and bayoneted to death. Of the 1400 troops in Rabaul on 23 January, twenty-eight were killed resisting the Japanese landing, about 400 escaped, and 800 became prisoners of war, and others died or were killed on New Britain. Nearly all of the prisoners of war died when the Montevideo Maru was torpedoed by an American submarine. About 200 civilians – government officers, planters and residents of Rabaul – captured by the Japanese and being shipped to Japan also died on the Montevideo Maru.

Rabaul, the first conflict between Japanese and Australian troops in Papua and New Guinea, had been a triumph for the Japanese and a disaster for Australia. The Japanese had been overwhelmingly superior in men, organisation and equipment. Before 23 January their planes had rolled and dived in 'impudent aerobatics' over the near defenceless Rabaul; after they occupied the area they quickly transformed it into one of their strongest bases in the South Pacific. The Australians had made poor use of their few resources, and they had found the country as hostile as the Japanese.

On the same day that they captured Rabaul the Japanese occupied
Kavieng, and soon after they established bases at Lae and Salamaua, and on Manus and Bougainville. The landings were preceded by reconnaissance flights and bombings. Departing Australian troops and local residents destroyed fuel dumps, stores, some buildings and the airstrip. The Japanese came ashore almost without opposition, passed their own bomb craters, smoking copra sheds, and a deserted Chinatown, labour compounds and European club.

At the beginning of January Port Moresby was no more strongly defended than Rabaul. The 1200 men of the garrison were neither well-trained nor well-equipped. Two six-inch guns had been placed on Paga Point, but the garrison did not have anti-aircraft guns capable of disturbing high-flying bombers. To support the garrison the area commander, Brigadier B. Morris, could call on two small local units, the Papuan Infantry Battalion and the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. But the Australian chiefs of staff decided that Port Moresby, unlike Rabaul, would be strengthened. On 3 January 3700 troops arrived from Australia. They were, the official historian says, a ‘badly trained, ill-disciplined and generally resentful collection of men’. After the bombing of Moresby in February the troops looted shops and homes. Most believed that it was better for them to drink the liquor in Burns Philp’s store and take radios from private homes than leave them for the Japanese. One officer of the old Papuan administration remembered soldiers frequently asking him how they could escape to Daru and Thursday Island when the Japanese arrived.

The air of defeat continued during March as the Japanese aircraft passed overhead releasing their bombs without breaking formation. When Australian pilots brought the first modern fighters, Kittyhawks, to defend Port Moresby on 21 March the infantry men stationed around the aerodrome fired on them with light machine guns. An indignant pilot asked them if they had ever seen a plane attack them with its landing wheels down. A soldier replied that all planes he had seen had either bombed him or shot at him.

**Taim Bilong Pait (Wartime)**

On 4 May eleven Japanese transports and over twenty supporting and covering vessels left Rabaul. The army assembled on the transports was prepared to go ashore on a beach near Port Moresby on 10 May. Another strong fleet moved south around the Solomons into the Coral Sea on its way to launch aircraft against north Queensland bases and prevent aid being sent to Port Moresby. Just before the invasion fleet from Rabaul moved through the Louisiade Archipelago it was attacked by aircraft taking off from United States carriers and from land bases in Australia and Papua. After an intense battle between aircraft and ships, in which the American fleet lost
heavily, the Japanese fleet turned back. It was the first significant reverse suffered by the Japanese in the South Pacific. At the time of the Battle of the Coral Sea, the defences of Port Moresby were little stronger than they were in February. A few days later over 4000 Australian troops began arriving. Work on transforming Port Moresby into a massive base for land, air and sea forces had been quickened by the arrival of American engineers, including two units of black Americans.

Having failed to capture Port Moresby with a sea-borne force, the Japanese planned to attack overland. On 20 July Yokoyama Force left Rabaul to secure the area between Buna and Kokoda, and prepare the way for an advance south against Port Moresby. In August another force of 2000 men left Kavieng and Buna to establish a base at Milne Bay. The battles at Milne Bay and on the Kokoda trail marked the maximum southward movement of the Japanese in Papua New Guinea; and the beginning of a slow, tragic withdrawal littered with dead men. The fighting from mid-1942 until September 1945 involved many people on the north of the mainland and in the islands, but the battles differed greatly in scale and style from one area to another.

The violence at Milne Bay was brief. In two weeks of fighting involving land, sea and air forces, 700 Japanese and 123 Australians died. Recovering from the trauma of battle in which some villagers had been killed accidentally and others had been murdered, the people of Milne Bay had to learn to live alongside tent-cities and temporary buildings housing well over 10,000 Australian and American troops, resting, training and in transit.

In the Buna-Kokoda fighting both sides were hampered by the difficulty of supplying their forward troops. At first the Japanese held the initiative, always having more men in the battle area. Australian units trying to block the advancing Japanese were constantly being by-passed and forced to make a fighting withdrawal so that they could rejoin other Australian troops. In the seemingly endless stretches of ridges and rainforest of the Owen Stanley ranges no wheeled vehicles could be used, and troops used only the weapons and rations that they could carry. In September 1942 when the leading Japanese forces had reached Iorobaiwa, almost looking down upon Port Moresby, Major-General Hori instructed his men to retreat. Defeated at Milne Bay, engaged in fierce fighting in the Solomon Islands, and losing their dominance of the sea and air, the Japanese could not support their troops south of Kokoda. Hori’s troops now faced greater hardships than those suffered by the Australians: they could not get sufficient supplies through the mountains, their bases on the coast were bombed, and fresh Australian troops arriving over an easier and shorter supply route soon outnumbered the Japanese at the point of battle. Sick and starving
Japanese began the long fighting retreat to the coast. American troops moving north from Australia joined in the final, bloody assault on the Japanese at Buna and Gona.

About 15,000 Japanese went ashore on the north Papuan coast; perhaps 1000 sick and wounded were evacuated to Rabaul, 2000 escaped northwards during the final weeks of the campaign, 350 were taken prisoner, and about 12,000 were buried in Papua. Australian and American battle casualties were much lighter: 2165 Australians and 930 Americans were killed. Both sides suffered more casualties from sickness than from wounds.

While the battle for Buna was being fought, small groups of Australian and Papua New Guinean troops watched the Japanese in Lae and Salamaua, attacked outposts and ambushed Japanese units using tracks leading inland. Many of the soldiers patrolling close to the Japanese had travelled by boat from Port Moresby to the mouth of the Lakekamu River, by canoe up the river to Bulldog, and then by foot over the ranges to Wau. Over 1000 carriers were constantly walking the Bulldog Track to keep the troops supplied, and hundreds of other Papua New Guinean labourers were bridging, benching and levelling in an ambitious plan to transform the Bulldog Track into a road for four-wheel drive vehicles. They succeeded, but only after the supply line was no longer needed. Jungle and landslide soon destroyed an extraordinary work.

The Allies captured Lae by a dramatic coordination of land, air and sea forces. American ships collected the Australian 9th Division from Milne Bay and put it ashore east of Lae on 4 September. By early in the afternoon of the landing day 7800 men and 15,300 tonnes of stores were ashore. The next day an armada of over 300 aircraft assembled in the air over Marilinan then flew down the Watut Valley to the Markham. Americans and Australians parachuted to capture Nadzab airfield which was then prepared to receive the Australian 7th Division. Units of the Papuan Infantry Battalion moved overland to Nadzab and others landed on the beach with the 9th Division. Australian troops entered Salamaua on 11 September and Lae on 16 September, but they found few Japanese. The main Japanese force slipped between the two Australian divisions. The Japanese suffered many casualties in the defence of Salamaua and Lae, and in the long, exhausting march over the ranges, but nearly 8000 men reached Sio on the north coast. In a series of battles and skirmishes the fighting on the mainland then shifted westward.

On strategically placed islands, the people saw amphibious landings in which thousands of troops and hundreds of tons of equipment came ashore. Within a few weeks of the first landing, the island was transformed by men and machines into a gigantic base for aircraft, ships and soldiers. On Woodlark and Kiriwina the landing troops faced no Japanese, on Nissan there was one small garrison and
on Manus 4000 Japanese died and seventy-five were taken prisoner in protracted defense and suicidal counter-attacks.

In the early months of the war on Bougainville in 1942 a few Australian coastwatchers, most of them pre-war residents of the area, evaded capture by using their knowledge of the country, and relying on the information of friendly villagers. Then in November
1943, after intense naval and aerial bombardment of all Japanese positions on Bougainville, 7000 American marines landed at Torokina on Empress Augusta Bay. The Japanese had few ground troops in the area but they attempted to counter-attack from the sea and the air, further exhausting their reserve of operational aircraft and ships. By the middle of December over 40,000 American troops were entrenched within a strongly defended perimeter at Empress Augusta Bay. At the end of the year the most distant outpost at Ibu on the Numa Numa track was held by a Fijian battalion. Determined to destroy the Americans at Torokina, the Japanese XVII Army cut tracks and hauled guns and ammunition from strongholds in the north and south to assemble inland from Torokina in March 1944. But by then the Americans had 62,000 men, three airstrips, gun emplacements and base facilities within their perimeter. Attacking entrenched troops who had greater fire power and air support, the Japanese lost 5000 killed, and others died of wounds and disease for the Japanese were unable to supply their fighting men with adequate medical or food supplies. Although the XVII Army on Bougainville still numbered over 40,000, it was no longer capable of mounting an offensive.

By mid-1944 the American troops at Talasea-Cape Hoskins, Arawe and Cape Gloucester on New Britain and at Torokina on Bougainville had reached a ‘tacit truce’ with the opposing Japanese. But when Australian forces took over from the Americans, they patrolled aggressively to locate enemy units. Without risking heavy casualties the Australians attempted to destroy the Japanese or force them from their food supplies. Papua New Guinean troops and local villagers were employed to gather information and wage guerilla warfare.

On Bougainville the Japanese were forced to retreat north to Bonis Peninsula and Buka Island, and south around Buin. At the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945 there were still 23,571 Japanese on Bougainville. In nine months of campaigning the Australians and Papua New Guineans had killed 8500 Japanese while they themselves lost less than 600 dead.

On New Britain the Australians and Papua New Guineans, supported by a landing at Jacquinot Bay, fought a similar campaign of aggressive patrolling, but the main Japanese forces north of the Keravat and Warangoi Rivers on the Gazelle Peninsula were still holding strong defensive positions at the end of the war. In fact General Hitoshi Imamura commanded 53,200 soldiers, 16,200 naval men and 20,000 civilian workers, about three times as many men as the Australians had thought. Apart from their victory at their landing in 1942 the Japanese had fought no ground war on the Gazelle Peninsula, but like the forces on New Ireland they suffered constant bombing and straffing.
About 50,000 troops of the Japanese XVIII Army survived battles, skirmishes, bombing and malnutrition to group west of the Sepik River during 1944. Some units were attempting to move further west to Dutch New Guinea when the Americans landed at Aitape and Hollandia. The XVIII Army was now held between the sea in the north, mountains and swamp in the south, the Australians on the east, and the Americans in the west. Although they had few stores, little ammunition and almost no heavy weapons, the Japanese launched an attack on the Americans at the Driniumor River. When the Australians took over from the Americans at the end of 1944 they faced a much reduced force, close to exhaustion and attempting to live off the land. About 13,500 Japanese troops, mostly concentrated south of Wewak were fighting the Australians, disease and malnutrition when war ended.

With his homeland facing 'utter destruction' the Emperor of Japan broadcast to the Japanese people on 15 August 1945 that Japan had surrendered: the Japanese armies in China, South-East Asia and the Pacific were to cease fighting. But it was September before Japanese commanders in Rabaul, Wewak and Bougainville handed their swords to Australian officers. The Japanese soldiers were then told to assist in the destruction of their arms and ammunition, and moved to assembly points on Muschu Island, the Gazelle Peninsula, Torokina and Fairo Island. By mid-1946 about 140,000 Japanese had left on crowded ships for their homeland. Australian military courts tried 924 Japanese in Rabaul, Wewak, Manus and South-East Asia for crimes committed during the war: 644 of them were found guilty and 148 were sentenced to death. Most were convicted of offences against prisoners of war.

Soldiers of the Emperor

About 300,000 Japanese went to Papua and New Guinea during the war. Imamura, the army commander in Rabaul, was an intelligent, travelled professional soldier. After graduating from military college, he had been a student and instructor in military studies. He spent a year with a British regiment in 1918 and he was attached to the Japanese embassy in India in 1927. Following service in Manchuria and China, he took his first command of a fighting force in China in 1940. When the sweep southward began in December 1941 he directed the capture of Java. He took command in Rabaul in November 1942. Other Japanese soldiers also came to Papua and New Guinea having experienced war and victory in Asia, but few had Imamura's knowledge of the outside world. The little information available to senior officers about Papua and New Guinea was not spread widely in the Japanese army. As Lieutenant-General Tsutomi Yoshihara asked, 'Was it at all likely that there would be many Japanese who had visited this dark uncivilised place . . . ?'
Nearly all Japanese troops were strangers to the Southern Cross, rains and landslides that destroyed months of road building, rapid rotting of aircraft fabric, vast swamps, and frosts in the high-altitude moss forests.

Half of the Japanese soldiers who served in Papua and New Guinea died there. The Japanese inflicted hardship, but they suffered much more. By late 1944 one-third of the Japanese XVII on Bougainville was sick and another third was fully engaged in growing food or catching fish. From 65,000 troops who were on Bougainville when the Americans landed at Torokina in 1943, about 26,000 died of illness, 16,000 were killed and 23,000 surrendered at the end of the war. The death rate in the XVIII Army was higher. Over 100,000 strong in 1942, it was reduced to 13,200 by October 1945. Very few had been transferred to Rabaul or other bases. Particular units had histories of disaster. The 51st Regiment escaped from Lae by a desperate march over the Huon Peninsula. They then faced the long retreat through the Finisterres to Madang and on to Wewak. The 20th Division went from Madang to strengthen Finschhafen. Rather than grouping and launching an attack in force, individual units went into battle immediately they arrived, were cut down in large numbers, and forced to join the general retreat west.

Men died in thousands: exhausted on cliff faces, falling in the frost on the high crossings, swept away as stones rolled beneath them in the rivers, and stumbling from hunger and disease in the swamps. Some of the sick or wounded committed suicide or asked their comrades to kill them. Advance units took all the food from village gardens; later units did not have the time or energy to bury their own dead. Before the general surrender some groups continued to fight although they had no weapons except sticks, stones and hand grenades fashioned from bombs. The Japanese were sustained by an ideal: the soldier's task was to fight, he was never to question an order and death was infinitely preferable to surrender. Having made arrangements for the withdrawal of their few remaining men from Buna, General Oda and Lieutenant-Colonel Tomita shot themselves. That, Yoshihara said, was a 'sublime conception of duty'. Adachi, the commander of the XVIII Army, wrote that he demanded of his sick and exhausted men more than any other army. That no action or apology could ever atone for the suffering of his men, Adachi committed suicide in Rabaul.

Ten years after the war Yoshihara, who had also served in the XVIII Army, wrote of the war in New Guinea. He told of incidents where Japanese troops had fought Papuan New Guineans, but in general he thought that the people were obedient, gentle and friendly, and their cooperation during the New Guinea campaign was no small matter. They helped with offering food and carrying wounded. And there were countless thousands of troops who owed their lives to the natives.
The Japanese, Yoshihara said, did not meet the savages that they had expected. Having attempted to talk with many village people, Yoshihara decided that they were ‘of low intelligence’, but the evidence he gives to support his belief is evidence only of the difficulties the Japanese had in communicating with villagers. Yoshihara’s expectation and his judgment of the people of Papua and New Guinea were similar to those of many Australian and American troops.

Among the many groups of Japanese tourists going to Papua New Guinea thirty years after the war are men searching for the graves of comrades. While their memories of the horror of war are still sharp, they often speak with affection for particular peoples and places.

**Labourers of the Emperor**

As Australian and Papua New Guinean patrols advanced against the Japanese on Bougainville and Manus and in the Sepik they met groups of starving and poorly clad Indians. Some had escaped from retreating Japanese units; others were released when Japanese positions were captured. Two men rescued in the Sepik said that they had been travelling through the bush for forty-five days since escaping from the Japanese in Wewak. Sixty men freed in north Bougainville said that the Japanese had shot forty of their fellow prisoners as a punishment and a warning after three other Indians had joined a coastwatcher and his troop of Papua New Guinean soldiers. After the final surrender of the Japanese 5589 Indians, 1397 Chinese, 688 Malayans and 607 Indonesians were released on the Gazelle Peninsula, and a few other survivors of Asian labour units were found in other Japanese controlled areas.

Chint Singh, who reached Australian and Papua New Guinean troops at Angoram on the Sepik a fortnight after the official end of the war, wrote an account of his life in New Guinea. Captured in Singapore, he had been one of about 3000 Indian soldiers in the British army taken on crowded ships to labour for the Japanese. At first employed unloading ships at Wewak, the Indians worked over twelve hours a day, suffered beatings, and almost no medical aid was given to the sick. Although the penalty for stealing was sometimes death, the Indians were forced to pilfer stores to stay alive. When Japanese ships could no longer reach Wewak the Indians acted as carriers for Japanese troops and supplied food by making sago and preparing gardens. They were frequently denied a share of the food they had produced. Possessing only tattered clothes, without mosquito nets, adequate food or medical supplies, many prisoners died on long treks in support of Japanese troops; others were executed by the Japanese or killed by Allied bombing. Some Indians who attempted to escape were captured and returned by villagers who feared
harsh punishment from the Japanese if they were caught assisting prisoners. And a few Indians who stole food from village gardens were attacked by angry villagers. Yet Chint Singh and others eventually owed their lives to Papua New Guineans who risked death by coming to the prisoners to talk to them and leave food for them. About 200 of the 3000 Indian prisoners sent to Wewak survived the war.

Other groups of prisoners attached to the XVIII Army suffered as much. Liun Yun, a rope-maker of Canton province, was seized by the Japanese, shipped to Rabaul and then to Salamaua where he worked in a labour gang with twenty-four other Chinese. Two of the Chinese were shot by the Japanese at Salamaua. Forced to retreat with the Japanese, the remaining Chinese began the march to Wewak. Liun Yun alone survived. Five of his companions were killed by Allied bombing, some died of disease or starvation, and Liun Yun thought that others, unable to work or keep up with the Japanese troops, had been executed. In Rabaul, where the Japanese themselves had more food and medical supplies and suffered less from enemy action, about 25 per cent of the Asian prisoners died, a higher death rate than among the Japanese.

Americans

Americans were the most numerous foreigners to go to Papua and New Guinea during the war. Over a million United States servicemen passed through the largest bases in the south-west Pacific. Confident of their armaments and their troops’ fighting ability, American commanders ordered their men to take Buna and Sananander, their first objective in Papua and New Guinea. But the advance was slow, and reports came back of officers who were incompetent and troops who were reluctant to attack. Some men were unwilling or unable to fight, but only the front-line forces then knew what the main obstacles were. Men fighting their first battle, untrained in jungle warfare, struggling through swamps, suffering their first attacks of malaria, could not sweep aside an enemy determined to die rather than give up strongly defended positions. But General MacArthur and his senior staff, embarrassed by their troops’ lack of success and ignorant of conditions on the battle field, demanded victory. MacArthur told General Edwin Harding, ‘Take Buna today at all costs.’ When Harding failed MacArthur replaced him with General Robert Eichelberger whom he sent forward with the advice, ‘Take Buna or don’t come back alive.’ Those orders increased American casualties; but there were to be ‘no more Bunas’.

From this time on the Americans in Papua and New Guinea landed at a lightly defended point, built a strong base, used their air and sea power to destroy the Japanese capacity to attack, stopped stores and
reinforcements reaching Japanese troops, and then repeated the process at another point further north. When the Japanese attacked the American bases (as they did at Torokina and Aitape) they were forced to travel over difficult country and then advance against entrenched troops supported by heavy arms and aircraft. Inevitably the Japanese died in large numbers, exhausting their supplies and inflicting little damage.

In coordinating land, sea and air power, the Americans exploited their possession of large-scale technology. At Nissan Island nearly 6000 men and 4400 tonnes of equipment and stores were landed in one day. Driving straight from the landing barges, bulldozers carved 11 km of road on the first day. Sixteen giant condensers turned sea water into fresh to supply the 16 500 men who were on the island within weeks of the first landing. Electric lights floodlit the area so that the building of bomber and fighter runways could continue twenty-four hours a day. The machinery being used on the island consumed over 36 000 litres of petrol a day; the aircraft used another 90 000 litres of aviation fuel. Yet the Nissan landing was a small operation compared with the assault on Hollandia, and Nissan was a minor base compared with Manus. At selected points on the Papuan and New Guinea coasts thousands of young American men had demonstrated a power not previously seen in the world. They were richer in material possessions than any other peoples, and they exhibited an exceptional concern about human comfort, food and health.

Pacific Island Allies

New Zealanders and Fijians fought alongside the Americans in the British Solomons and then moved north with them to Bougainville. Most of the Nissan assault force were New Zealanders, and 1500 Fijians patrolled forward of the American stronghold at Torokina. Another 400 Fijians of the First Docks Company laboured on Torokina beach unloading and packing stores. In their free time they surfed in the breakers that made Torokina dangerous for barges. The Fijians worked closely with Bougainvilleans. When Fiji’s 1st Battalion withdrew from Ibu on the Numa Numa track over 200 villagers came with them; they feared the Japanese would punish them for assisting the Fijians.

Sergeant Usaia Sotutu, a Fijian who had worked for twenty years on Bougainville as a missionary, led the 1st Battalion around the Japanese and back to Torokina by using little known tracks across the Emperor Range. Another Fijian, Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu, was wounded at Mawaraka south of Torokina while his unit was attempting to reach some villagers higher up the Jaba River who were waging their own war against the Japanese. Sefanaia had res-
cued two wounded Fijians before he himself was hit. Other members of the unit trying to reach Sefanaia were also hit. Sefanaia called to the men to stop the rescue attempts, but realising that they would try again and more men would be wounded, Sefanaia exposed himself to Japanese fire and was killed. He was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Australians at War

Australia had been at war for over two years when the Japanese thrust southward in December 1941. A slow turning of Australian attention from the troops fighting in Europe and North Africa became a desperate concern about the defence of Australia as the British surrendered in Singapore, the Japanese bombed Darwin, the Americans were defeated in the Philippines and the Australians retreated in New Britain and Papua. In the past, Australians had spoken of the time when New Guinea would be their last barrier against invasion. Now it was true; Australian troops, it seemed, were holding the enemy at the door.

Early newspaper reports and moving films of the fighting in New Guinea were addressed to readers who knew little of ‘the islands’. They were places previously reported by short paragraphs about crocodiles, cannibals, and brides bought with dogs’ teeth and pigs; and infrequent long articles about gold strikes, exploratory patrols, murdered white men and visits by Governors-General. Over 500,000 Australians served overseas during the war. Many went to Papua and New Guinea. Coming from a total population of only 7,000,000, they left few families without friends and relatives ‘in the islands’. By the end of the war Australians had learnt about Papua and New Guinea — Milne Bay, Kokoda, Coral Sea, Buna, Salamaua, Lae, Wau, Madang, Wewak, Bougainville and Rabaul were more than well-known place names, they had acquired associations only a little less strong than an earlier generation had attached to Gallipoli and Flanders.

The spreading of popular knowledge about Papua New Guinea was partly dependent on the careful gathering of geographical information by special army units. The need for accurate data was great. When the American assault force was approaching Torokina on Bougainville in 1943 the captain of a transport asked his navigating officer for the ship’s position. The officer replied, ‘About three miles inland, Sir.’ The chart then being used placed Cape Torokina 9 km south-west of its actual location. In work continued after 1945 hydrographic surveys were made of much of the Papuan and New Guinea coasts, and American and Australian survey corps provided the first detailed maps of much of the mainland. By July 1945 117 Australians and 77 Americans were employed in the Allied Geo-
graphical Section which published handbooks, terrain studies, special reports and a four-volume *Annotated Bibliography of the South-West Pacific and Adjacent Areas*. The Directorate of Meteorological Services gathered more information and provided more accurate predictions about the weather in tropical Australia and New Guinea than had ever been attempted before.

The suffering of the troops defeated in the early battles for Rabaul and Kokoda was increased because they were untrained and ill-equipped for war in Australian Territories. The army that had fought major battles in Greece, Crete, Syria, and North Africa had to change radically to prepare troops to fight and survive in the wet tropics. A sign that the changes were being made was the arrival in Port Moresby in September 1942 of the first troops wearing ‘jungle green’ uniforms. By the end of the war the Australian troops had a tactical supremacy over the Japanese. It was heightened, but not dependent on their better weapons, supplies and transport. Australian soldiers had learnt to operate in the environment of their closest overseas lands. The skills were retained, developed and later applied by the army in Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam.

The army also learnt to reduce the impact of tropical diseases. At the end of the fighting in Papua in 1943 Australian troops had suffered 6154 casualties from battle and 21 600 from malaria. In one week alone over 1000 men at Milne Bay contracted malaria; but by destroying mosquitoes, issuing protective clothing and nets, and ensuring that all troops took suppressant drugs medical advisers rapidly reduced the incidence of malaria. The fall in sickness rates among fighting units made field officers demand and respond to information about protecting soldiers’ health. The Land Headquarters Malaria Research Unit directed work in the laboratory and the field, and cooperated with civilian research and teaching institutions. Tests in Australia produced a substance to kill the mites that carried scrub typhus, the tropical disease most feared by Australian troops. Once the effectiveness of the ‘miracle drug’ penicillin was known, its production and application was speeded up. At the end of 1943 it was used for the first time to stop infection in a wounded soldier at Guy’s post north of the Ramu River. During 1944 Sir Howard Florey, the leader of the research team responsible for the development of penicillin, visited New Guinea to observe and extend the application of the first antibiotic drug. Research into nutrition and methods of food preservation greatly improved the diet of the troops. From the massive concentration on the destruction of men in Papua and New Guinea came knowledge to enable people to live healthier lives.

The Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs formed in 1944 took inquiries beyond the immediate needs of winning the war. Instructed to advise the Commander-in-Chief on the administration of areas under emergency control, the head of the directorate, Alf
Conlon (that ‘remarkably unprofessional politician’) gathered a group of lively minds. Including anthropologists, lawyers, poets, agricultural scientists and senior officers from the pre-war administrations of Papua and New Guinea, the directorate studied the impact of the war on Papua New Guineans, and began formulating policies for the post-war. The directorate was particularly concerned with labour, education and the training of Australians to administer the Territories. The School of Civil Affairs which later became the Australian School of Pacific Administration was started under the authority of the directorate. While the directorate did not make immediate changes in the application of Australian policies in Papua or New Guinea, it did direct able men to appraise the work that Australians had done and might try to do there. Before 1941 Australians with special skills had been concerned infrequently and individually with Papua and New Guinea; after, through the directorate and other military units, hundreds of highly trained men and women, from parasitologists to novelists, were working there.

On 21 January 1942 while the people of Lae were surveying the damage done during the first Japanese air raid, the Administrator of New Guinea, Sir Walter McNicol, handed authority for administration to the army. Civil government of the Mandated Territory had ended dramatically but without ceremony. In Port Moresby the Administrator, Leonard Murray, and the senior army officer, Brigadier Morris, disputed the timing of the end of the civil administration. Morris eventually assumed power on 15 February 1942. It was essential that the army take over, although most of the disorder in Port Moresby was then being caused by troops looting buildings in defiance of officers and military police. Field staff of the civil administration in areas not occupied by the Japanese were instructed to continue working and given rank in administrative units. Nearly all the other Europeans still in the two territories were either taken into the army or instructed to leave. The administrative units, one for Papua and one New Guinea, were merged to form the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (Angau), under the command of Morris in Port Moresby. Two decisions with long-term significance had been taken quickly: the two territories had been combined under the one administration, and Port Moresby was the ‘capital’ of the combined territories.

By 1945 about 1700 men were serving in Angau. To maintain supplies of copra and rubber Angau officers recruited men and directed their labour on plantations remaining in Allied control. They patrolled, held courts, dealt with health and labour problems in areas away from the war zone, and aided the rehabilitation of communities whose homes and gardens had been destroyed by war. Angau officers and Papua New Guinean police patrolled into enemy-occupied areas, and provided information and acted as
guides for other units. When Allied troops moved to new camps Angau was supposed to control communications between villagers and soldiers. One Angau officer recalled trying to persuade villagers to work for the Allies: 'We made our propaganda simple. The gist of it was that the Japanese were a land hungry people who wanted to settle in New Guinea, and that in addition to taking the natives' land, they would kill off the menfolk and take the women as wives.' The Far Eastern Liaison Office spread propaganda further by dropping leaflets from aircraft, sending agents to communities in Japanese-controlled areas, and directing broadcasts to the villagers. The broadcasts ended the pre-war assumption of black and white residents that the radio was samting bilong masta tasol.

Although young Australians with no experience in the territories joined Angau, most senior field officers had worked in the public service in either Papua or New Guinea. Some officers who had felt at ease administering a paternal interference in village affairs found compulsory recruiting and uprooting people from danger areas and construction sites repugnant. With little time to explain why village gardens had to be flattened for airstrips and all able-bodied men taken to unknown areas, they were forced to be imperious. Other Angau officers, some recruited from the pre-war white community, used the excuse of wartime to demand immediate obedience to all instructions. They were ready to kick labourers thought to be 'cheeky' or lazy, and they instructed the police to punish all who showed signs of protest.

Nearly all of the Australian soldiers who went to Papua and New Guinea after the start of the war had little knowledge of the people of the territories – or of any non-white Australians. Averaging twenty-one at enlistment, the troops were uneducated in the prejudice or behaviour of communities with barriers between masters and boys. Most had not joined the army to fight for ideals. They certainly did not go to war to protect the peoples of Papua and New Guinea. One young builder's assistant remembered that he was keen to go to war:

Actually, I felt it was going to be over before I got into it as a matter of fact. But I guess adventure to a certain extent. A lot of other fellows I knew had gone, and I wanted to be in the army. That was about the strength of it.

Many of the soldiers who went to New Guinea had little to do with the people who lived there. Living in large camps and without transport, the ordinary soldier saw black men, palm trees and jungle as part of an exotic background. For most soldiers war was training, waiting, travelling and little violence; they encountered other Australian soldiers. But several thousand young Australians had times of close association with villagers and Papua New Guinean men in labour and fighting units.
Men of the 2/5 Independent Company went into camp on the Laloki River inland from Port Moresby in April 1942. They saw few Papuans while they were there, but after six weeks they went by launch to Movea, and Toaripi people then took them by double-hulled canoe on the four-day trip up the Lakekamu to Bulldog. On the walk across the ranges to Wau young men proud of their physical strength found themselves left behind by the more heavily-laden carriers. In the north the Independent Companies patrolled the tracks close to the Japanese bases at Lae and Salamaua. Sometimes living in the villages, supplied by ‘kai lines’ (carriers) and guided by Papua New Guineans, they formed many relationships with the people. Often they met in situations where the Papua New Guineans could demonstrate superior skills, where the Australians were dependent on the Papua New Guineans. The members of the Independent Companies had no inclination, evidence or preparation to cause them to believe that they were mastas. Other Australians also came away from New Guinea with a knowledge of a variety of peoples, some of whom had been comrades, men who had shared a tough, levelling and bonding experience.

In Australia news reports, moving films, books and poems provided a fresh picture of the people of Papua and New Guinea. In its most sympathetic and repeated form it showed Papuans, their feet in mud and a bush stretcher across their shoulders, taking a wounded digger down a steep jungle track. The solicitous Papuan walking at the digger’s head, steadying the stretcher on the steepest grades, had his hair piled high and he wore only a laplap or a brief cover across his genitals. Sapper Bert Beros, in his poem ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels’ written on 14 October at Dump 66 in the Owen Stanley Ranges, did much to create and spread the picture of the compassionate black carriers:

Using leaves to keep the rain off
And as gentle as a nurse.
Slow and careful in bad places
On the awful mountain track,
The look upon their faces
Would make you think that Christ was black.

Showing the faithful black boy coming to the aid of the masta, ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels’ was a picture pandering to prejudice and romantic illusion; but it was more than that. It portrayed Papua New Guineans with a strength and humanity that people in Australia had not heard about before; and it made displaced planters fear that they would have difficulty turning the ‘fuzzy wuzzy’ back into a subservient kanaka.

The sentiment of Beros’s poem was based in reality. Colonel F. Kingley Norris, senior medical officer of the 7th Division, reported on the work of the carriers on the Kokoda Trail:
With improvised stretchers — one or two blankets lashed with native string to two long poles spread by stout traverse bars — as many as eight or ten native bearers would carry day after day. To watch them descend steep slippery spurs into a mountain stream, along the bed and up the steep ascent, was an object lesson in stretcher bearing. If night finds the stretcher still on the track, they will find a level spot and build a shelter over the patient. They will make him as comfortable as possible, fetch him water and feed him if food is available — regardless of their own needs.

The troops summed up their dependence on carriers to bring up rations and ammunition, and to take back the wounded in the expression: ‘No boong, no battle’. White Australia had rarely expressed such praise and gratitude to ‘coloured’ men.

Australian troops arriving in Papua and New Guinea after the Japanese had begun to retreat were lectured on how to treat the ‘natives’. Those who gave the lectures tended to look back to an ideal of relationships before the war to describe the ‘proper’ behaviour of black and white. F. E. Williams, the government anthropologist and a resident of Papua for twenty years, informed the soldiers:

The natural abilities of the native are very nearly, if not quite, on a par with those of Europeans. However unacceptable, even unbelievable, to the man in the street, this is the general verdict of those scientists who have studied the subject. In the general bush, indeed, the natives will in many respects make a better showing than we do. It is salutary for the white man to bear this near-equality in mind.

But the native, being overawed by the white man’s cultural powers, tends to regard him as a superior being, and adopts a submissive or deferential attitude. White residents of New Guinea have usually endeavoured to act up to this, and the European’s pose of superiority is not resented by the native because he is used to it. It is worth some trouble to maintain since it gives us an advantage.

Williams’ research and reading almost convinced him that white men possessed no innate superiority; but the war, he thought, justified Australians’ exploiting an advantage based on error.

In February 1943 commanding officers of the 5th Division were instructed to maintain the ‘advantage’. Their attention was drawn to practices leading to unsatisfactory relationships developing between ‘service personnel and natives’:

(a) A growing tendency to fraternise . . .
(b) Promiscuous bathing, including frolicking together in the water . . .
(c) The increasing practice of vehicles carrying both white and native personnel, and the tendency for vehicles to stop and give natives a lift . . .

Australian soldiers were also instructed to build camps away from villages and labourers’ quarters to prevent the spread of disease; and medical advice supported the order.

Some troops did not believe the lectures and disobeyed the orders on race relations. Having already worked out their own way of behaving towards particular Papua New Guineans, they decided to ignore the ‘experts’. And sometimes circumstances made instructions against fraternisation absurd. Small units resting on the track shared bully beef and cigarettes with the men who were acting as
their guides and carriers. Soldiers, frustrated because they shared no common language with villagers, talked at length with those few Papua New Guineans who were at ease in English, and worked hard to gain fluency in Pidgin. While a few Australians given command of labourers did adopt the harsh style of pre-war overseers, others were disturbed by the shouted abuse, the occasional kick or cuff, and the argument that if you did not show the coon who was boss they ‘would be all over you inside twenty-four hours’. One young soldier said that he was shocked to find Australians abusing other men and treating them as menials; he had no intention of supporting such a system. In spite of the many thousands of Australian troops who had nothing to do with Papua New Guineans and the others who learnt to behave like *mastas*, many troops were generous, curious and friendly towards the people of Papua and New Guinea. They greatly outnumbered the pre-war foreign population. Actions between black and white men which were branded as absurd or eccentric in 1940 were common in 1943.

By the end of the war many Australians felt that they were in debt to the people of Papua and New Guinea. Gavin Long in the final volume of the official history of Australia in the war said that by 1944 ‘the burden of the war was weighing heavily on the New Guinea natives — more heavily, man for man, than on the general run of Australian citizens’. All Australians could see that Papua New Guinea had done nothing to cause the war and that armies had killed them and destroyed their property. Some Australians went further and concluded that the Allies, by deciding to fight the Japanese in Papua New Guinea, were partly responsible for the hardships suffered by Papua New Guineans. Hearing and seeing the reports of loyal villagers rallying to aid Australian servicemen, Australians also wondered whether they had done enough for the people of their territories before 1941. The sense of debt, widely felt in Australia, made Australian politicians look for more generous policies in the post-war period and it made Australian taxpayers more willing to pay for them.

**Papua New Guineans**

The burden of war fell unevenly on Papua New Guinean communities. Some groups suffered while others were untouched, and because of the lack of communications, people might not know that war had destroyed members and materials of a group living less than 200 km away. The war had almost no effect on about one-third of the people of Papua and New Guinea. Most villagers on the upper Fly and Sepik rivers and through much of the Western and Southern Highlands may have seen more aeroplanes fly overhead and fewer patrols pass through their lands, but otherwise they would have seen
little change. Highlanders living at points east of Mount Hagen were involved in more dramatic events.

Early in 1943 only fifteen Australian soldiers were stationed in the Highlands, but by October 1000 Australians in Bena Force, some special American units and 235 members of the Royal Papuan Constabulary were in the area. At Goroka army engineers and 1000 Highland labourers constructed a new 200 m runway in seven days, and, more slowly, army units built 85 km of roads to take motor vehicles. About 2000 men from Chimbu were brought into the Goroka area to grow vegetables to supply the army. In June 1943 the Japanese bombed Highland airstrips, killing some Highlanders, destroying equipment and setting fire to the kunai grass. But perhaps the most disastrous consequence of the war was the introduction of an epidemic of dysentery in August 1943 which swept through the Highlands, killing people not in direct contact with foreigners. Army units issued ‘sulfa’ tablets, built temporary hospitals and instructed the villagers in hygiene. Although no Japanese soldiers entered the Highlands, war disrupted the lives of many eastern Highlanders. More numerous and acting with a sense of urgency, the foreigners had been more inclined than pre-war officers to force changes on the villagers.

The diversity and the extent of the impact of the war on the coast can be gauged by looking at selected places. On Misima Island in the south-east of Papua the sudden withdrawal of all government officers, an Australian missionary and nearly all the white miners, traders and planters left several groups competing for power. A Tongan missionary, a Papuan clerk at the government station, a small detachment of police, three Europeans who disobeyed the general instruction to leave, several hundred indentured labourers from other areas of Papua and 3000 villagers argued and fought about continuing the laws of those who had left or replacing them with a system more to the liking of one of the competing groups. The Coral Sea Battle was fought in the sky above and in the seas around Misima. Without any means of obtaining information about the war, villagers heard and passed on wild rumours. A young man, Bulega, preached of a new order in which islanders would have wealth and power, and white men would be servants. His followers decided to kill the returning ‘government’; and when the first Angau officer and police visited a small island off Misima, the people crowded about them and killed them. More soldiers and police came. They destroyed houses and canoes, shot five people and arrested many. Bulega hanged himself while in prison, and the government publicly hanged eight men found guilty of murder. As Angau officers re-established the old order many Misima men went away to work on the mainland. Australians learnt little of the killings and hangings, and events on Misima did not disturb their acceptance of the picture of the gentle Fuzzy Wuzzy.
Other groups on the Papuan coast saw no Japanese but they too were profoundly disturbed by the war. Angau took away nearly all able-bodied men: the clearing of garden land, repairing of houses, trading expeditions and ceremonies were neglected. Village government, economy and social life changed. Where in 1940 there were some groups along the Papuan coast that rarely saw a man go away to work, by 1945 all fit men had been labourers or soldiers. Many had travelled beyond Papua, and they had seen stranger sights and encountered thousands more foreigners than those men who worked as domestic servants or plantation labourers before the war. Hanuabadan villagers near Port Moresby were told to leave their homes and find shelter on the land of other Motu peoples. On their return the Hanuabadans never re-established large subsistence gardens. The war had speeded up their transformation from subsistence farmers who did some work for cash, to wage earners who did a little fishing and gardening.

People living in areas occupied by the Japanese were most likely to suffer in the violence of war. Nearly all the villagers living along the north coast of Milne Bay in 1942 had been born into communities that were Christian and peaceful. They lived within a day’s sailing of foreign-owned plantations and stores, and the government and trading centre at Samarai. Some of them saw departing Australians destroy buildings on Samarai, and Australian and American troops build a huge base at the head of Milne Bay; but most were completely unprepared for the bombing that preceded the Japanese landing in August 1942 and the two weeks fighting in which 1000 soldiers died. Sir William Webb, in his inquiry into Japanese breaches of the rules of warfare, recorded the story of Ru of Ahioma, the site of the first Japanese landing:

He saw the warships coming in, and ran into the bush with other boys. He saw scattered bands of Japanese in the bush. They shot three natives who went back to Ahioma for food, namely Kapulina, Boro and Hinadikere, a native woman. He saw Hinadikere killed at Wawandala. She went to get some food, and was shot by Japanese in the back of the head. Ru saw the Japanese catch a boy named Kinunuri at Motua close to K.B. They tied his hands and bayonetted him. Later Ru said that he was in a tree when he saw Kariota killed. He got down and was running away when he saw the Japanese bayonetting Pesia. They tied his hands behind his back, tied him to a tree, and three Japanese out of about ten bayonetted him. They wanted Pesia to show them the road to Gili Gili, but he was not familiar with it, and took them around pads, and finally finished up somewhere near where they started. This made the Japanese wild, and they killed him.

The Milne Bay villagers were caught in violence that was brief, massive, uncontrollable and nearly incomprehensible.

The Busama lived through equally horrific events; and their suffering was prolonged. A village of about 600 people between Salamaua and Lae, Busama was undamaged during the Japanese occupation of the Morobe coast. As the Australian-appointed _luluai_ at first declined to meet them, the Japanese appointed the _tultul_ as
their headman. Not interfering in normal village affairs, the Japanese contacted the people only to buy pigs and vegetables and recruit men to assist in unloading ships or do other labouring work. The Busama assisted an American pilot who survived a plane crash to reach Australian troops, and they permitted labourers, previously indentured to white men and stranded in the district, to settle in the village. Tension in the area was greatly increased when the old lii,ui, ressent- ing his loss of power, contacted an Australian officer and persuaded him the new headman was actively assisting the Japanese. In a subsequent raid two Australians and a troop of Papua New Guinean police killed two villagers, but not the headman. Three policemen were later seized by refugee labourers, taken to Busama and handed to the Japanese who shot them. In the fighting to retake Salamaua and Lae, Allied bombing destroyed Busama, and any attempt to build new gardens or shelters immediately drew more bombing and machine-gunning. The villagers lost all property: houses, canoes, bicycles, sewing machines, fishing nets, wood-working and gardening tools, and pigs. As the Japanese became desperate to escape the attacking Allied troops, they forced villagers to act as carriers. When the Australians again took over the administration of Busama they reappointed the old li,ui, unaware that he had been a despot before the war and that his charges against the former tultul were false. As American and Australian demands for labour were high, nearly all able-bodied men were compelled to act as carriers in the Markham-Ramu campaigns or work at base-camps. With the men away, and the remaining villagers forced to fill quotas of sago thatch to supply to Lae, the gardens were not replanted. In spite of the fact that the army supplied rations, many Busama were hungry in 1944. But some Busama profited by selling souvenirs to the soldiers and nurses who picnicked on beaches near the village; and the subsistence economy recovered quickly as the men returned and the Australian government paid compensation for war damage. By 1948 the gardens were meeting demands for food, the villagers owned twenty-seven small canoes and eighteen canoes of 10 m or more; and the heavy rainfall and growth of vegetation on the shores of the Huon Gulf had covered most of the scars of war on the land.

A small garrison of about 100 Japanese maintained a post and administered 1500 people on Nissan Island, a small atoll north of Bougainville. In February 1944 over 5000 New Zealanders and Americans landed on the island. There was no prior bombardment. Within a few weeks 16 400 soldiers and 45 500 tonnes of equipment were on Nissan. Able-bodied Nissan men were retained to work at the base while other islanders were evacuated to the British Solomons. As the Allies built other bases further north, Nissan quickly lost its importance, and by the end of the year it was a quiet, minor post. The Nissan had seen massive works by men and machines that
had transformed their homeland and secured the death of 100 Japanese; but the other purposes of the men and the machines were scarcely known to the Nissan. The Nissan had seen Japanese, New Zealanders, white Americans, black Americans and Australians. All had demonstrated that they were admitted to a culture possessing great power, but they had done little of permanent value for the Nissan.

Some villagers who survived up to four years of Japanese occupation passed through times of terrifying violence. Communities on Bougainville, New Ireland and the Gazelle Peninsula suffered almost daily bombing and straffing of all houses and gardens visible from aircraft. Japanese soldiers, often sick, underfed and without supervision from senior officers, seized village food supplies. As Allied troops advanced and aerial bombing increased, Japanese commanders suspected New Guineans of passing information to Australians and they acted ruthlessly against any villagers thought to be 'disloyal'. After the war Bukei of Manus Island told Australian officials of his experience on New Ireland. A cook at the Kavieng Club, he had run away when the Japanese landed in 1942 and lived quietly in various east coast villages. After four months the Japanese sent him to Kavieng where he worked as a fisherman supplying the Japanese. During 1944 Allied bombing became intense and he and other labourers deserted. Eventually they were collected and Bukei returned to Kavieng to work unloading stores. Later Bukei was one of six men employed as 'police' to 'roam the bush and report signal fires and trouble in the villages'. He said that he knew of four Chinese, four mixed-race men and forty villagers who were executed during his time with the Japanese police. He explained:

The lists for execution were compiled in this way: information would be given to a Japanese soldier by a native that some person was a spy and had contacted Australian soldiers. The native police would be sent out with instructions to arrest the suspect. In the case of the Chinese the Kemputai [sic, Japanese military police] made the arrests. Then the arrested person would be ill-treated and beaten by the Kemputai, forcing him to involve some other person; the victim being in so much pain and so afraid that he would say the name of anyone at all, so the lists grew and the innocent suffers [sic] put to death.

Towards the end of the war Bukei again ran away. He lived with other Manus men on Lavongai until the end of the war. For many New Irelanders, Allied bombing, Japanese harshness and desperate men being forced to denounce each other had led to terror. Ples katim, the beheading place, became an area and a phrase of dread.

By contrast Michael Somare, a young boy at the beginning of the war, remembers the Japanese who visited his home village of Karau, west of the Sepik River, as friendly and just. First thought of as 'white' men, the Japanese were soon accepted as 'just normal people'. For nearly a year Somare and other Karau children attended
an informal Japanese school. The Japanese in Murik did not suffer intense bombing or deprivation, and they left before Australian troops arrived. Weeping villagers presented the departing Japanese with smoked fish.

Most villagers confronted by horrific events that they could not control or predict, acted to protect themselves and their families. A few attempted to use the situation to advantage themselves and humiliate their enemies. But that was a dangerous way to behave, and some men who attempted to direct Japanese or Australian guns against their enemies were themselves destroyed. Villagers in the Sepik who chose to guide the Japanese were killed in counter raids. But many other Sepik peoples were forced to fight for one side or the other; and they did not make a choice based on who they liked or who they thought would win. Men had to appear to support the soldiers who were armed and in the village; and later worry about counter-attacks. Yet there were many cases of villagers not acting for reasons of self-interest. At great risk to themselves people assisted missionaries, planters and government officers whom they had known before the war. Moved by compassion, they helped sick and wounded who were unknown to them and unable to pay for comfort. Chint Singh reported that many Sepik villagers brought food to the suffering Indian prisoners of war although they knew that the Japanese might execute anyone attempting to communicate with prisoners. Often villagers who had never spoken to the Indians came after dark to the camps to offer food.

During the war more Papua New Guineans left their home villages than ever before. Most were labourers and they had no choice about whether they would sign-on or what work they would do. Men could not evade the Angau patrols and still fulfil their duties to their own families; and if they deserted from labour lines they were punished and returned to work. Conditions were often harsh and many labourers recall seeing men beaten for disobeying orders. A young Australian who walked over the precipitous Bulldog track remembered the men carrying 22.5 kg loads for seven days. The sustained themselves on one tin of meat which they ate on the first day so that they would not have to carry it, boiled rice in the evening and dry biscuits in the morning, usually eaten on the march. Towards the end of the war most army employees were better fed and provided with better health services than pre-war labourers, but men working on plantations for the Production Control Board were still supplied according to the old inadequate scales.

At the height of recruiting the army employed about 55,000 Papua New Guineans. Nearly 2000 of them died of causes other than war wounds. Both the total employed and the dead are higher than the actual figures because they do not include most of those who worked without signing-on. The extent to which villagers worked 'unoffi-
cially’ is shown in a 17th Australian Infantry Brigade report on the fighting in the Aitape-Wewak area. The ‘local people’ had

acted as efficient guides and sentries for our patrols; they built huts, headquarters, medical posts and jungle tracks for our use; they cleared and cleaned the villages previously occupied by an enemy devoid of the most elementary standard of sanitation; they had buried the dead; had voluntarily aided our indentured lines... and had assisted to evacuate our wounded across the difficult mountain country.

Australian troops in the Sepik and on Bougainville and New Britain also reported being accompanied by ‘unofficial’ troops armed with spears, axes and discarded weapons.

While high recruiting rates imposed hardships on villagers, many of the labourers were not used effectively. An officer at Milne Bay pointed out that the forty-four Papuans working at the officers’ club and the thirty assigned to American officers as domestic servants could do more to win the war by working elsewhere. Another officer in the Northern District thought that about one-third of the labourers in the area were not used to good advantage: ‘every unit commander,’ he reported, ‘demands his quota like a comforts fund issue’.

The total number of Papua New Guineans employed by the Japanese is unknown. Many worked for short periods only and were satisfied with their conditions and pay. Others, particularly after 1943, were compelled to work long hours in difficult conditions under brutal masters. While the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels were taking stores up and wounded back down the Kokoda Trail, about 1200 New Guineans were supporting the opposing Japanese troops. Conscripted in Rabaul, some of the Japanese Army’s New Guinean carriers were local villagers and others were indentured labourers stranded on the Gazelle Peninsula. As the retreating Japanese lines of supply were cut, the carriers were forced to forage for food in abandoned gardens – and desperate Japanese soldiers sometimes seized the vegetables they were able to find. A few carriers escaped to join the Australians. However, Joseph Todol and five other men carried out a plan requiring greater daring and persistence. Finding a submerged boat near Buna, they worked secretly to repair it, and travelling at night passed north along the New Guinea coast before reaching New Britain. They ate coconuts only for most of the journey. When within walking distance of their home villages on the Gazelle Peninsula, they burnt the boat. Todol lived out the rest of the war making certain that he was not seen by the Japanese.

Those Papua New Guineans who enlisted in the Australian army had their lives profoundly changed by the war. They were likely to have had close relationships with foreigners and shared the foreigners’ power. The barefooted men who wore the laplap, green beret, shirt, and red-and-green colour patch of the Pacific Islands Regiment were a tough, respected force. Formed in 1944 by uniting the Papuan
Infantry Battalion and two New Guinea Infantry Battalions, the P.I.R. units fought in every Papua and New Guinea campaign except Milne Bay. They were credited with having killed 2209 Japanese for the loss of sixty-three Australian and Papua New Guinean members of the P.I.R., an extraordinary ratio of enemy-to-regiment dead. Although often operating as small lightly armed units, towards the end of the war the P.I.R. carried out several company attacks coordinated with artillery and air support. A total of 3532 men enlisted in the P.I.R. and 878 joined ‘M’ Special Unit, a group trained to carry out independent action in Japanese-occupied areas. A further 3137 men in the Papua and New Guinea police forces were often involved in military operations, and another 955 men served as medical orderlies. The soldiers were paid at the same rate as labourers: a first year recruit received 10s. a month and a sergeant £3. The rate was much less than that of black men in the South African Army, or of Torres Strait Islanders in other units of the Australian Army. Pension rates for the ex-soldiers were also low, many carriers received none, and they were unwelcome in Australian returned servicemen’s clubs.

Before the P.I.R. completed its duties controlling the surrendered Japanese troops, its members stood in many ceremonial parades and listened to generous praise and extravagant promises of rewards. Some were decorated; thirteen Papua New Guinean soldiers won the Military Medal. But after they returned to the villages they saw little sign of changes that would give them new opportunities. When the P.I.R. was reformed in 1951 some were keen to rejoin the army, the institution that had given them power, skills, respect and promises. Only a few men who reached positions of importance during the war became prominent in civilian life. Sergeant Gabriel Ehava Karava, D.C.M., from the Gulf Province and Sergeant Peter Simogun, B.E.M., from the Sepik were elected to the first House of Assembly. Others became important village leaders or they obtained secure positions without authority in the public service. Most of the soldiers had travelled, they had seen what men could do, they were well-trained as soldiers; but they had few skills to enable them to transform village economies or to rise to high positions in Territory institutions. When opportunities began to open for Papua New Guineans to take positions of real power in the 1960s, the men who had demonstrated a capacity to lead during the war were too old and too lacking in basic education to run a modern state. Many were disappointed: they were unable to reach the goals that they knew men could reach, and they did not get the schools, hospitals and wages that they had been told that they had earned. The aims and the structures of the religious and political cults that flourished after the war were influenced by what men had seen and heard during the taim bilong pait.
In the 1950s some Papua New Guineans could look back to the war as an awesome disruption that brought few permanent changes. But for many, there was no return to the 1930s. Communities on Manus, in Madang, the Sepik and the Gulf of Papua took their own initiative. Paliau, Yali and Kabu were revolutionaries who conceived plans in varying degrees of knowledge about the economic situation that they hoped to change. The soldiers returning to Toaripi had been aware that the foreigners had power not just through wealth and knowledge, but through organisation. The Toaripi were determined to do more for themselves by combining into larger units and drawing on more manpower and capital. The war had provided demonstrations of what man could do to change the environment and care for people, and many communities in the 1950s sought change. The foreigners, too, made the war more than just a disruption. The war changed the scale of foreign intervention. During the war foreigners had come in vastly greater numbers than ever before, and in the post-war they employed people, wealth and technology to an extent inconceivable to those Papua New Guineans who had worked with pre-war administrations. While some of the foreigners in the 1950s behaved as though they possessed the advantage of being judged ‘superior beings’, and some Papua New Guineans believed that they were, there could be no complete return to masta-boi relationships. Too many Papua New Guineans had known other sorts of relationships and they had seen foreigners in situations where they were clearly not superior; and many of the foreigners arriving after 1945 did not want to support the values of the 1930s.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

Extensive collections of war documents are held in the Australian Archives, Canberra; the Australian War Memorial, Canberra; and to a lesser extent, the National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby. The Commonwealth Archives has produced Selected Items Covering Topics Relating to the Second World War, Reference Guide no. 5, 1972; and there is a guide to the ‘Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, South-West Pacific Area’, compiled by V. Blackburn, and some indexes in the War Memorial. J. Miller, The United States in World War II, The War in the Pacific, Cartwheel: the reduction of Rabaul, Washington, 1959, has a section on American records.

The official war histories of Australia, the United States, and New Zealand provide extensive material on national forces in Papua New Guinea. The Japanese official history is incomplete; a small section of it is available in translation in the Australian War Memorial. The Papuan and New Guinean battalions are not detailed in the Australian history: the Fijians are in O. A. Gillespie, Official History of New


CHAPTER 8

PAYING A DEBT 1945-1949

Out of the war-time destruction of old ideas and the ferment leading to new, the Labor governments of Curtin and Chifley produced a 'new deal' for Papua New Guinea. Between 1945 and 1950 the Australian government provided its Melanesian territory with a direct subsidy of £13 millions, compared with £212 500 in the years 1936 to 1941. The Menzies Liberal governments in the 1950s continued the practice of increasing annual grants to Papua New Guinea.

Speaking on the Second Reading of the Papua New Guinea Provisional Administration Bill in July 1945, the Minister for External Territories, Mr E. J. (Eddie) Ward, announced that the Labor government was not satisfied that sufficient interest had been taken in the Territories prior to the Japanese invasion, or that adequate funds had been provided for their development and the advancement of the native inhabitants.

Australia, said Ward, had a 'debt of gratitude' to Papua New Guineans and a duty to provide them with better health, better education, more participation in the wealth of their country and eventually a say in its government. The provisional administration was to be of one territory, the Territory of Papua New Guinea, with one Administrator and one public service; and as a first step in the new deal Ward revealed a reformed Native Labour Ordinance which increased minimum pay to 15s. a month (these were 10s. in Papua and 5s. in New Guinea before the war), reduced hours of work to 44 a week (previously 50 in Papua and 55 in New Guinea) and limited indentures to twelve months. The indenture system, Ward said, was to be abolished 'as soon as practicable.'

To show it was serious about reform the government cancelled all Papua New Guineans' labour contracts on a single day, 15 October 1945. Few labourers wished to stay at work and thousands joined in a
mass exodus to the villages. Asked by a planter in the Kikori area of Papua why he was leaving, a ‘leading boss-boy’ answered that his people had plenty of food and money in the villages: ‘You pay us our money, but we cannot buy anything with it – it is no good to us.’ Papua New Guineans had been conscripted to work by the army during the war. They were as eager to be demobilised as Australians, and post-war shortages made money less immediately useful. It is not surprising that all but a handful of labourers preferred to go home.

European employers, who suddenly found themselves without labour, were convinced that the cancellation of contracts was madness. ‘In the view of Ward-ism’, wrote a correspondent for the Pacific Islands Monthly in November 1945, ‘it is much more important that Fuzzy-Wuzzy shall be sent singing across the kunai ridges, than that gold shall be dug out of the Bulolo and the Watut.’ For a few months the economy came to a standstill. Rubber and copra plantations closed down. Boats’ crews walked off boats. One Port Moresby hotel was left without staff. ‘Old hands’ in Papua New Guinea predicted ruin. The cancellation of labour contracts had confirmed the prejudices of those who were shrill abuse against all suggestions of a ‘new deal’.

Eddie Ward, for his part, defended his policy as a stand against exploitation by the big companies, which had previously held a throttle-hold on the Territories’. He spoke without intimate local knowledge of Papua New Guinea but with the conviction that ample government expenditure would ensure rapid development in the native interest. To Ward, the departure of labourers after 15 October simply proved his point: the indenture system was obviously disliked by Papua New Guineans and ought to be abolished.

Ward was as simple-minded in his attitude to colonial policy as the planters who opposed him. He was no socialist, as they thought, but a paternalist, humanitarian reformer in the Australian tradition, a good Labor man who thought of Papua New Guineans as primitive working-men in need of protection.

‘How quickly can a million and a half people,’ Ward asked in 1948, ‘most of them naked or in loincloths, be brought up to a decent civilised standard?’

It’s too big a job to be done in a few years, too big to get done in a generation. But we’ve made an interesting start.

We have taken some natives in loincloths from Papua and sent them to the Central Medical School in Fiji, where I hope to see them graduate as medical practitioners.

Can they do it? Their progress has been satisfactory, but naturally slower than natives from other Pacific Islands which have reached a higher stage of development.

The ‘job’ in Papua New Guinea was not so straightforward as Ward imagined; nor was he so great an obstacle to European prosperity as his opponents thought. The rubber and copra industries survived the
Ward years despite a shortage of labour, private capital was welcomed back into the Territory, and (because of government spending) the retail trade had never been better. Burns Philp, W. R. Carpenter, Steamships Trading Co. and other firms with diversified interests benefited much more from the 'new deal' than any Papua New Guineans.

Involved in internal Labor Party and union politics, twice suspended from his ministry during inquiries, and Minister for Transport as well as External Territories, Ward had neither the time nor the inclination to do more than observe the making and implementing of the broad outline of Australian policies in Papua New Guinea.

The first post-war administration was provisional because the international status of New Guinea was uncertain after the demise of the old League of Nations. But even in 1945 Australia's intentions for New Guinea were clear. Under a vigorously internationalist Minister for External Affairs, Dr H. V. Evatt, Australia became the leading advocate of including the principle of trusteeship in the Charter of the United Nations and gladly signed the Trusteeship Agreement for New Guinea of December 1946. Trusteeship was a more exacting international obligation than the mandate had been. The United Nations Trusteeship Council wanted to know what Australia was doing to prepare New Guinea for self-government or independence, how it was promoting the economy of the Territory and the extent of its education and welfare programmes. UN missions, visiting every three years, were supposed to be watch-dogs. By the time a permanent joint administration of Papua and New Guinea was established in 1949 Australia had already reported twice to the United Nations on the progress of its Trust Territory. Australia's post-war support of trusteeship is significant for one reason above all: it placed Australia on a path which was to lead to Papua New Guinea's political independence. The contrasting case is Namibia.

The Administrator of the combined Territory from 1945 to 1952 was J. K. Murray, a former Professor of Agriculture at Queensland University. He had first been principal of an army institute known as the Allied Land Forces Headquarters School of Civil Affairs, which was set up at Canberra early in 1945 to train officers for civil administration in Papua New Guinea and Borneo. He belonged to that circle of advisers who helped the Australian government formulate its new colonial deal, men such as Colonel Alf Conlon, James McAuley, the anthropologists Ian Hogbin and W. E. Stanner, and Colonel J. R. Kerr (later Australia's Governor-General). J. K. Murray shared the hopeful liberalism of this circle. He wrote in 1947 that

We cannot continue to use the word 'native' as if meant something less than the word 'man'. The interested and ignoble doctrines of racialism which have penetrated deeply into the life of New Guinea and constitute an irrational obstacle to its future progress,
Murray wanted to reverse the priorities of pre-war economic policy: to put the Papua New Guinean first and the expatriates second; to turn the Papua New Guinean into 'an independent producer for export'. He was fond of quoting J. R. Kerr's dictum that Australia's economic policy must be in the interests and for the benefit of the native peoples so that when they reach political maturity they will not find that the country and its resources have been developed in some other interest and that economic control lies in some other hands.

He described himself as 'really appalled' to discover on his arrival in Port Moresby in October 1945 that neither of the pre-war administrations had had an Education Department. And he was proud to be associated with the first Australian government which, as he said, adequately backed its policy in Papua New Guinea with money. In 1968 he described Eddie Ward as responsible for the basic policy that was to last from 1945 to the present day, which was, and is, that the interests of the native people are paramount and that priority be given to their educational, social, economic and political development.

The concrete achievements of the Ward years should not be belittled. The physical devastation of the war was enormous. Bombs had razed the majority of pre-war towns: in Wewak, Madang, Lae, Finschhafen, Salamaua, Rabaul, Kavieng and on the Papuan side in Samarai, hardly a building was left standing. The armies left in a hurry, either taking with them their Quonset huts, trucks, warehouses and scrap metal or allowing them to be exported by profiteers. Where fighting had occurred plantations were in ruins. And many Papua New Guineans resented the return of the Australians, preferring the richer, more open-handed Americans.

Reconstruction itself was a difficult task; the implementation of initiatives in social welfare was even more difficult, but it was attempted.

Training of the field staff was organised on a regular basis at the School of Civil Affairs and from 1947 at its permanent peacetime successor, the Australian School of Pacific Administration. However elementary the school's instruction may have been, cadet and older patrol officers were at least acquainted with scholarly thinking about anthropology, colonial administration, medicine, tropical agriculture and so on. They learnt that Papua New Guineans had cultures worthy of respect.

John Gunther, the newly appointed Director of the Department of Public Health, arrived in Port Moresby at the end of the wet season in 1946. Amid the paper-wall muddle of buildings at Port Moresby's administrative centre, Gunther was given a mud floor and tin roofed hut as his headquarters. Gunther had served in New Guinea during
the war as the head of an airforce unit combating tropical disease, but Moresby, a town dominated by men, many still in uniform, in 1946 reminded him of Mt Isa, where he had worked in the 1930s. Knowing that in many villages everybody was to some extent sick, Gunther decided that his first task was to provide basic health care as quickly and as widely as possible. Needs were greatest among those communities that had become dependent on government or mission health services and then been cut off from all aid during the war.

The obvious signs of ill-health were the numbers of people suffering from skin diseases, yaws, enlarged spleens resulting from malaria, and respiratory diseases. Medical patrols visited villages, and hospital staff tried to turn no one away, even as Gunther said, if it meant putting people under beds and two in a bed. A comprehensive programme of training Papua New Guineans as health workers was started. Generously funded by the Australian government, the Department of Public Health spent £1 million a year by 1950. That amount was 17 per cent of the Territory budget in 1949-50. New drugs helped make the Department more effective.

Papua New Guinea’s first Director of Education, W. C. Groves, had to begin from scratch in developing a government school system. Despite the educational endeavours of the missions, 95 per cent of Papua New Guineans remained illiterate after the war. No State primary or secondary schools for Papua New Guineans existed, except for the Sogeri school (near Port Moresby) inherited from the army. J. K. Murray thought education even more basic to development than health, but his administration in fact put health first. Government expenditure on health in 1950 was more than twice that on education. Half the education vote moreover, came from the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, which was concerned not with basic schooling of children but with the training of carpenters, plumbers, mechanics and medical orderlies. Much time was spent debating which language should be used in the schools, whether it was possible to achieve some blending of European and Papua New Guinean cultures, and what relationship the new government system should have with the numerous and diverse mission schools. Many fundamental issues were still undecided by 1950. Handicapped by staff and material shortages, the Education Department found that many of its resources were being used to provide schooling for the children of Australian settlers and public servants. Education Department officials talked of creating a system of schools that would meet the needs of the villagers, but they were slow to get village children into classrooms.

Papua New Guineans were given many promises by Angau and the Provisional Administration about the rewards they would get in the post-war years. Expectations were high, and by the Territories’ pre-war standards Australia was indeed generous. Back pay, still
owing to Papua New Guineans from the time before the Japanese invasion, was quickly distributed by the Provisional Administration during 1946. War damage compensation was paid to Papua New Guineans as well as expatriates, and claims continued to be heard as late as 1950. Villagers could ask to be compensated for the loss of relatives and property destroyed in wartime. By mid-1950 the administration had spent nearly £1 million honouring such claims from Papua New Guineans.

Government advisers had intended the compensation money to be saved and used for rural reconstruction, but much of it went instead on immediate tradestore purchases. Enterprising traders followed district officers so as to be on the spot when people were paid. The anthropologist Camilla Wedgwood estimated that less than a quarter of money received by Milne Bay people in 1946 was deposited as savings, and she described an orgy of gambling in the area. The assistant district officer from the Western District of Papua complained in 1948 that 'money was going out in a golden stream'. J. K. Murray admitted the disadvantages of 'honouring the Commonwealth's promise to pay now' but he could see no alternative once payments had begun. Few Europeans realised that many Papua New Guineans were disappointed with the amount of compensation, that £5 for a lost pig and £20 for a dead son seemed small after the experience of Western military wealth during the war, of riding in army trucks and cars, eating army rations and seeing vast military encampments built within weeks.

The compensation scheme demonstrated the complexity of Australia's task. Without experience in investing money, many Papua New Guineans decided to spend it straightaway on the tea, sugar, flour, tinned meat and card games they enjoyed. Papua New Guineans were not Australians who were black and merely waiting for a 'fair go' to become small businessmen. They were pickers and choosers from Western culture.

Before the war, field officers had instructed villagers to grow economic crops and broaden the range of their garden foods. The few specialist agricultural officers spent most of their time servicing the plantation industry, and European planters and traders obstructed any Papua New Guineans whose ventures into the cash economy seemed likely to cut into their own profits. They opposed attempts by government officers to instruct villagers to build copra driers; they wanted to continue to buy whole nuts and process them on their plantations. When J. K. Murray took up office the plantation industry of the old Mandated Territory was almost destroyed; copra exports which had been over 71,000 tonnes in 1938-39 were only 4500 tonnes in 1946-47. Even in Papua, where Angau had maintained production on most plantations, copra exports had fallen by half and rubber by one quarter. Murray accepted that one of his first
tasks was to rehabilitate the plantations; but he also directed that the resources of the Department of Agriculture were to service the villages. There was, he said, to be more than 'lip service' to the idea that 'the interests of the natives are paramount in . . . any proposed economy.'

W. Cottrell-Dormer, the first post-war Director of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries, was sympathetic to plans for raising the efficiency of subsistence farming and assisting the villagers to become cash farmers. The work of the department was helped by research into village food supplies and diet. The work, which had begun in the war years, leading to more scientifically based ration scales was continued, and in 1947 the Commonwealth Department of Health carried out a comprehensive survey of village nutrition. For the first time the government possessed comprehensive data on the extent to which the villagers lacked protein and particular minerals and vitamins. Although the villagers suffered little obvious malnutrition, many people were retarded in growth and young children were much more prone to disease and likely to die than they were in Australia.

By 1949 the Department of Agriculture had established four main stations and ten other centres for demonstrating new ideas, giving advice and distributing plants and improved breeds of animals. Agricultural officers went on patrols, rural progress societies were established so that communities could come together to pool resources and receive instruction, and several hundred villagers attended courses at rural training centres. Although the government found difficulty recruiting specialists, officers with training in veterinary science, botany, entomology and tropical agriculture were appointed. One officer was given the special task of promoting village cocoa growing on the Gazelle Peninsula, and at Aiyura on the edge of the eastern Highlands the department expanded crop experiments on the pre-war agriculture station to build up basic knowledge that was later used by Papua New Guineans and agriculture officers to stimulate the spread of cash-cropping in the Highlands. To replace and improve livestock destroyed during the war, the Department built pig-breeding centres at Lae, Madang, Wewak, Aitape, Manus, Sohano and Buin; and day-old chickens were flown in from Australia, reared and distributed.

Other projects were less successful. The sheep introduced into the Highlands did not thrive, nor did they provide protein, or raw material for a craft industry or clothing to make Highlanders more healthy.

The department's determination to offer the villagers new opportunities — and its failures — were evident in the attempt to establish a rice industry in the Mekeo area north-west of Port Moresby. Encouraged by mission and government, the Mekeo had grown some
rice before the war, and Angau had continued to guide and demand production after 1942. Like other Papua New Guineans returning from employment during the war, the Mekeo carried with them promises and expectations of a better way of life. Some of them believed that they would be given material rewards, perhaps shotguns, even a truck. In 1948, when agricultural officers talked about ending the compulsion to grow rice and making production easier and more profitable, some Mekeo saw the growth of the rice industry as part of their reward for war services. They were partly right. But during its first ten years the scheme gave little reward; in fact most families invested more in funds and labour than they received in payment for harvested rice. Many Mekeo decided that they had been deceived, that in some way the white men had tricked them. Government officers, on the other hand, tended to believe that the Mekeo had failed to take advantage of the government’s generous aid. But the real reasons for the failure of the project lay in basic economic and administrative problems.

Cottrell-Dormer was committed to the scheme, and eventually stepped down from his position as director to work full-time in the area; but some other government officers, particularly from other departments, thought that too much of the government’s resources were being spent on one project of doubtful value. They opposed the communal planting of rice fields either on ideological grounds – it was communist – or for practical reasons – it would not work because the Mekeo traditionally worked their gardens in families. Government departments did not co-ordinate their work in the area: roads and bridges connecting the rice-growing area to the coast were not built, tractors and harvesting and milling machinery were not repaired, and in 1956 a government officer reported that the two previous harvests had not been milled and the growers were unpaid. Those Mekeo who wished to stay home and increase their cash income were much better off selling betel nut, a crop that they cultivated, harvested and marketed for themselves. In fact, by the early 1960s several villagers had bought tractors, largely from the proceeds of their betel nut sales.

The ‘new deal’ was limited. The Papua New Guineans’ share of export earnings remained tiny beside that of expatriates’, as it did in 1975. Co-operatives did not put the economy of the country back into Papua New Guinean hands as J. K. Murray hoped they would. In spite of the zeal of the officers who promoted the cooperatives and the expectations of the people who formed them to market their cash crops and direct businesses, many village societies failed.

One difficulty was ignorance. The people of fifteen villages on Karkar island, for example, had the money and the enthusiasm to set up a sawmill after the war but the venture failed because they did not know enough about running a business. Their experience was re-
peated in many other communities. Papua New Guineans whose copra driers burnt down, whose new motor vessels were prematurely beached and so on were cut off by circumstances from the vital technical information which no European businessman would have dared be without. It was beyond the resources of the early post-war administration to supply that information across a hundred cultural divides.

A second difficulty was that some Papua New Guineans saw no advantage in cooperative effort whether for subsistence or cash crops. When the people of Pihun in the Ninigo islands obeyed the government's orders in 1949 to build cooperative gardens, the only result was discontent. An agricultural officer visiting the islands in 1950 reported that the people doubted whether the luluai would 'fairly distribute the produce'. The islanders were used to living in 'small scattered hamlets and co-operation except in fishing was rare'. They were not accustomed to community enterprise; nor were they agriculturalists by tradition, having lived off the sea for centuries. The few gardens on Ninigo since the patrols of the 1920s had been 'planted as much for the purpose of window dressing to appease patrolling officers' as for bananas, kaukau (sweet potato) or sasac (sago). The people wanted not gardens, but a tradestore where they could buy the rice, condensed milk, and canned fruit juice which had supplemented their diet during the war. They regarded gardening as a waste of time.

The problems of the co-operative movement were not insuperable, as their opponents thought. They were technical problems. What was needed was a highly flexible government policy which allowed for the variation of local needs in Papua New Guinea. But any hope of such a policy went with Murray when he resigned as administrator in 1952. Rhetoric notwithstanding, his successors believed in a European-owned export economy, and failing Papua New Guinean co-operatives were allowed to die.

The Labor government, architect of post-war innovation, fell from office in December 1949 and was replaced by the Liberal-Country Party Coalition under Menzies. But those planters and businessmen who thought that the end of 'Ward-ism' also meant a return to pre-war conditions were disappointed. Australian colonial policy by the 1950s had become more bipartisan than either the Opposition or the Government liked to admit. Spender and his successor in 1951, Mr (later Sir) Paul Hasluck, paid more than lip-service to the objective of Papuan New Guinean welfare. Just as Labor had not opposed private enterprise, the non-Labor government did not oppose generous welfare paternalism.

It was the spirit of Labor's paternalism which disappeared in the early 1950s: that enthusiasm for the cooperatives and rural progress societies among agricultural extension officers; the belief, as the
Director of Agriculture said in 1950, that improvement projects ‘should stem from the people themselves as much as possible’; or, to take a third example, J. K. Murray’s dedicated opposition to European racial prejudice. The Pacific Islands Monthly was referring to this spirit when it complained in 1950:

Had the native never discovered that the whitemen had feet of clay there would never have been all this social and political mutiny in the form of cults and so forth . . . A quality we can never recover in a black country, once it is lost, is prestige. Nowadays there are so many who have no desire to recover it; some who have never known it existed.

J. K. Murray, one who had no desire to recover white prestige left Papua New Guinea in mid-1952, forced to make way for the Liberal Party’s appointment, D. M. Cleland.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 8

There is no single history of early post-war Papua New Guinea, though much can be learnt from sections of standard works such as W. E. H. Stanner, The South Seas in Transition, Sydney, 1953; L. P. Mair Australia in New Guinea, Melbourne, 1970; and J. D. Legge, Australian Colonial Policy, Sydney, 1956.


The quotation from Ward in 1948 is from South Pacific, vol. 3, no. 3, November 1948, pp. 67-8. J. K. Murray’s comment about the use of the word ‘native’ comes from his Provisional Administration . . . , 1949, p. 55; his approving use of the words of John Kerr is from the ‘Proceedings of Conference of District Officers’ held at Port Moresby 18-28 February 1948, typescript held in National Library, Canberra, p. 96; his description of Eddie Ward is from K. S. Inglis (ed.) The History of Melanesia, Port Moresby and Canberra, 1969, p. 178.


Movement and Change 1950-1960

In 1950 fifteen Europeans had homes near Goroka, the headquarters of the vast Central Highlands District. Within five miles of the Goroka station about 9000 people lived in collections of round, slab-walled, thatched huts set alongside patches of bare ground. From high ground an observer looking across the Goroka valley could see clumps of casuarina trees marking village sites, rolling kunai plains, sharp spurs, water courses, and squares of well-worked garden land. Within the 32 km wide valley there was a total of about 35 000 people and beyond, from Kainantu in the east to Kopiago in the west there were another 700 000. No-one was then certain of the number, for many Highlanders had not yet been censused; their names were not entered in a village book.

The lives of the communities near Goroka were already changing quickly. Warfare had been important. The first anthropologist to live among the Gorokans, Kenneth Read, found that when the people talked about their families there was a ‘monotonous repetition’ of members killed in raiding. Leaders, Read found, had been men who, above all else, had proved themselves in war, men who ‘killed and scattered enemies’. Now warfare had ceased. Old men no longer impressed on the young the skills of the warrior, and young men searched for other ways to secure a name to be spoken with respect. No-one repaired the stockades around the villages and some groups were building houses away from easily defended sites on ridge tops. People travelled further and more frequently. During World War II Highlanders from the Chimbu Valley, west of Goroka, had been brought into the area to grow vegetables to supply the Australian and American armies. By the end of the war there was a jeep track from Kainantu on the eastern edge of the Highlands to
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In 1950 all road vehicles had to be flown to Goroka, but already it was possible to drive further from Goroka airstrip than from most other points in the Territory.

The main movement of Highlanders to coastal districts began in 1950 when 2445 men went away to work under the Highland Labour Scheme. Usually government officers spread the *tok* (talk) that workers were needed, and at the Goroka attestation centre they were told the places of employment and the rates of pay. Before they left Goroka by air the men were checked to see that they were healthy and over the age of sixteen. Most went to work on plantations. By the middle of 1950 over 1000 Highlanders were working in Madang, 700 in Morobe, 500 in New Britain and a few were scattered through other districts. They agreed to work for eighteen months at 15s. a month. Their ration scales were more generous and better balanced than those of pre-war workers, and they could no longer be fined or imprisoned for minor breaches of the labour ordinance.

By 1950 twelve Native Medical Assistants had graduated from the Health Department's school in Goroka and there were on average over 100 Highlanders in the Goroka hospital. Many more were treated at nearly seventy aid posts or clinics established by missions and government in other parts of the Highlands. Fearing that the movement of labourers would spread disease, the administration passed regulations to ensure that all labourers were tested for tuberculosis and supplied with medicines to protect them against malaria. In a comprehensive programme to stop tuberculosis spreading throughout the Highlands over 95,000 B.C.G. vaccinations were given in the first six months of 1950. The vaccinations, sent by air each week from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories in Melbourne, were often dropped by parachute to health teams in the field.

Apart from the training centre for medical assistants at Goroka, there were no government schools in the area in 1950, and the few mission schools provided only education of a very elementary kind, and that instruction was given in a local language or a *lingua franca*, not English. But already a few had acquired a wide knowledge of the outside world. Apo Yeharigie, Sabumei Kofikai and Rovelie Akunai, three of the young men who attached themselves to early patrols, became known to particular Europeans and later worked for them or other employers on the coast. Both Kofikai and Rovelie were in Rabaul when the Japanese invaded and they remained there during the war. Apo returned to Goroka during the war with a senior Angau officer and became an important intermediary between his people and foreigners. Sinake Giregire attended an early Lutheran school and his teachers, recognising his ability, sent him to Finschhafen where he had a further three years of education. Such men spread knowledge of foreign ways and they were well-placed to take advantage of opportunities as they opened to Highlanders.
Papua New Guineans from outside the Highlands also acted as interpreters and innovators. They were always more numerous than Europeans; by 1951 the government employed twenty-one Papuans from the Central District in the Highlands. Both Sergeant Enka and Sergeant-Major Mawasan from the Morobe District, who came to the Highlands in the 1930s, married women from the Goroka valley. Outsiders could join Highland communities and obtain positions of influence in them more quickly than they could enter some of the more tightly-knit coastal communities.

Three missions – Lutheran, Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist – had worked in the Goroka Valley before the war, and had spread their influence by 1950. Read noticed that some young men were refusing to go through rites associated with entering the men's houses because of their Christian beliefs. Others did not go through the ceremonies because they were away working for foreigners. Mission stations – sources of trade goods, new garden plants and craft skills – were changing the material culture as well as the religious beliefs of the Highlanders.

Until after the end of World War II nearly all Highlanders who worked for Europeans or sold them food were paid in shell or trade goods. Those communities then in contact with Europeans used the shell and trade goods in transactions with other groups, spreading foreign influence well beyond the points of contact. With the end of tribal warfare and the stone-tool industry, and the use of more efficient steel implements in clearing lands for gardens, men were free to spend more time in travel, trade and ceremonial exchanges. The wealth and the number of people involved in the exchanges increased. The working lives of women were less changed by the coming of peace and steel.

Writing in 1951, Read worried about the future of the Gorokans. He thought that young men were eager for knowledge and opportunities to raise their standard of living, but he saw signs that those communities with the longest associations with Europeans were beginning to display the sense of cultural inferiority commonly seen among colonised peoples. They felt that no matter what skills they acquired they could never obtain the wealth and power of the Europeans.

By 1960 further profound changes had taken place in the Goroka Valley. The town had a foreign population of about 450 Europeans and ten Chinese. North of the airstrip the dusty roads were bordered by deep harats (drains), banks, garages, stores, a 'native' and a 'European' hospital, a primary 'T' school for Papua New Guinean pupils and an 'A' school mainly for foreigners, a golf course and a club for Europeans. Nearly half of the Europeans in the town worked for the government. Four times as many Papua New Guineans as foreigners lived in the town. Of the Papua New Guineans working as teachers,
electricians, mechanics, carpenters and clerks, most came from the coastal districts; the Highlanders were unskilled labourers. An intermediate school allowing students to reach standard 9, a technical school with twenty students, and a teachers' college with thirty-eight trainees provided opportunities for Highlanders wanting skills in the new economy. Goroka was the Territory's largest inland town, and its growth marked a shift in the interests of government and foreign investors from the beaches, coastal plantations and goldfields to the high valleys and large population of the Central Highlands.

Almost exclusively an isolated government station in 1950, Goroka was a service centre for a plantation industry in 1960. Some thirty white settlers owned a total of 1860 hectares of plantation scattered through the Bena and Asaro valleys and near Goroka town. In 1960 the plantations produced over 600 tonnes of coffee at prices averaging about £400 a tonne. The settlers had bought nearly all their land between 1950 and 1954 from villagers who were eager to sell. Gorokan communities then wanted their own 'white man'. They hoped to enter profitable relationships with him; he would buy their garden products, sell them trade goods, and show them new skills and ways to wealth. Perhaps some Gorokans hoped to find secret rituals that would enable them to obtain 'cargo'; but most probably had the rational hope that they could watch, participate and learn. No doubt, they also wanted the cash that they received from a government officer for the sale of their land, although they probably knew that the payment to any individual, after it was spread among many landowners, was small.

To an extent that surprised outsiders the Gorokans learnt the secret of *bisnis*: they added cash-cropping to subsistence gardening. Particularly after 1957, when early growers were being paid for their first coffee harvests, the demand for coffee seedlings was high. As those trees came into bearing, the cash paid to villagers increased rapidly. In 1960-61 Gorokans sold coffee worth £31 700; in 1964-65 it was worth £192 000; and in 1967-68 village coffee growers received over £500 000. Many of the plots of dark green coffee under spindly shade trees were small and their owners' incomes were low. There were also some villagers unable to grow any cash crop. People living high in the ranges and gardening land at altitudes over 2000 m had no land suitable for coffee and no means of getting other crops to markets. The high and remote villages, unconnected to main roads, were the homes of thousands of people dependent on returning labourers for cash.

By contrast, few *bikpela man bilong bisnis* had considerable cash incomes. Khasawaho (Baito) Heiro, the most successful of the early growers, had an income of £2000 in 1957, and in later years a few Gorokans with larger areas under crop had greater incomes. Baito
bought a Land Rover with the profits of his 1957 harvest, and by 1965 more than forty Gorokans were operating jeeps, utilities or trucks. Apo Yeharigie, Sabumei Kofikai and Sineke Giregire, the three men who first acquired a knowledge of foreign ways before World War II, became successful growers. As well as coffee the Gorokans sold increasing amounts of vegetables, especially sweet potato, in the town and to foreign-owned plantations. Gorokans whose land under cash crops was too extensive to be worked by their families employed Highlanders from other areas and paid them the same rate as the foreign planters were paying. Some communities increased cash incomes by selling passionfruit and peanuts, and by 1960 a few men were trying new businesses: running trade stores, growing tobacco and grazing cattle. Few trucks or trade stores made profits. But generally the Gorokans had not spent their cash incomes rashly: they invested in more business. Gorokans provided nearly all the capital to finance their own entry into cash cropping and other ventures. Before 1960 they received almost no credit from the government or other sources. Gorokans, on the other hand, had placed £40 000 in savings accounts in local banks, increasing the banks' capacity to lend to foreigners.

The increasing movement of Highlanders observed in 1950 continued throughout the following decade. Most men who travelled long distances were on their way to a place of work. The foreign-owned plantations within the Goroka area employed over 1000 men, nearly half of them from the Chimbu, and the rest being recruited within the Eastern Highlands or from the more distant Western Highlands. The number of Highlanders working in coastal districts under the Highland Labour Scheme had risen from 2500 in 1950, to 7000 in 1960, and it was to be 14 500 in 1965. In 1956 their pay was increased from 15s. to £1 5s. a month plus rations, clothing and accommodation. In the 1950s nearly all the men working under the Scheme were from the Eastern Highlands and the Chimbu; the Western and Southern Highlands were to become more important in the 1960s. By 1960 over 1000 Highlanders were working in coastal districts as 'free' labourers; and the number of men looking for work for themselves was increasing rapidly. Before 1942 almost no Highlander worked for cash; over the twenty years from 1950 to 1970 they made up more than half of the workers employed outside the Highlands.

The Government, the Economy and Planning

In 1950 government in the Highlands took much the same form as it did in the 1930s. From government stations, officers administered districts and sub-districts. Men of all races came to the stations to obtain permits, ask questions about government regulations and
request that problems be solved. Officers of the Department of Native Affairs (changed to the Department of District Administration in 1964) often accompanied by representatives of the departments of health, forests and agriculture, took patrols to the villages. To the best of their own ability and the skill of the men to turn the talk (the interpreters), officers, police and carriers talked to the villagers. The officers hoped to settle disputes, bring the census up to date, improve health, encourage road-making and provide ways for people to enter the cash economy. They appointed luluais and tultuls. As long as the villagers gave the gavman one day a week to work on road building and did not advertise a flagrant disregard for the government’s law they did not suffer such disturbance in their daily lives. Many were still more lightly touched. In 1950 an estimated 300,000 people had not yet been censused. They may have watched and traded with patrols passing through their lands, but they had yet to submit to government regulation.

The structure of government in the Goroka Valley changed in 1958 with the establishing of the first local government council. Imposing a tax of £1 10s. a year on men and 10s. on women, the council raised £9000 in 1959. The council built medical aid posts, schools and roads; elected councillors replaced the luluais and tultuls as representatives of their people. Although the councils were sometimes dominated by the government officers appointed to advise them, their introduction marked a significant change. For the first time Papua New Guineans could decide how considerable sums of public money should be spent. But in 1960 most Highlanders were still administered under the old system of kiap and luluai; and about 80,000 people remained beyond government control.

An examination of the changes taking place in the Highlands in the 1950s and continuing in the next decade reveals much about the government’s aims and the ways that geography, world markets and the energy and inclinations of Papua New Guineans modified plans. The Gorokan’s dramatic entry into coffee growing and the cash economy was assisted, but neither planned nor led by government officers. Early missionaries planted coffee in the Highlands, but it was not until some European planters gave instruction and seedlings to men who had worked for them that Gorokans became commercial coffee growers. Baito, the first successful grower, had been Jim Taylor’s foreman. Taylor, a leader of exploratory patrols through the area in the 1930s and the first post-war district commissioner of the Highlands, resigned from the government service to take up land near Goroka. He supplied Baito with seedlings and assisted him to bring his trees into production. Before the early Gorokan growers had sold any coffee, the first government agriculture officer had begun promoting coffee growing. The officer and his team of Papua New Guinean assistants patrolled widely. Talking late into the
night, they explained to villagers how to plant and care for the trees, how the crop was picked, and what people in distant lands did with the coffee beans. If the villagers showed interest, the agriculture officer (didiman) helped them prepare land and gave them seedlings. Influenced either by their past experience or their prejudices, government officers expected few Gorokans to persevere and some doubted whether it was worth while trying to change people from the stone-age to cash-farming in one generation. But during the 1950s the Gorokans' demands for seedlings and advice could not be met by the government and Gorokans sought knowledge for themselves and some villagers obtained seeds to start their own nurseries. By 1960 government officers, worried that world market agreements would soon make it difficult to sell all the Territory's coffee, stopped encouraging the Highlanders to grow it; but the Gorokans continued to plant about 500 000 trees a year during the early 1960s. The Gorokans by then knew enough to service their own expansion. Papua New Guineans in other areas with suitable land joined the coffee 'boom'. Although most Papua New Guinean holdings were small, scattered and their production per hectare was low, the villagers were planting much more coffee than the foreign settlers. As the villagers' trees came into bearing, the Papua New Guinean share of production increased. In 1965 Papua New Guineans produced as much coffee as the foreign-owned plantations, and in 1967 they sold twice as much.

In 1951 Read had feared that the old ways and values of the Gorokans were being destroyed, and like other peoples faced by rich, confident foreigners possessing a complex technology, the Gorokans would begin to think of themselves as failures. They did not. Most Gorokans had approved of and benefited from the early changes: the end of tribal warfare, the introduction of steel tools, the freedom to travel, and the increase in trade and ceremonial exchange. By the 1950s they were ready for further change. They eased the transition by adapting old and new ways. A man could no longer make a name by being a warrior, but the orator and the man who accumulated wealth in pigs and shell, and built through trade and marriage a network of people with obligations to him, could become the councillor and bikpela man bilong bismis. By contrast, some coastal communities which experienced a sudden confrontation with government patrols, recruiters or miners, were forced to recognise the strength of the foreigners, sometimes after a bloody and humiliating defeat, and for the next fifty years they saw little economic or political change.

During the 1950s Highlanders began to learn that they formed a group; that Highlanders had common physical and cultural characteristics which made them different from other Papua New Guineans. Government officers observed the growing sense of identity,
and some predicted that it would become stronger; but they did not foster it. The Highlanders’ group consciousness developed with travel. Highlanders who went to coastal plantations and towns to work found that foreigners and other Papua New Guineans grouped all Highlanders together. The Highlander living on the coast learnt that he knew of a homeland and a way of life that was similar to that known to other Highlanders. When seen alongside some coastal peoples, the Highlanders looked alike. The Highlanders acquired a common language, *pidgin*, and they gave it a distinct accent and slightly different vocabulary. The placing of district boundaries, at first around the Highlands, and later the tendency to group the Highland districts together increased the Highlanders’ consciousness of themselves as one people.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (‘the World Bank’) in its report on the economy of Papua and New Guinea in 1964 saw the growth of the coffee industry as ‘one of the success stories of the Territory’. It was, but it was also limited. Not all Gorokans and fewer Highlanders had participated in the ‘boom’, and the income of the most successful Papua New Guinean growers was much less than that of the foreign planters. The rate of change seemed to be slowing, leaving some Highlanders almost excluded from the cash economy and others left at a frustrating level. Some of them were beginning to speak of the injustice of a system that gave the foreigners larger areas of coffee, higher incomes, greater control over processing the crop, and better access to markets. Arguments about land and broken agreements added to the villagers’ resentment. Some groups claimed that when land had been sold to settlers their particular claims had not been considered and they had received no compensation. Their anger may have been justified, for Read had observed some clans making profits and defeating their enemies by selling land that was under dispute. Those communities that had been eager to secure a white man by selling land were sometimes disappointed. There was no partnership. After a few years, particularly if the original landowner sold to another planter, any special relationship between villagers and settler ended. The villagers found that unless they had something that the manager wanted, they were unwelcome on lands that had once been theirs.

The Highlanders had passed through revolutionary economic and social changes, advanced their standard of living and retained their personal dignity and independence. But they had not escaped some of the fundamental problems faced by other peoples colonised by the strong and wealthy. Although government officers had encouraged the villagers in their search for other ways of making money, the success of coffee compared with other cash crops had left them vulnerable to fluctuations in the world market. Small-scale growers of one crop are not among the rich of the earth.
In coastal districts there was a similar uneven and limited spread of opportunities to enter the cash economy. On the Gazelle Peninsula, the villagers increased their planting of cocoa, and through the Tolai Cocoa Project managed a network of cocoa fermentaries. By 1961 the Tolai Cocoa Project, with the aid of a loan of over £250,000 from the Bank of New South Wales and assistance from the local government councils, had the largest Papua New Guinean-owned business. On Bougainville the villagers produced almost no cocoa during the 1950s, but sold nearly 2000 tonnes in 1963-64 and 6500 tonnes in 1969-70. Growers who maintained their subsistence gardens had few costs and could spend on pleasure, prestige or invest in further bismis. In many other areas cash crops failed, leaving the people frustrated, and in some cases feeling cheated by government officers and produce buyers. In vast areas of the Western, Gulf and Sepik Districts and in villages within a few miles of Port Moresby, the people were not deceived for they had not been offered an opportunity to become cash farmers. If they wished to enter the cash economy they had to leave home. Except that by then they had a much greater chance of obtaining work in the expanding towns of Moresby, Lae, Madang and Rabaul, many villagers found the basic economy of the Territory in the 1950s similar to that known to their parents thirty years earlier.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 9


There is no general history of the Highland Labour Scheme but there are government reports (e.g., D. Cochrane et al, Report of Inquiry Investigating Rural Minimum Wages . . ., Port Moresby, 1970) and an increasing amount of research on internal migration (see Marilyn Strathern, 'No Money on Our Skins: Hagen migrants in Port Moresby', New Guinea Research Bulletin, no. 61, Port Moresby and Canberra, 1975, and her bibliography). Some other valuable


CHAPTER 10
THE TERRITORY 1949-1968

Spender States Policy 1950

In June 1950 Percy (later Sir Percy) Spender, the Minister for External Affairs and External Territories in the Menzies government, presented a long statement to the House of Representatives on Australia's policy in Papua and New Guinea. Twenty-two years later, Spender in his autobiography said that there had been no previous comparable plan for the advancement of the Territory, and that his speech to Parliament provided a 'main foundation upon which the progress and development of New Guinea has been erected'. The speech is valuable as a summary of the Minister’s attitudes towards Papua and New Guinea, but it is a guide to only a part of the later history of the Territory. The war, Spender said, had confirmed the importance of New Guinea to Australia’s defence: it was clearly vital to Australia's security that the islands' resources be developed and that Australia 'build up in those areas a friendly, prosperous and loyal people'. In accordance with other ministerial statements made over the previous fifty years Spender spoke of advancing the welfare of the 'native peoples' and increasing their participation in the natural wealth of the Territory. In contrast to the Labor Party’s policy of the previous four years he looked to private enterprise to develop industries and services, and he argued that it was in the interests of the people of Papua and New Guinea for more Australians to settle and more Australian companies to invest in the Territory. He wanted Papua and New Guinea’s economy to complement that of Australia; he expected Papua and New Guinea’s trade to be dominated by Australia. The factor limiting development, Spender thought, would be the supply of labour. (The same belief had worried the royal commissioners of 1906 and others during those few years when it was thought that Papua would be the home of many prosperous
Australian planters.) Labourers, Spender said, would henceforth be under agreement rather than indenture: workers would no longer be fined or gaoled for unsatisfactory performance, but the period of their contracts would be increased from one year to eighteen months.

While Australian capital and management, and Papua New Guinean labour developed the island’s resources, the government’s task, Spender told Parliament, was to encourage private enterprise, locate opportunities for investment, and ensure that the Papua New Guineans participated in the fruits of development. The government would also bring all the Territory under the full control of the central government within five years, and continue to subsidise the welfare work of the Christian missions. The government’s own plans for the advancement of Papua New Guineans would be mostly concerned with health, education and agriculture. In health the government hoped to reduce or eliminate the incidence of malaria, tuberculosis, hookworm, yaws, dysentery and whooping cough. In education the government aimed to provide universal literacy, technical skills and to provide opportunities for communities to develop within their own cultures. Spender made almost no mention of constitutional or political change except to note that for ‘many years to come’ Papua New Guineans would be unable to play an important part in executive government. He also said that his government intended to establish the Legislative Council allowed under the Papua and New Guinea Act of 1949. The Council was to include three nominated Papua New Guineans.

**Plans and Performance in Health and Education**

During the 1950s the Department of Health expanded rapidly and carried medical services to many communities. It succeeded because the Australian government provided funds, its Director, Dr John (later Sir John) Gunther, was an aggressive administrator who saw goals clearly and was prepared to break conventions to attain those goals, and because of circumstances unplanned by men or governments.

In 1948 a number of doctors were working in Australia as packers, forestry workers and factory hands. Refugees from war-devastated Europe, they were prevented by law from practising medicine in Australia. When Gunther learnt of their existence, he became determined to employ them in the Territory in defiance of doctor’s associations in Australia and the Commonwealth Director of Health. In all, Gunther recruited about forty doctors, of whom the highly skilled specialists outnumbered the incompetents, and the average of them was equal to graduates from Australian medical schools. The refugee doctors, partly because they were not at first
allowed to practise medicine elsewhere, tended to stay in the Territory longer. It was fortuitous that the refugee doctors were available at a time when the Department of Health was unable to recruit staff among Australian graduates; and it was Gunther’s determination which secured their services.

Gunther also distressed more cautious colleagues by plans to instruct Native Medical Assistants and Aid Post Orderlies to diagnose and treat major diseases. The main illnesses then killing Papua New Guineans were pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, dysentery and meningitis. Knowing that they could normally be diagnosed by observation and (except for tuberculosis) treated by antibiotic drugs or quinine, Gunther argued that it ought to be possible to take men with almost no formal education and train them to recognise and treat the major diseases of the villagers. By 1962 there were 1200 orderlies operating aid posts throughout Papua and New Guinea. To allow them to maintain subsistence gardens, the orderlies worked part-time to combat specific diseases, improve village hygiene, give injections against yaws and dispense first-aid. The orderlies, as conservative critics had predicted, sometimes made mistakes: on one occasion an orderly on patrol used infected material in injections and killed some villagers. While distressed by particular cases in which ignorance resulted in disaster, Gunther answered his critics by pointing out that the orderlies had saved thousands of lives, and that no other scheme could have quickly brought medical aid to within one day’s walk of so many people.

Papua New Guineans obtained higher training in medicine by attending the Central Medical School in Suva. The first graduate returned to Port Moresby in 1952, but only ten other students graduated as doctors in the next ten years, partly because few Papua New Guineans were completing secondary school. In 1959 students began preliminary studies at the Papuan Medical College. Later a faculty of the University of Papua New Guinea, the College was the first tertiary training institution in the Territory.

By the early 1960s the Health Department had had a profound effect on the welfare of many people. The mass vaccination of Highlanders against tuberculosis without using Mantoux tests had been a radical step, opposed by medical authorities in Australia. But again Gunther thought that the risks involved were negligible while the gains were enormous. The malaria control programmes had begun to reduce the incidence of malaria in areas where it had long debilitated most of the population and been the main cause of death. The aid posts, medical patrols and 150 hospitals spread services widely. Maternity and child health services reduced death rates among the young. Many Papua New Guineans were being trained at many levels: as doctors, dentists, laboratory assistants, nurses, infant and maternal welfare assistants, and aid post orderlies. The Depart-
ment was the largest employer in the government and absorbed up to 20 per cent of annual expenditure.

Reviewing the government's work in Papua and New Guinea in 1956, Hasluck said that the achievements of the Department of Health had been 'little short of amazing', but in terms of the needs of the population they were still 'pathetically inadequate'. While the population growth rate varied greatly from one area to another it probably averaged about 2 per cent annually. 'Life expectancy' was between thirty and forty, but this figure was determined by the fact that half of reported deaths were among children under five.

When the Minister turned to review ten years' efforts in education he could point to no spectacular achievements. He admitted that the figures showed that 'something better' would have to be done before the Education Department reached its primary goal of providing universal literacy in English and some technical education.

In 1960 'something better' was still needed. Just over 12,000 Papua New Guineans were in government primary schools, 42,000 were in mission primary schools, and 72,000 were in 'exempt' mission schools, most of which provided low-level courses, not in English. That is, fifteen years after the end of the war, less than one quarter of the children of school age attended schools, and many of those being educated would not have an opportunity to acquire lasting skills in English. A total of 230 Papua New Guineans were in mission and government technical schools, and a further 1070 were at post-primary schools. No Papua New Guinean had reached the final two years of secondary education in a government school in the Territory. From 1955 when ten students were sent to Australia, each year about twenty Papua New Guineans had been granted scholarships to attend high schools in Australia, and two or three students attempted senior high school courses or their equivalents in mission institutions.

The relative failure of the Education Department was not due to uninterest or misdirection from the Minister. Hasluck was concerned about both health and education. He frequently secured more money from the Commonwealth government than departments could spend in a year. The white community in the Territory was more tolerant of government expenditure on 'native' health than on education, but they raised no effective hostile campaigns as they had before 1941. Some members of the Legislative Council denounced the scheme to send Papua New Guineans to high school in Australia, claiming that it was premature and that the returning students would be misfits and radicals; and white residents in 1950 persuaded the Minister to abandon plans to establish a multi-racial high school in the Territory. The president of the returned serviceman's association in Rabaul did threaten to horsewhip the Director of Health if he shifted one black or yellow man into the European hospital in Rabaul, but the Department of Health was able to maintain a policy
of moving people to any section of a hospital in an emergency. The classification of 'European', 'Native' and 'Asian' hospitals was changed in the 1960s by making a distinction between 'paying' and 'non-paying' wings. Spender may have helped secure employer support for expenditure on health by emphasising the work of the Department in increasing the labour supply; but even before the war the dullest of employers had realised that it was desirable to have labourers who were numerous and fit. Hubert Murray would have recognised many of the attitudes expressed by white residents; and been relieved to find that they had so little power.

The differences in performance between the Departments of Health and Education were partly circumstantial and partly due to the different tasks facing them. The Education Department could not obtain qualified teachers and there were no refugee teachers excluded from their profession in Australia. At the end of the war the Health Department faced problems demanding quick action: diseases had to be stopped from spreading into the Highlands, medical services had to be taken to villagers who had suffered severely when the course of the war had cut their access to aid, hospitals had to be rebuilt in urban areas, and where practicable the Department had to take over facilities and services established by the armed services. But senior officers in the newly created Department of Education found it difficult to see what had to be done immediately and then scrounge the necessary staff and materials. Formal education is a long process and people survive without it. The Health Department could always argue that speed and expediency were justified because the longer the delay, the more people suffered and died.

The people directing the departments also determined the differences in performance. The Director of Education, William Groves, was hard-working, learned and a careful planner: he was not quick to reach decisions or an aggressive administrator. The history of education would have been different had Groves, soon after his appointment, decided that what was needed to spread literacy quickly were schools in thatch huts or under shady trees conducted by people who had taken a short course and then returned to be members of predominaing ly subsistence economies. Had Groves argued confidently for such a scheme he would probably have gained support from his colleagues and the Minister. As it was, modest 'emergency' plans for obtaining teachers were not introduced until ten years after the war. Then three courses for Papua New Guineans were introduced: 'A' course students, having completed primary school, were given one year's training to fit them to teach in the lower levels of the primary schools, and 'B' and 'C' course students with higher qualifications were admitted to two-year courses. In 1960 a six-month 'E' course was introduced for Europeans with three years of secondary education. By 1960 the 'E' course was the main way Europeans entered the Territory teaching service, and the 'A' course Papua New Guinean
graduates outnumbered those from ‘B’ and ‘C’ courses by 223 to 35. Rapid growth in primary school enrolments in government schools did not occur until the 1960s. In 1960 there were 18,000 Papua New Guineans in government primary schools, in 1964 there were 50,000 and in 1966, 65,000. The missions were still providing more school places than the government; but more than half the children of school age were yet to be offered places in schools. The high population growth and the need to provide higher education for those already completing primary education meant that the target of universal primary education, expressed so frequently, was a long way off. Given the resources available and the type of education being promoted, some officers of the education department began to say it would never be attained.

The comparison between the departments of health and education illustrates several points. For the first ten years after the war the Minister, senior officials in the Department of Territories in Canberra, and the Administrator in Port Moresby did not normally provide detailed instructions to departmental heads in Papua and New Guinea. That is, senior officials in the Territory were able to exert considerable influence over policy and practice. Commentators on Australia’s performance in Papua New Guinea have neglected this point in the same way that they have overlooked the extent to which the people and country of the Territory determined practice. (The influence of people and environment on policy is illustrated in Chapter 9.) The availability of money was not a primary restraint and white residents, so vociferous before the war, did little to inhibit the government’s actions. Australian practices needed considerable adaptation to fit the needs of the Territory. Government departments found it difficult to decide on policies and then convince others that their apparently novel decisions were correct.

Quickening Change: the liquor laws

At the end of the 1950s the forces changing the policies of the central administration increased in strength. They can be identified by looking at the reform of the liquor laws that allowed Papua New Guineans to drink alcohol, a subject on which many people were eager to express their opinions.

On Monday, 6 November 1962 the South Pacific Post reported that on the previous Friday and Saturday 14,000 bottles of beer had been sold in Port Moresby and 9000 litres had been consumed in bars. Queues had formed outside bottle departments and at one stage the doors of the Moresby Hotel had been closed to prevent further crowding. At 8 o’clock on Friday night Papua New Guineans were, a reporter said, six deep at the bar, some waving pound notes to attract attention. In another part of the bar a wild game of darts was in progress. But only four Papua New Guineans were arrested for
drunkenness during the weekend. The Liquor (Temporary Provisions) Ordinance 1962 had come into effect with little of the release of savage passion that some had predicted. The South Pacific Post decided that the ‘first three days of drinking had been rowdy but good-humoured, with practically no untoward incidents’. White women would, it seemed, be able to continue to live in the Territory. If Papua New Guineans had thought that 3 November 1962 would mark a change in their relationships with white men, then their predictions also proved false. White drinkers withdrew from public bars to those made exclusive by price, and rules about membership and dress. At first, Papua New Guineans made sure their drunken companions did no harm. Those forces of moderation were neither praised nor thanked; publicans showed little concern, and sometimes contempt, for their new customers. Some bars became places where men drank aggressively and fought each other among facilities designed to survive brawls and be easily hosed-down before the next day’s drinking. The relaxation of the liquor laws was one factor leading to easy meetings between the races at the barbecues and parties that became common in the 1960s; but most Europeans, Chinese and Papua New Guineans were not among those who took steak, beer and talk on mats strewn across lawns in backyards.

The changing of the liquor laws was part of a general repeal of discriminatory legislation beginning in 1958, but ‘drink’ was the question which most inflamed supporters and opponents of change. It was one subject, as the United Nations Visiting Mission of 1962 found, that was raised at every public meeting. Some Papua New Guineans and Europeans who did not themselves drink alcohol argued strongly for reform. People were divided not so much by the particular question of the liquor laws, but by the general question of whether or not Papua New Guineans were ‘ready’ for change.

Donald (later Sir Donald) Cleland, the Administrator, decided to reform the liquor legislation in February 1962. He acted before the arrival of the United Nations Mission led by Sir Hugh Foot, and he did not act on instructions from the Minister. From February until November the Territory administration was concerned about the extent to which the laws were to be changed and how the changes were to be introduced.

In deciding to change the legislation, Cleland was responding to a number of forces. Firstly, some senior officers led by Gunther, now Assistant Administrator, were arguing that it was time to change. Secondly, a small but growing number of Papua New Guineans, some of whom had travelled overseas, were able to speak effectively against legislation preventing them from drinking. Two capable spokesmen, Guise and Taureka, were members of the enlarged Legislative Council formed in 1961. Australia could for the first time be embarrassed by other nations picking up statements made by Papua New Guineans criticising Australia’s administration. Thirdly,
the numbers of those opposing change were declining. Where the 1959 conference between representatives of the Christian missions and the Administrator had voted to maintain prohibition, the 1961 conference decided not to oppose reform. A minority of missionaries were still prepared to argue the old line. One said, 'we have been responsible for delivering the native people from the fiery furnace of heathendom and savagery, and I think we may well find that in taking any action that introduces liquor we are going to drown them in a sea of alcohol'. But a more common response in 1961 was for missionaries to speak of accepting the lesser of evils; some Papua New Guineans would suffer from drinking alcohol, but more harm would be done to race relations and the political future of the Territory by retaining the legislation preventing liquor sales.

Those who argued for change, or decided that they could no longer oppose it, were persuaded by a variety of arguments. While in the past the white community had felt it virtuous to speak of their 'paternal' care for the 'natives', they now felt uncomfortable when faced with any legislation treating races differently. The very word 'discrimination' seemed to have gained a power: once it was demonstrated that a law or practice was discriminatory many whites felt that further argument was unnecessary. Some Papua New Guineans, particularly those in towns or nearby villages, were already drinking regularly and they had attacked police and patrol officers trying to break up parties. With the law being flouted, some suppliers making profits and people in danger of being poisoned by 'home brews', some senior officers took the pragmatic view that the law had to be changed because it was not working. Basic economic changes were bringing more Papua New Guineans to the towns and more villagers were entering the cash economy. Many of these people were likely to want to drink at a time when Papua New Guineans were becoming aware of discriminatory practices. On formal occasions and in private homes both Australians and Papua New Guineans were embarrassed when Papua New Guineans could not legally be served alcohol. In the U.S. sit-ins, freedom rides, marches, protests and violence marked the movement to end discrimination against blacks; in Africa new nations were celebrating independence; and in western New Guinea the Dutch were encouraging the people to aspire towards an independence that they would not achieve. All people in Papua New Guinea able to read newspapers tempered their arguments with a belief that Papua New Guinea could not be completely free of world events.

The Legislative Council

A similar complex mixture of forces – movements overseas, economic and social changes within Papua New Guinea, pragmatic
administrators and articulate Papua New Guineans – hastened other changes in the 1960s. The timing of any particular change was decided by the Minister, the Administrator or senior officials in the Territory. The most obvious and formal of changes were in the structure of the legislature.

The first Legislative Council for the combined territories assembled in the Port Moresby Red Cross Hall in 1951. Presided over by the Administrator, sixteen official members from the public service and twelve other members met to conduct business. The legislative programme was prepared by the public servants and they had a majority to make sure that it was passed. Nine of the twelve non-official members were white businessmen, planters or missionaries. The settlers sometimes spoke long and passionately about the government wasting money and imposing taxes on their businesses, but they generally realised that in the face of the government majority their speeches could have little effect. The three Papua New Guinean members nominated by the government contributed little. Two of them lacked formal education and skill in the language of government, and in any case Papua New Guineans in the Legislative Council could not be expected to act unlike other Papua New Guineans. Nowhere else in the 1950s did two or three Papua New Guineans stand before a meeting of senior white men and instruct them on policy or the details of legislation.

In 1961 an enlarged Legislative Council, with a majority of non-official members, met in the converted European Hospital on Touaguba Hill. The new Council was significantly different in composition, but its members behaved in much the same way. Although government members had to work harder to explain their legislation and ensure that some non-official members voted with them, they were rarely in danger of defeat. On one occasion the government abandoned a piece of legislation. Concerned with land, the Bill could not win the support of any Papua New Guinean member, and while the official members could still have got it passed, they chose not to do so against united Papua New Guinean opposition. The seven Papua New Guinean members (three elected, three nominated and one official) always spoke briefly. Even in the debate on the Bill to change the liquor legislation they spoke much less than the non-official white members. The Papua New Guineans recorded an opinion; they did not raise new issues, suggest specific amendments or make strong condemnations of past policies.

Speaking at the opening of the enlarged Legislative Council, Sir Dallas Brooks restated Australia’s aim to make the Territory ‘self-governing’ and to secure this goal ‘by choice of the people’. The two aims could of course be incompatible, for the people might choose not to be self-governing. Brooks suggested that in another five years the Australian government might promote a further step towards
self-government. But early in the life of the second council Lloyd Hurrell, an Australian planter, moved that a select committee be formed to make recommendations on constitutional change. Hurrell wanted the form and timing of change decided within the Territory rather than in Canberra or the United Nations. The committee, consisting of two senior public servants, two Australian settlers and two Papua New Guineans, travelled widely gathering evidence. Many Papua New Guineans feared that constitutional change meant that white men (and their capital and skills) would leave the Territory, and even those Papua New Guineans who wanted change were reluctant to make any comment on white representation to a committee dominated by white men. Gunther, the chairman of the committee, recalled witnesses who would say, ‘I think there ought to be a black representative from every sub-district.’

There were about fifty odd sub-districts then, and you would say:
‘How would you elect the whites?’
‘They would have to have white representatives from there too.’
‘This is a huge house, it’s quite silly.’
‘Yes, well you go away and fix it up. It’s about what we want.’

When the Committee submitted its report at the end of 1962 it recommended the formation of a House of Assembly of sixty-four members, forty-four open electorates, ten from ‘special’ electorates and ten official members appointed by the Administrator from senior members of the public service. All adults could vote or be candidates for open electorates; all could vote for the special electorates but only non-indigenous residents could be candidates. The Committee had recommended giving Papua New Guineans more than they had asked for at public hearings, but Gunther believed that they had in fact wanted a black majority.

Between the formation of the select committee and the presentation of its report, the United Nations Visiting Mission chaired by Sir High Foot toured the Territory and recommended a 100-member assembly elected by all adults. The mission wanted no special electorates for non-indigenous groups and it wanted to reduce the number of official members to about five. The Mission’s recommendations were denounced as absurdly unrealistic, but publishing them had three important effects: they stimulated interest in the Territory when most Australians were unaware of the changes taking place under Australia’s stewardship, they eased public acceptance of the slightly less radical proposals of the select committee, and they misled many observers into believing that the select committee had been strongly influenced by the Mission. Denying that the Committee’s report was changed by the intervention of the Mission, Gunther has said: ‘I very sincerely believe that we would have come up with exactly the same findings had we met before Foot came, as we did
after Foot had made his statement.’ Four of the six-man committee probably favoured an elected black majority in the new legislature before the release of Foot’s report, but it is uncertain how great they wanted that majority to be. The committee would probably have been unable to persuade the Legislative Council to accept its recommendations unanimously without the Mission’s report. The report also made the Australian government and public servants in the Territory establish the House of Assembly more quickly.

Neither Cleland nor Hasluck had attempted to direct the Select Committee. And later Hasluck would not support the Committee on two points only. On one, the Committee decided to change. The Committee had first thought that the Speaker should be appointed either from within or from outside the House, but that if he came from within then he should resign from his position as a representative of an electorate. The Minister for Territories, Hasluck, after consulting cabinet, said that the Speaker ought to come from the House; and the Committee recommended according to the Minister’s advice. On the other point, the Committee recommended in writing that the voting age be eighteen knowing that the Minister would change it to twenty-one. The interference was minor, but significantly on both occasions the changes brought practice in the Territory closer to the Australian ‘model’ in that the Speaker is an elected representative and the voting age was then set at twenty-one.

**The House of Assembly 1964–68**

When the first general election for the House of Assembly was held in 1964 most Papua New Guineans had had no experience in formal elections. Local government councils covered less than half the population, and even in council areas most of the councils were less than three years old. In the absence of effective parties, people voted for individuals. There were no ‘national’ issues, except that most electors looked to the government for more ‘development’. They wanted a representative able to persuade the _govanman_ to provide them with more roads, aid posts, schools, airstrips and opportunities to enter the cash economy. The electors were not choosing a man to be part of the government but someone to carry requests to the government. In many electorates nearly all people linked by village residence, clan or language voted for one candidate; the largest group in the electorate succeeding in getting its representative into the House of Assembly. The election was then basically a test of the size of intra-electorate groups and not concerned with comparing the policies or qualities of the different candidates.

The successful candidates who met to learn about the House of Assembly and then to be its first members (M.H.A.s) included no women and no Chinese. All the representatives of the ten special
electorates were Europeans and while Papua New Guineans won most open electorates the voters of six electorates chose Australian expatriates. Few of the Papua New Guinean elected members had any formal education beyond primary school, some were illiterate and most were not fluent in English. Men who had enhanced their position within their home communities by sponsoring economic and social innovations were not equipped to determine national policies. They prefaced speeches asking for more roads and schools with a statement of gratitude for what the government had done in the past, and of hope that Australia would continue to guide them.

In spite of their reduced numbers the official members were still able to dominate the House. The under-secretaries selected from elected members to work with heads of departments had little influence on departments or business in the House. Several under-secretaries, realising that they were wasting their time, stayed away from their departments for long periods. Apart from Paul (later Sir Paul) Lapun, who succeeded in amending the mining laws to give Bougainvillean landholders a small return from copper royalties, the Papua New Guinean members did not mobilise the black majority to direct government policy. As in the Legislative Council, white members were the most frequent and aggressive opponents of the official members.

The members of the first House of Assembly dispersed for the last time in 1967. The second House, to meet in 1968, was to be larger, with sixty-nine members coming from open electorates, fifteen from regional electorates and ten official members. Although no electorates were reserved for non-indigenous residents the educational qualifications for candidates in regional electorates excluded most Papua New Guineans. The formation of the Pangu Pati (Papua and New Guinea Union Party) in 1967 ensured that there would be some changes in the style of elections in a minority of electorates, and that more educated young Papua New Guineans would be candidates. Formed by an alliance of two Australian members of the House of Assembly, Anthony Voutas and Barry Holloway, seven Papua New Guinean members and a group of educated Papua New Guinean public servants, Pangu attempted to strengthen the dignity and political independence of Papua New Guineans by asserting that the days of ‘Yes Sir, Yes Sir’ to white government officers were over. Papua New Guinean public servants, some of whom had served long apprenticeships but never held positions of real responsibility, had begun to argue that they would never acquire the skills to govern their land unless they were given executive experience. Their conclusion was expressed in Pangu’s platform with the demand for immediate ‘home-rule’. A senior Australian official in the Territory thought that the Papua New Guineans’ criticisms of Australia’s policies were ‘impertinent’; the Minister, Charles Barnes,
who had replaced Hasluck in 1963, said that the Pangu members were just a group of publicity seekers out of touch with the aspirations of their own people.

Nearly all the Papua New Guineans who addressed the United Nations Visiting Mission early in 1968 confirmed Barnes’ opinion. Tei Abal, elected unopposed for the Wabag electorate in the Western Highlands, said, ‘We know the UN is pushing Australia to give independence soon. This talk about hurry up we don’t want until we are ready. We want to go slowly until we are ready.’ A candidate for the Western Highlands regional electorate told the Mission, ‘My son will think about independence but I will not, not me.’ Many used the imagery of the councillor who said, ‘Australia is our father and we will follow what he says.’ In the face of requests from the UN and others to set a timetable of steps towards independence, the Australian government in its report to the UN said it continued to affirm that its basic policy for the people of Papua and New Guinea is self-determination and... reiterated that it is the prerogative of the Territory people to terminate the present status and take independent status if they wish.

The Australian government added, in the same document (Territory of New Guinea Report for 1967-68), that the people of the Territory needed a ‘basic self-reliance in all economic matters’ if they were to exercise a real choice at the time of self-determination, and that the terms of any future relationship between Australia and a self-governing Papua and New Guinea could only be worked out between the two governments of that day. The stated aims seemed to place ‘self-determination’ a long way off and they still contained a basic contradiction: the people of Papua and New Guinea did not have a free choice because they could not decide on a relationship with Australia that was not acceptable to Australia.

And in the meantime Australian decisions were determining Papua and New Guinea’s political future. The most significant decisions were the establishing of a Westminster form of government, the spread of a largely English-Australian system of courts and legal procedures, and the development of a large pyramid-structured public service.

Michael Somare, who had recently resigned from the public service to contest the East Sepik regional electorate, made one of the few passionate statements of independence to the 1968 UN Visiting Mission. Papua New Guineans, he said, were not looking for a chance to turn on Australians and say, ‘O.K., you dirty slobs we’ll kick you out’, but it was essential for more Papua New Guineans to take higher positions in the public service and control more of the cash economy. The House of Assembly, he thought, should be responsible for spending revenue raised within the Territory. He accused the Australian administration of failing to teach the people
about political parties. He accused them of fostering the development of a system of government, the Westminster system, that was complex and had been rejected by other colonised peoples. Somare spoke before a noisy crowd of about 500 people at Angoram airstrip. It was a measure of the changes then occurring that Somare won a seat in the House of Assembly in 1968, the first time that he contested an election, and he was re-elected unopposed in 1972.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 10

Sir Percy Spender spoke in the House of Representatives on 1 June 1950 and his autobiography is Politics and a Man, Sydney, 1972. Sir John Gunther provided information in taped interviews; transcripts have been placed in the Australian National Library, Canberra. Sir Paul Hasluck made his 1956 review in the George Judah Cohen Memorial Lecture at the University of Sydney. After this chapter was written Hasluck made a detailed statement of his work as Minister in A Time for Building: Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea 1951-63, Melbourne, 1976. Many contemporary articles and ministerial speeches were recorded in the magazines South Pacific and Australian Territories. Don Dickson in James Griffin (ed.) Papua New Guinea Portraits: the expatriate experience, Canberra, 1979, assessed the work of William Groves as Director of Education. Sir Donald Cleland made a brief survey of his term as administrator in The Second Waigani Seminar: the history of Melanesia, Canberra, 1969, a volume containing other relevant papers.

The work of the Legislative Council and the establishing of the first House of Assembly have been examined in David Bettison, Colin Hughes and Paul van der Veur (eds) The Papua-New Guinea Elections 1964, Canberra, 1965; and the transcripts of debates are of course essential sources. David Stephen in A History of Political Parties in Papua New Guinea, Melbourne, 1972, gives a general survey of the origins of political parties; and Albert Maori Kiki, Kiki: ten thousand years in a lifetime, Melbourne, 1968, and Michael Somare, Sana, an autobiography of Michael Somare, Port Moresby, 1975, provide personal accounts. Marion Ward (ed.) The Fourth Waigani Seminar: the politics of Melanesia, Canberra, 1970, has many valuable papers. The Minister for External Territories issued a pamphlet, New Guinea: the people speaking, Canberra, 1968, giving extracts of opinions expressed by New Guineans to the UN Visiting Mission. The Visiting Mission Reports are published. Two collections of papers by commentators and participants were edited by John Wilkes, New Guinea and Australia, 1958, and New Guinea . . . Future Indefinite? Sydney, 1968. The general influence of the UN on Australian policy has been examined by W. J. Hudson, Australia and the Colonial Question at the

CHAPTER 11

AMBIGUITY AND LIBERATION
1968-1972

Association or Independence?

Commentators and writers of memoirs, especially those who were directly involved in some of the less creditable and credible events of the last years of Australian colonialism, may well tend with hindsight to gloss the progress of Papua New Guinea to independence as though its main features were not just inevitable in themselves but, give or take a year, a natural outflow of Canberra's planning and local execution. There may be a tendency to see a writer who dwells on the unique detail of P.N.G.'s devolution as one who is unable to recognise the whole plantation for the haphazardly grafted trees. Not to consider a little of this detail, however, would deprive the sagas of global colonialism of one most curious and Australian history of a kind in which can be discerned some of the paradoxes of national character. Moreover, it is not clear that the journey to independence would inevitably have proceeded as early as it, comparatively speaking, did, or that the actions and personalities of a few major figures did not create this ease. Similarly, it is not apparent that major decisions taken during devolution have spent their impact and are to have no bearing on the future.

Once Sir Robert Menzies had learnt the lessons of Africa and in 1960 declared that it would be better to leave P.N.G. 'sooner not later', it might have been expected that colonial affairs would be set apart from the vagaries of the Australian coalition (and, for that matter, party) politics. The use of the World Bank Mission report on economic development in 1963-4 might logically have been accompanied by the setting of clear political targets and vigorous programmes to achieve them. Instead, there was more confusion than before. When Hasluck, a distinguished and dedicated if not always
an enlightened man, had been promoted to the ministry of Defence in 1963, the Territories portfolio had been given to Charles Barnes, a Queensland grazier, horse-breeder and gentleman of the turf. Barnes had entered Federal politics at the age of fifty-seven with the expectation that he might eventually lead the Country Party. A bluff, stand-offish, condescending man, with no obvious rapport with black people and a bumbling approach to the press, he might have sought the portfolio on a number of sectional grounds: the portfolio included the Northern Territory where there were decisions to be made on mining, landrights and Aboriginals; Nauruan and Christmas Island phosphates would be within his sphere; P.N.G. might be prevented from growing sugar or other foods which competed with Queensland’s. It might have been that Menzies tossed him that portfolio because there was then simply a clear vacancy for a Country Party man in Cabinet, and Territories was a step to higher things. As it turned out, Barnes was unsuited to high office and was removed from Cabinet by Menzies’ successor, Harold Holt, after the 1966 elections. His place was taken by a younger colleague, with the relatively minor, but locally sensitive, portfolio of the Interior. In February 1968, a month after he became Prime Minister, John Gorton further deflated Barnes by transferring the Northern Territory to Interior and hiving off External Territories. That Barnes should have been retained at all when the Australian (28 February 1968) could call him ‘an earnest, hard-working and thoroughly conscientious man’ who ‘is not up to his job’, that External Territories should then rank below Shipping and Transport or Education and Science, that two years later the Melbourne Age felt it had to editorialise, ‘BARNES MUST GO’, but that Barnes held on until 1972, were comments on both the bucolic tenacity of the Country Party and the local preoccupations and off-handedness of Australian Prime Ministers.

Even at ten years distance it is difficult to explain the direction of Australian policy in the 1960s except in terms of coalition politics, torpor and negligence, or of deliberately stalling for time and long-range influence – or both. The loss (for such it was perceived) of West New Guinea to Indonesia in 1961–1962 and the possibility of communist government on the other side of what was by then a land frontier with an Asian state, had modified the focus of Australian defence strategists as had new missile weaponry. It is possible to relate actual policy in P.N.G. to Australia’s commitment to forward strategy in Vietnam in rather strained terms. Was P.N.G. becoming a liability rather than a defence asset, a springboard rather than a shield? An authoritative, conservative strategist put the issue like this in 1965:

If the whole island [i.e. geographical New Guinea] were to sink under the sea, the net result for Australia in terms of military strategy would be a gain. It is an exposed and vulnerable front door . . . [However] so long as there is a possibility that the island of
New Guinea could fall into the hands of a country of potentially hostile intent against Australia, it is in our interest to see that the eastern portion remains defended. In military semantics, Papua New Guinea is ‘essential’ to the defence of Australia, but not ‘vital’. We could lose it and fight on, but we would fight on under far greater difficulties.

Barnes, however, could say in 1968:

As to the importance of Papua New Guinea in the defence of Australia, this is very doubtful. Changes are taking place in defence strategy. If you look at the map and the relationship of Australia and Papua New Guinea and consider modern weaponry, you might see Darwin as the main defence base not only for Australia but for Papua New Guinea, and by the end of this century Darwin and its satellites may well be the largest centre of population in North Australia.

Whatever sense this made, even following the success of the anti-communist military in Indonesia in 1965, it is difficult to see Barnes’ policy as being purposively influenced by hard-nosed thinking in the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs.

In the light of strategic uncertainties, the lack of vehement pressure from Papua New Guineans for Australia to leave (indeed, the contrary was generally true, especially in the Highlands), the unsettled problems of parliamentary leadership in Australia and the general refusal to contemplate trends in other colonial and ex-colonial countries, responsibility fell on the bureaucracy to provide guidance; the Department of (External) Territories was the real government of the colony. Telex and telephone were the means through which simple decisions were referred and even minor expenditures sanctioned. The bureaucrats were the custodians of the Australian taxpayers’ moneys and, in any case, were reluctant to trust their P.N.G. counterparts. In effect, the same attitude was taken to security; after all, it was ultimately the minister who had to face the flak in the Australian Parliament. This had a stultifying effect on the P.N.G. House of Assembly, which lived under threat that if it used its powers for positive government contrary to departmental wishes, the general aid program would be jeopardised. In this way Papua New Guineans were being groomed for self-government.

Key appointments were made to strengthen Canberra’s control. The head of Territories, George Warwick Smith, was himself an economist with Country Party connections who had been transferred from Trade. His appreciation of Australia’s sacred trust to train personnel for independence can be gauged from his implied threat in 1970 to the distinguished scholar and administrator, Professor C. D. Rowley, that public servants would be discouraged from attending the University of P.N.G.’s invigorating seminar on ‘The Politics of Melanesia’ unless Smith was assured that it would be ‘scholarly’ and not ‘a political forum’. In 1967 David Hay, a senior career diplomat, who had been schooled by Geelong Grammar, Oxford and Moral Rearmament, succeeded the dogged Cleland as Administrator. Al-
though he designed his own white proconsular uniform complete with flashes and a braided cap, he had no illusions about his actual powers. His consultative skills were to be used not just to conciliate, listen and learn but to sugar unpalatable decisions, excuse peremptory directives and, where necessary, stall. In 1968 T. W. (Tom) Ellis, the laconic martinet and stetson-hatted trail-blazer of the Western Highlands, became head of District Administration while, in Bougainville, where the World Bank’s recommendation for selective massive development was about to be implemented, a man was made District Commissioner whose reputation for no-nonsense-from-natives was unrivalled. Clearly Territories was preparing for confrontation: its displays of armed force in the Islands in 1969-70 can be seen as intimidation as much as response, while its courtship of Highlanders was divisive, with domination if not malice, aforethought.

In its brief to the World Bank the Commonwealth Government stressed that its major aim is to help the inhabitants of the Territory to become self-governing as soon as possible and to ensure that when this aim is reached the Territory will, to the greatest extent feasible, be able to stand on its own feet economically.

Nevertheless Barnes and his department continually emphasised self-determination rather than self-government until they were accused of making ‘ambiguity an art form . . . All seven types of ambiguity graced his administration’, one notable observer of Barnes said, adding that there was ‘contemporary evidence’ that External Territories sought to link P.N.G. organically with Australia ‘with a status short of self-government and independence’. In January 1968 Barnes told the Australian Institute of Political Science:

Much has been said recently that I had ruled out consideration of the Territory becoming the seventh State of Australia. I saw in the press and heard over the air seven different versions of what I was supposed to have said. What I said, and what I now repeat, is that I do not see it as a practical possibility, for the time being, that the Territory should be absorbed into the Commonwealth of Australia as a new State on the same terms as the existing States, though what may happen in the future could be something else again. I am not sure that those Territory people who are thinking in terms of some future close association between the Territory and Australia have fixed ideas about the form the association should take. They may be using the term ‘Seventh State’ as a convenient way of referring to a close association with Australia, without necessarily implying total integration with Australia on the same constitutional terms as the existing states.

I believe, again after considerable experience and criticism since I have been Minister for Territories, that we will have this closer association. Our futures are destined to run parallel.

This was obfuscation as well as ambiguity. In March, when delivering the Governor-General’s address to the Commonwealth Parliament, Lord Casey did say that seventh statehood was ‘not likely’ but he did not finally close the door. After the election of the Second
House of Assembly, Barnes even said that there would be no independence for twenty to thirty years. It is difficult to believe that Gorton, only a decade ago, approved of these statements, but he tolerated them.

The benign confusion of the Barnes approach is reflected even in the ideas of a ‘radical’ such as Albert Maori Kiki, who, in early 1968, told an Australian audience

I do not know how many people in Papua would like a seventh State (I imagine that some young Papuans and New Guineans would like to cut away from you) but I would like to have some sort of association with you after we achieve self-government or independence, but not as a seventh State.

Kiki, a humorous and forthright man, who rose from tea-boy and dokta-boy to become a trade union founder, Secretary of Pangu Pati and, in 1968, Papua New Guinea’s first notable autobiographer, condemned the humiliating paternalism to which those who sought the dignity of self-government were subjected, simply because they were financially dependent:

The Minister cannot see the mess that his Department and Administration are making in New Guinea . . . We are often warned by the Australian Administration that this money is given to you free by the Australian Government from the Australian taxpayers and you have to be very good and loyal colonial boys otherwise you will not get more of this money. We bow down and say, ‘Yes master, I will do what you say.’ This kind of attitude . . . must not continue. We are like animals emerging from the water and have to bow down and lick your boots just because, if we go against you, this money, this thing you put on the golden plate, will be taken from us.

The Second House of Assembly

In the elections for the Second House in February-March 1968, Kiki was to find little evidence of a burgeoning national consciousness; even in his home area in the Gulf of Papua the Secretary of Pangu Pati could not win. As in 1964 the contests were ‘separate and distinct electoral skirmishes rather than a territorial battle’. The Administration had struck a winning chord with its priority (or ‘fantasy’) of economic before political development while its political education programme was confined to electoral information and rudimentary civics. The abstract nature of this instruction hardly brought the House of Assembly closer to the villager. As one research team said,

the electors’ dominant interest was economic development. This set the tone of most village discussions of the roles of the House of Assembly, the local government council, co-operatives, Administration agencies, incumbent and prospective members, and even the election process itself. It subsumed, and even tended to distort, issues of a non-economic order, such as the question of self-government. Subsistence farmers, wage workers and entrepreneurs, the educated and illiterate, cargoists and Christians – all agreed on the significance of the question: ‘How are we to progress?’ Indeed, interest in and knowledge of the House of Assembly did not seem to extend to beyond its potential contribution to the material advancement of community and region which, in the people’s view, was or should be the chief business of local and national government.
Administration policy on parties was especially baffling. It now seems clear that no serious consideration was to be given to any other than the Westminster system which, according to orthodox practice, requires institutionalised parties for robust participation and clear articulation of policies. While it is impossible to know yet how each gradualist step in constitutional development was actually conceived, bureaucratic control closed off serious consideration of other systems even though familiarity with the role of a paramount Administrator and a centralised *Kiapdom* could have pointed to a Washington or another variant system of parliamentary democracy. In 1966 Barry Holloway (in 1967 a founder of Pangu Pati) had protested that the Select Committee had not been stimulated to consider alternatives to the Australian system. In 1970 John Gunther was to complain that the Government 'through directions to the official members' interfered with the workings of the Select Committees of both the First and (even more so) the Second House 'so that the Committee was not able to consider some of the very many exacting problems that must come before any committee considering a new constitution for a colonial country progressing to self-determination'. Warwick Smith in 1970 made it quite clear that in his opinion, the structure of the Papua New Guinea Act, the basic constitutional instrument, pointed 'towards development along two lines: firstly, a parliamentary system; secondly, a unitary system'.

The control that External Territories exercised over Papua New Guinea ensured that his opinion would prevail. Yet, in all sincerity, the Principal Training Officer of the Department of District Administration could maintain that not only was his own political education programme 'not, and I repeat not, political indoctrination', but that there 'was no intention... to push any one structure or form of government'. Somehow an awareness of politics as a process was lacking.

Similarly, the Administration seemed to be able to conceal from itself that it was, in effect, a government party. It had, said Cecil Abel M.H.A., 'leadership, a clear-cut policy, is highly organised and is disciplined, all the hallmarks of a party'. Yet Barnes admonished people to avoid parties; his *kiaps*, especially in the Highlands, actively discouraged them; and Special Branch Police were conspicuous at public party meetings, noting the people and the proceedings. Of the six parties formed in 1967, five survived to contest the elections of 1968: the United Democratic Party (UDP), the All People's Party (APP), the National Progress Party (NAPRO), the Agricultural Reform Party (ARP) and Pangu Pati. Some candidates campaigned under the label of several parties and members of the same party could compete against each other. H. R. Niall, Speaker during the First House, who was opposed by the dynamic Pangu member, A. C. (Tony) Voutas,
attempted to demonstrate the irrelevance of parties by joining the UDP, asking the
APP for help, attacking Pangu specifically while teaming with one of its sympathisers
in an open electorate and promising to set up a labour party with him after the election,
and circulating several thousand copies of the Goroka pamphlet attacking all parties.
Mr Voutas won.

In the end only Pangu emerged as a significant force, although its
membership was probably about thirteen immediately after the
election and dropped to a core of ten by early 1970. But even its men
won on personal rather than party issues. Paul Lapun, for example,
retained his seat in South Bougainville with an 82.1 per cent majority
although he did little campaigning. He relied on charisma in a
cargoist and anti-European area. Kiki, although warned of the con-
sequences, felt he had to campaign in his bird-of-paradise Pangu
shirt but only in one area did it help him:

Everybody here was talking about Paul Lapun, our member for Bougainville. He was
very popular in the area because he had fought for and gained royalties for the people
of Bougainville. In Baimuru the Philip oil company was then looking for oil and the
people were anxiously wondering who would help them to get money for the oil
found on their land. This was the only genuine political issue the people raised in that
whole area.

Tony Voutas, in Morobe Regional, ran probably the best organised
campaign in the country with ‘Toni Komitis’ and ‘Toni buttons’.
Nevertheless, he reflected that his victory in the Papua New Guinea
terrain would be hard to emulate unless a man were ‘somewhat of an
athlete and well-endowed financially’. Without effective party back-up he saw the re-election of any M.H.A. who was absorbed by
national responsibilities as problematic because the expectations of
electors were so high. Therefore, there would be a danger, after independence, that incumbent politicians would be tempted to defer
elections indefinitely.

In 1968 twenty-three of the forty-six M.H.A.s who sought re-
election were defeated but this was less significant in the more
parochial and less anti-Administration Highlands than in the coastal
and island regions. The Highlanders preferred candidates who were
believed to have access to the government. Where six former Ad-
ministration interpreters (rather than traditional leaders) had been
elected in 1964, eight were elected in 1968 and only five of the
outgoing seventeen Highlands M.H.A.s were defeated. These were:

the three outgoing European members for open electorates; a prominent traditional
fight-leader who did not speak Pidgin, and therefore clearly could not gain access to
the government; an ex-interpreter born outside his electorate, who . . . was defeated
by another interpreter from the same village in which he was now resident; and a
member from Chimbu who had acquired perhaps fewer of the visible accoutrements
of success in the European world than most of his fellow Highland members.

The overall result, however, did constitute an advance on 1964.
There was a smaller portion of Europeans: eight out of sixty-nine
Open M.H.A.s and eleven out of fifteen Regional (including two Pangu members). Indigenous M.H.A.s were better educated, thirty-seven out of sixty-four having some formal education and twenty-one of these coming from the Highlands. Thirty-one indigenes (including all the Papuan M.H.A.s) could speak some English. New men of the calibre of Michael Somare, Ebia Olewale, Oala Oala-Rarua, Oscar Tammur, Paulus Arek and John Poe gave more poise and cogency to the indigenous viewpoint, as did progressive expatriates such as Voutas and Percy Chatterton, while able men like John Guise, Paul Lapun, Matthias Toliman, Sinake Giregire and Tei Abal were returned. Pangu Pati at least returned as a wedge which would soon split the Second House into other nominal parties, although at the first sitting the All People’s Party (with two members) changed its name to All People’s Group to avoid the charge of emulating Pangu, which it wished to destroy, as well as, presumably, to avoid the stigma of potential oppositionism. However, because the two members of APP so frequently disagreed with each other, they were called the ‘One Person’s Party’.

In May 1968, the Australian Parliament amended the Papua New Guinea Act ostensibly to increase the degree of internal self-government. The Administrator’s Council now became the Administrator’s Executive Council (AEC), and remained an advisory body to the Administrator. It included three other official members, an M.H.A. nominated by the Administrator and the seven ministerial members who were to assume the roles of the former under-secretaries, a change which to Barnes was ‘a matter of terminology rather than substance’. In addition, up to ten ‘assistant ministerial members’ could be appointed. While not being members of the AEC, they could attend meetings and speak on issues which concerned them. These ‘ministerial office-holders’ were selected through consultation between the Administrator and a standing committee of five elected members of the House because there was no party system to provide a more supportive involvement in executive appointments. The specific portfolios were allotted by the Minister and could be removed by him. What should have been a relatively simple progression became, however, ‘a hesitating step forward towards self-government followed by two smart paces backward’. Guise, Chatterton, Oala-Rarua, Voutas and Cecil Abel entered a strong protest against what they saw as ‘a reflection on the dignity and authority of the previous House of Assembly’. There was, in effect, both an increase in the Administration’s power of veto and control of the business of the House. The powers and duties given to the ministerial members who needed ‘powers of initiation and responsibility as well as powers of response’ were vague. They were not going to represent the AEC in the House, so much as, said Barnes, ‘represent the Administration in relation to those functions
assigned to them, for example, regarding questions and motions in the House’. The assistant ministerial members were to hold ‘a form of junior ministerial office designed to allow elected members to work with departmental heads and to undertake work of a ministerial nature’. Responsibility, however, would remain with the departmental head, even though he no longer, in these cases, sat in the House. The Departments of Law, Treasury, District Administration and Lands were still represented in the House, however, by their expatriate departmental heads.

To offset the loss of some of its departmental heads to the House, the Administration appointed three senior district commissioners and a district inspector to the House. They were obviously carefully chosen, in particular to marshal the Highlands vote and, in one case, to try to offset the influence of Voutas among Morobe men. The sometimes blatant appeals, especially by one Highlands kiap, to regional chauvinism and ‘loyalty’ were endorsed by Tom Ellis, head of District Administration. Authoritarian and unimaginative, he could be referred to by a member as ‘God bilong mipela’ (‘God belonging to us’) because of his ‘proven omnipotence in bringing economic development’ to the Western Highlands. Equally, he ‘could stand up in church and tell the congregation ‘God i makim mi Nambawan bilong yupela’ (‘God has made me Number One over you’ cf. Romans 13:1). This regional shepherding of votes by expatriates did not help national unity, and it slowed the awareness of inevitable devolution. It did not, however, reassure Barnes that he could cope with the ‘radicals’ because, soon after the Second House opened, he asserted that, if the legislature demanded self-government, he might require it to be confirmed by a popular referendum. It is possible that he did not realise that he was thus virtually questioning the legitimacy of the House and its scrupulously conducted elections.

A more fortunate augury in the first sitting was the election of John Guise to the Speaker’s chair to which he brought both more alertness and more dignity, as well as less formality, than his expatriate predecessor. The addition to his wig and gown of a bird-of-paradise feather, a kina shell (Highlands) and a tapa cloth (Papua) provided symbols of national unity. Less happily in the long run the House on 15 November 1968 crushed (70 to 10) Paul Lapun’s motion to adopt ‘Niugini’ as a national name. It had won a newspaper competition because it was said to mean ‘a coconut stand’ (niu + gini) in Motu and it simulated Pidgin orthography for New Guinea. The motion was defeated at the second reading, partly because it was falsely alleged by the Administration to be unconstitutional, partly because it was a Pangu resolution, partly because Paul Lapun, member for South Bougainville, as a proponent of Bougainville secession seemed incongruously cast as a nationalist, and partly because not one Papuan voted for it. The options were still too open.
Epineri Titimur from Rabaul, where an islands secession movement was current, became prophetic:

I want to state clearly that I feel we should have a national name, as this will help us achieve unity. I am afraid that future generations will be cross if we retain the two names of 'Papua' and 'New Guinea'. In later years I will die — but my words will remain. If we retain the two names which we use at present I feel that some areas will break away and form their own states.

The Emergence of Secessionism

1. Nationalism and Micronationalism

In 1970 the distinguished African political scientist, Ali Mazrui, was to charge Australia with having denied Papua New Guinea 'an infra-structure for nationhood'. This, he felt, was the greatest of all imperialist sins:

In many ways the British were humane; and in many ways the Australians have been humane. The British were exploitative; but the Australians were indifferent. There is only one thing worse than exploitative colonialism — and that is indifferent colonialism.

This was a wry perception of a system which had generally been seen as benign, which had brought in over A$1000 million in aid since World War II, and which the indigenous people themselves did not want to renounce too soon. Charges that Australia had failed to promote cultural homogenisation, economic interaction among indigenes and autochthonous institutions for conflict resolution could only ring true. However, following J. S. Mill, Mazrui felt that among the forces generating nationhood

the strongest of all is political antecedents; the possession of national history and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.

It was obvious enough that lacking a recorded history and a literate traditional culture such as existed, for example, in Southeast Asian societies, Papua New Guineans would have difficulty recreating shared positive experiences. Even traditional artistic achievements were not uniform throughout the country, and acceptable common symbols hard to devise. Among Sepik micro-societies the astonishingly decorative and lofty haus tamburans were exceptional, not general, and by 1942 the production of artifacts in areas of early European contact had more or less disappeared with the beliefs and ceremonies supporting it. The search for a Melanesian identity in a generally modern context was bound to be prolix and somewhat muddled rather than a luminous rediscovery of tradition. White academics at the University of Papua New Guinea, which was founded in Port Moresby in 1966, were encouraging black history, indigenous literature, the preservation of oral traditions and the study of traditional arts, customs and skills but they could hardly
mould them into an authentic culture for black elites who, in any
 case, were often disposed to tear up those parts of their historical
 record which they currently found repellent. Nevertheless, it could
 be hoped that, given time, a feeling for shared achievements, based
 perhaps on political mythology as well as history, would eventually
 emerge.

 In the short term, however, the most obvious areas of shared
 feeling would have been those of ‘collective humiliation’ – or even
 national paranoia. ‘To be capable of being angry about the same
 thing’, said Mazrui, ‘is to share an area of fellowship’. This seemed to
 imply that Australians should have terrorised Papua New Guineans,
 as the Germans or French might have done, rather than have reduced
 them to ‘a structured dependency’. This is, of course, an absurd
 proposition, no less so because a benign policy inevitably left P.N.G.
 in a neo-colonialist position after independence. As for national
 paranoia, the Administration did aggravate fears of Indonesia during
 the Sukarno era but it would hardly have been responsible (or
 possible in the Suharto period) to exacerbate them. In the face of
 low-key devolution, the lack of charismatic indigenous leadership
 and rigorously coercive government, the processes of legitimation
 and integration would necessarily be slow and only a building-block
 process would eventually be able to create the nationalist infrastruc-
 ture that a myopic but relatively well-intentioned imperialism was
 unable to leave behind.

 Nevertheless, it also needs to be stressed that Papua New Guinea
 has fewer overriding obstacles to eventual integration than many
 other nation-states, both old and new. Racially, there is nothing
 comparable to, say, the Indian versus Pacific Islander in Fiji, or the
 Chinese-Malay-Tamil problem in Malaysia, or the incompatibilities
 based on physiological distinctiveness and custom found in any of
 dozens of countries. The expatriate white and the resented Chinese
 retailer are relatively few in number and can eventually take a slow
 boat to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland – although, possibly the
 longer they stay, the greater the chance of shared anger. Religiously,
 Papua New Guinea is a Christian country with the sects and de-
nominations for the most part in the 1970s linking hands in
 ecumenism and most clergy preaching integration. So Papua New
 Guinea is not Lebanon or Nigeria or India. With no common indi-
genous language, English should remain the language of the edu-
cated. Pidgin English is spoken increasingly as a lingua franca
(perhaps by more than one quarter of the population today) while
Hiri Motu is used by about 100 000 people in coastal Papua, but
Pidgin should triumph in the end. P.N.G. contains a myriad cus-
toms but the basic elements for a relatively facile social mobilisation
remain: a subsistence gardening culture, a diffused social
egalitarianism (with some exceptions) and stateless political organi-
sations emphasising reciprocal obligations and individualistic achievement. Given the development of a common language and a general concern for security and economic progress, the fragmented value-systems can be homogenised into a national culture. Similarly the phenomenon known as tribalism with its suggestion of terminal endogamous polities does not exist, and did not in traditional times. Traditional political organisation was characterised by impermanent groups whose interests transcended even language frontiers in favour of trans-ethnic alliances. As autonomy evolved, self-interest and acquired obligations seemed also to characterise politicians once they were elected to the centre. This leaves regionalism as the most serious potential disintegrator, though perhaps not an insuperable problem. It is in this context that the emergence of so-called micronationalist movements should be viewed although they are frequently seen as secessionist in tendency. However, the proliferation of these movements as autonomy approached pointed to a more generalised problem of legitimation rather than a desire for perpetual fragmentation. Australian rule failed to erect taut political linkages with Port Moresby except through *kiap*-dominated district government. Local government councils were allegedly set up to be training grounds for national participation but the failure to trust villagers with judicial and adequate executive powers led to their sporadic rejection of councils and the upsurge of reactive, alternative home-grown movements. These became increasingly vocal in the face of an Australian retreat and the emergence of a novel, uncertain and competitive indigenous polity.

Generally these micronationalist societies felt that the Administration, the missions, expatriate entrepreneurs and councils had failed to advance their economic interests and that more direct assertion, both political and economic, was necessary. An appeal was made to tradition to provide legitimacy and there was a revivification or revision of communal rituals. In some cases these societies look like stereotyped cargo cults. For example, the most sensationalised in the period under review was the Peli Association in the East Sepik whose leader, Matthias Yaliwan, announced in 1971 that on the seventh day of the seventh month of that year independence would come to P.N.G. and that the goods of the earth would appear on sacred Mt Tum. Only a cement marker which the Americans had left there during the war, Yaliwan explained, thwarted the magic which would enrich his 6000 people with their mats and *bilums* of sweet potatoes. In July 6000 people with their mats and *bilums* of sweet potatoes waited for three days for the apocalypse. However, although the Peli Association appears irrational to Western minds, it could hardly be seen as secessionist, especially after Yaliwan was elected to the Third House and seemed to see himself as the future ruler of the nation. Neither can more practical groups such as the Nemea Landowners Association (near Abau in Central Dis-
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strict) or the Butibum Progress Association (near Lae) be seen as providing a focus for any terminal loyalty short of the utter breakdown of central or regional government. They must be distinguished in intent from those which articulated a new and wider ethnic homogeneity as in Bougainville, and aimed at regional secessionism rather than parochial particularism.

2. Bougainville

It would have been difficult, in the 1960s, to find a less auspicious place in Papua New Guinea for the development of the second largest open cut mine in the world than Kieta and its hinterland. Latent secessionism can quite reasonably be imputed to Bougainvilleans long before this feeling surfaced in the face of an impersonal extractive industry, *kiap* insensitivity and the rapid approach of a political integration about which they were not to be consulted. The spatial alienation from Rabaul and Port Moresby, the strong affinities and links that existed with the Western British Solomon Islands, the distinctive skin colour that was gibe at - the insult *as belong sospen* or ‘black like the arse of a saucepan’ – by the other Papua New Guineans whom Bougainvilleans call ‘redskins’, their use in earlier times as police and *boss-bois* on a divide-and-conquer basis, all helped to form an ethnic stereotype which they themselves accepted proudly. Moreover, because of the natural affluence of their village life and the coverage of the district by Christian missions (mainly Catholic and non-Australian), the administration neglected to play a conspicuous role in development almost until copper was discovered. Bougainville was known as the ‘Cinderella’ district not because it was poor but because it was ostensibly neglected. Thus there was no administration primary school in Kieta until 1960, and then it was begun as a service for non-Bougainvillean police and civil staff. Cargoist movements were recorded as early as 1912 on Buka Island in North Bougainville and were manifest from the 1930s till the eruption of the Hahalis Welfare Society in the late 1950s. This society openly refused to pay tax or join the local government council, ultimately scored a moral victory over the *kiap*, and survives to the present day as a viable if not efficient movement. For all the sensationalism about its sexual mores and its ‘baby-garden’, where promiscuously conceived children were communally reared, it genuinely tried to change traditional values to meet modern demands in a spirit of self-reliance. It was also secessionist in outlook. Its influence drifted into Kieta sub-district where, in spite of the complacent Patrol Reports of the late 1950s, in which few signs of frustration were recorded, cargoism became rife in the early 1960s. Perceptive observers felt that race relations were at least as bad in Kieta as anywhere in Papua New Guinea. In 1962 the great majority of a meeting of over 1000 people asked the UN Visiting Mission to
take the mandate away from Australia and give it to the United States. The USA ‘was strong and wealthy and would develop this Territory properly’, the promises of non-segregation made during the war had not been honoured, and the USA would raise wages and the price of produce. They said the Australians treated them like dogs.

Such sentiments were far from unique in Papua New Guinea, but should not have been shrugged off. In 1964 an exploration team from Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia (CRA) began taking samples of low-grade copper ore at Panguna, some 27 kilometres inland from Kieta. In spite of attempts by some officials and company explorers to handle the matter with concern and finesse it soon ran into opposition from villagers. Special patrols with police frequented the area in order to intimidate people who feared the loss of their ancestral land and were shocked by the massive technology which denuded it. Attempts to reassure them necessarily founder when they were told personally and tactlessly by Charles Barnes that astronomical riches lay in the ground, but that they would get nothing directly from it except compensation for specific damage to livelihood and property, plus normal occupation fees of $2 an acre ($4.95 a hectare). The principle of eminent domain, conferring mineral rights on government, supplanted tradition in what was supposed to be a Trust Territory. Cargoism was not deflated even when a scheduled end-of-the-world failed to occur at Guava village in April 1967. Paul Lapun’s victory over the Administration in the House of Assembly in 1966, when he procured 5 per cent of the 1.25 per cent (0.0625) royalties for the landowners, was only a very partial palliative. In 1967 a financial agreement was worked out by the Administration and CRA to provide for the eventual operation of the mine. It was assumed by CRA that self-government would hardly occur for ten years, with independence coming later. Not one token Papuan New Guinean, let alone a Bougainvillian, was present at the bargaining table, nor was the simplest gesture of conciliation, a gift share issue, made to local landowners. Around the same time, developments in timber and road metal in the Buin area of South Bougainville were handled with similar contempt for villagers. In order to try to entrench itself among Bougainvilleans, CRA suavely hired a miscellany of experts, including at least three noted anthropologists. One of these, professor Douglas Oliver of Harvard and the East-West Centre of Hawaii, had already written a masterly ethnographic study of the Siwai of South Bougainville dating back to 1938–1939. His published advice to CRA shows no awareness of the political implications of mining, but merely a facile optimism that the people he portrayed to CRA shareholders as simply primitive and superstitious ‘will probably get used to the Company’s presence’.
In 1966 at Holy Trinity Seminary in Madang a group of students led by twenty-six-year-old Leo Hannett and other Bougainvilleans began a mimeographed journal, *Dialogue*. Interspersed with devotional rhetoric, it launched a vehement attack on 'the troika of exploiters' in Papua New Guinea: the administration, the planters and the missions. In particular it criticised the large-scale developments on Bougainville. The administration was so shocked by the temerity of these black theologues that Special Branch police were sent to Madang to investigate possible communism and subversion. Leo Hannett felt obliged to leave the seminary within a year of ordination while his contemporary John Momis from Buin was expelled, although afterwards encouraged by his bishop to complete holy orders in Australia. Other Bougainville students eventually left; many of the province's leaders today are ex-seminarians. In September 1968, with CRA obviously ready to proceed to a final agreement, a group of twenty-five Bougainvilleans living in Port Moresby, with Hannett, Lapun and Donatus Mola M.H.A., North Bougainville, prominent, called for a referendum in Bougainville on its political future. Hannett, who, with his people, had been evacuated from Nissan atoll during World War II to the British Solomons, favoured union (or 'réunion') within the rest of the archipelago, asserted the right of self-determination and pleaded for Papua New Guinea and Bougainville to part on good terms.

In April 1969 the administration announced its final determination to let CRA proceed. It had decided to resume the rich, white-owned Arawa plantation plus some land belonging to the Arawa and Rorovana villages for the construction of a town and port site. The difference between the compensation offered to the owner of Arawa plantation and that offered to 'the natives' was glaring, especially as, before the dispute was settled, the administration was reselling other land in Kieta to private bidders for high sums. Understandably, the Roravanas refused to lease their land so that in August the riot squad was sent in with the district commissioner, an ex-naval petty officer, at its head. The international publicity was sensational. Pictures of helmeted police carrying batons and wrestling with bare-breasted women (the custodians of the land) were radioed around the world. Australia's image was hurt and there was outrage in the tabloid press. 'Australia's Shame: This Is How the World Will See Us' were the headlines of the Sydney *Sun*, 6 August 1969, while the same city's *Daily Mirror* referred to 'bloody thugs' and 'Australia's bullies in New Guinea', and asked 'Where the hell are we heading?' CRA realised that its agent, the administration, had bungled. It did not want either to earn the ineradicable hostility of local people or to have costly delays in its schedule. As a result of a delegation to Australia by Paul Lapun and the Rorovana leader, Raphael Bele,
John Gorton allowed negotiations to be made directly between villagers and the company. The compensation was greatly increased and peace secured. However, in spite of the many financial benefits to locals in the form of royalties, compensation, better employment opportunities, the stimulus to food-marketing and other things, and in spite of the company’s painstaking attempts to placate them, the basic hurt remained. John Momis and an American anthropologist, Eugene Ogan, wrote:

Because their wishes have been ignored, many Nasioi today suffer, in varying degree, even greater feelings of intimidation, inadequacy to adjust to modern conditions, betrayal, and even fear for their physical and spiritual safety than they did in 1962, when some of them demanded a change of administration. In the Guava area, closest to the mine site, one hears men saying, 'The white man is destroying us', and women, 'We weep for what is being done to our land'.

This feeling of alienation was aggravated by the influx of thousands of white and other Papua New Guinean workers, particularly during the construction phase of the mine up till the end of 1971.

A frankly secessionist political organisation, Napidakoe Navitu, was formed in the Kieta area. By early 1970 it claimed to have 6000 paid-up members and to have ‘united Catholics, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, cargo cultists, people within and outside the Councils’. These administration-imposed local government councils had been a cause of disunity among Bougainvilleans. Napidakoe did not – like the Mataungan Association (see p XX) – set up an alternative local government so much as infiltrate and usurp the council on the one hand and link anti-council and council villages according to their own customs. Napidakoe’s secretary, an abrasive young Australian Barry Middlemiss, who played a major role in resolving the land disputes, also tried to build up a co-operative business movement, Navitu Enterprises, as well as a monthly newspaper, Bougainville News. In spite of the new-found patronage of the mining company and even the indulgence of the Administration, he lacked the personal resources needed for success. Furthermore his open personal feuds with leading Bougainvilleans alienated areas outside Kieta sub-district. Both Donatus Mola and Joseph Lue (Bougainville Regional) moved his deportation in the House of Assembly although he retained the close friendship of Paul Lapun, the member for South Bougainville. The administration came to appreciate that Middlemiss was useful as a divisive influence. His attempt to stage a referendum on secessionism in South Bougainville in 1970 was a fiasco. When in March 1971, in the House Lapun moved for an Administration-supervised referendum, it was defeated 57 to 14. By late 1971 Lapun himself had gradually moved to a position where he felt a federal status would best suit Bougainville while first Lue, and then Mola, happily occupied assistant ministerial
posts in the House of Assembly. The general opinion among many allegedly well-informed people was that secessionism was a velleity and, at a price, would inevitably subside.

3. The Gazelle Peninsula

It was typical of the administration to be more concerned in late 1968 with the formation of the Melanesian Independence Front which proposed that the Islands’ districts (Manus, New Ireland, New Britain and Bougainville) should secede as a single nation, than with Bougainville. Rabaul was to be the capital of a new member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Melanesia. Perhaps the facts that the Islands seemed to be a geopolitical unit and that an expatriate businessman was its protagonist led many observers to see this as a fateful sign of things to come. Leading Tolais in East New Britain, both pro- and anti-administration, expressed support but there may have been more plausibility in their fear of Highlanders than in any reaction against the radicalism of Pangu Pati. The Melbourne Age, 19 October 1968, called

this small revolt a major issue. If the relatively rich and certainly arrogant Tolais of New Britain join forces with the breakaway group, mainland New Guinea will be left destitute of its most valuable economic properties.

Charles Barnes warned that Australian aid had been framed for New Guinea as a whole, implying that breakaway regions might not receive the money which would otherwise be allocated to them, a minatory ploy that was to become part of Gough Whitlam’s box of domineering tricks. Like so much else in Australian policy it was based on the assumption that kanakas were easily intimidated and were unlikely to be aware of Australia’s own security needs. What, for example, was to be the result of refusing aid to a successfully secessionist Papua which was less than ‘a bow shot’ from the islands of the ‘deep north’ of the State of Queensland? Would it seem to be an invitation to a foreign power to fill a vacuum? Would it cause a political reaction within Australia? Such rudimentary questions were ignored because the Australian bureaucratic — rather than democratic — penchant made it easy to confuse the undesirable with the unthinkable. Equally, observers did not seem to ask how Bougainvilleans might jell with the Tolais or whether other groups in the Bismarck archipelago might fear a Tolai paramountcy. Like P.N.G. itself, this Islands segment suffered interethnic mistrust, and its diversity was a strength to the central government.

Obtuse paternalism came out most clearly during the protracted contretemps with the pace-setting (rather than ‘arrogant’?) Tolais which flared up in February 1969. The Administrator-in-Council proclaimed that the Gazelle Local Government Council (LGC) would henceforth include areas occupied by Chinese and Europeans,
thus making it ‘multi-racial’. Control of the assets of the Tolai cocoa project were also transferred without any consultation with the local growers whose money had set it up. Because the Council itself had agreed to the basic move in 1968, little notice had been taken of the election to the House of Assembly of Oscar Tammur, a compelling young orator, who had campaigned against this scheme. On 15 May 1969, at its last meeting, the mono-racial Council was persuaded by Tammur to rescind its 1968 decision and, on the following day, he led some 10,000 Tolais on a protest march through Rabaul. It was the first demonstration of the Mataungans (Be Alert) Association. It obviously sprang from the grievance of Tolai land alienation and the wish to be free of foreign domination at all levels of decision-making. As its secretary, Melchior Tomot, said later, ‘The Mataungan Association is pro-European and -Chinese, but it’s anti-European and -Chinese bullies, bullies which [sic] are put over the natives.’

Nevertheless, the administration went ahead with its plan for a multi-racial council. Elections were held in which only 6720 voted out of 33,688 persons eligible. Tom Ellis, however, tried to demonstrate to the House on 25 June 1969 that this represented 51.5 per cent of the total anticipated [vote] which, and this is important, was 30 per cent higher than the number who polled in the last Council elections in 1966. No allowance either has been made for those who may, I say ‘may’, have been discouraged from voting by Mr Tammur or Mr Titimur or someone else.

One of the first resolutions of the new Council was to drop ‘multi-racial’ from its title because it ‘confused’ villagers. It was moved by one of the four non-indigenous members and was passed unanimously – which may have proved Tomot’s point.

Both a commission of enquiry and demonstrations were held; riot squads were despatched to Rabaul; helicopters whirred over Malaguna Avenue to frighten the Tolais; pro-council supporters were beaten-up; taxes went unpaid, or were paid to the Mataungan Association; leaders were arrested. It all seemed so unnecessary except to *kiaps* like Tom Ellis who saw a basic law and order problem. As one magistrate, Paul Quinlivan, said in a judgement

... it is my considered opinion that the multi-racial council election of early 1969 should have been cancelled and that there should have been no official opening ... for the Mataungan Association to demonstrate at.

It is probable that this view was shared also by the Assistant Administrator, Les Johnson, who, together with the sensitive and progressive Commissioner of Police, Ray Whitrod, resigned from the Public Service almost certainly because they disagreed with Ellis’s policy of confrontation.

By 1969, in addition to Tammur, the Mataungans had acquired a particularly eloquent, not to say vehement, spokesman, John Kapu-
tin. Born in 1939 at Matupit near Rabaul, Kaputin had been educated in Rockhampton, Queensland, where he says he 'was exposed to a panorama of Australian activities, a situation in which the black Australian was nothing more than a second-class citizen.' A brilliant sportsman of great personal charm, he was the first black man to play interclub rugby and he represented P.N.G. at the Commonwealth Games in Perth in 1962. This did not prevent him from being denied entrance to Port Moresby clubs or from being viciously insulted directly and by post for marrying a talented and beautiful white woman. In 1966 he went on a scholarship to the University of Hawaii from which he returned without a degree but well-versed in the evils of colonialism and foreign investment and in the virtues of economic nationalism and instant independence. His distinctive contribution to the Mataungans was the New Guinea Development Corporation (NGDC) which collected small-scale village investments for fermentaries and trade stores. Throughout the late colonial period rumour and wishful thinking persisted that the NGDC was on the verge of collapse and its founder and manager grievously embarrassed. At Independence it was, in fact, publishing balance sheets and its founder was as irrepressible as ever. In Kaputin P.N.G.'s emergent nationalism found an electrifying orator who terrified white supremacists with spectres of African violence, desolate do-gooders who found their empathy was void, and invigorated black people with potent images of self-reliance.

The ineptitude of the administration and its distrust of 'politics' can best be shown by its attempts to displace the Tolai leaders. On 7 May 1970, some prominent Tolais in Port Moresby formed a mediating group called Warmaram to try to solve the Gazelle problem. Being mostly public servants, they had to be granted leave of absence and financial assistance by the administration. Before their work got underway, a letter written by the Director of the Department of Information and Extension Services to Radio Rabaul was published. Warmaram, not being a political party, was to be given as much time on the air as it wanted, but this right was not to be granted to the Mataungans. Indeed, David Hay was quoted as saying that 'a major concern of the Warmaram group was to reduce and destroy Kaputin's standing'. However, there was a public outcry and Warmaram was discredited.

By July 1970, when the administration was preparing to redistribute some alienated land, such an impasse had been reached that the Mataungan Association encouraged its supporters to squat on the estates in question because the traditional ownership was quite clear. The following dialogue between Kaputin in front of 3000 Mataungans and the district commissioner, H. C. West, in charge of 500 police, illustrates how emotionally confused the issues were:
West: Mr Kaputin, I am telling you the Administration has clear title to this land and should anyone dispute that, they have got recourse to the courts of law. If you dispute this, there is no reason why you cannot take the matter and contest it in the courts.

Kaputin: Yes, we will contest it by marching on to that road and you can kill off as many as you want to. We will come here to resist and let the Australian people know what you are doing to us.

West: The Australian people already know what we are doing in respect to this land here. We are making available land to the Tolai people to help them solve their land problems.

Kaputin: You are not giving land to the Tolai people. What you want is what you have theorised in your political ideology and you are shooting off, killing off thousands in Vietnam because you won't support that and you are doing the same thing right here.

In a panicky move John Gorton, who had just returned from a visit to Papua New Guinea where he had been upstaged by Kaputin at Rabaul airport, authorised a call-out of the Pacific Islands Regiment, an authority which even Les Johnson felt he needed. This proved not only unnecessary but was not done by due legal process, and could have had the most serious repercussions. Gorton could hardly have envisaged that Mr Whippy, the ice-cream peddler, would be more effective than the Pacific Islands Regiment. One potential riot was broken-up by the unexpectedly soothing strains of 'Greensleeves' and the craving of savage breasts for the cooling emulsions of the white man — an event which was celebrated by the Papuan poet, Jack Lahui:

Due north-east from here,
in the land of tremors and eruptions,
the police stood like Spartans,
and the Mataungans stood firm too,
claiming power and land,
a venomous political obligation.
Right round the globe
there's no peace where
a house is divided in two
and no sense of compromise.
Out of the heat of peaceful violence,
the law with batons bold and banging
and shields ready to protect
the two foes stood ready for battle.
Amidst the enemies came Whippy,
with his savourous and melodious ice-cream,
the celestial hammering crochets of 'Greensleeves' —
surely such charm of music
has power to soothe the savages . . .
so goes the saying.

Mataungan ascendancy became even clearer in late 1970 when the Gazelle Council was unable to collect taxes to continue normal services and a boycott of the Tolai cocoa project reduced the throughput of its fermentaries by nearly 90 per cent. The Administration, by then led by Les Johnson, redrew the council boundaries so
that it became mono-racial, but by this time the Mataungans were utterly opposed to any official body and in May 1971 set up their own alternative council. Moreover, in January the assets of the cocoa project had been transferred to a new body, the New Guinea Producers Company. The 100,000 shares at $5 had been offered not exclusively to Tolais who had originally set up and still owned the project, but to any ‘native’. Money raised was to be used for the purchase of additional fermentaries, not to recompense the Tolai growers. After months of heated debate, the Administration began to realise how legally dubious its objectives were. Further violence followed and when in August a new district commissioner, Jack Emmanuel, was bayonneted to death on a bush track while trying to persuade ‘trespassers’ to leave some alienated land, it looked as though punitive measures might be taken against the Tolais. Instead, the killing had a chastening effect on all parties. No evidence came to light that it was directly connected with the Mataungan programme; no paranoid white supremacist went on a rampage although police acted roughly before making arrests; a protracted trial took place under Chief Justice John Minogue; humane sentences of from eighteen months to fourteen years were handed down to five men. Minogue felt that, because of Tolai land problems, there were extenuating circumstances. Somehow the Administration was able to avoid making political martyrs during the whole affair. On one occasion, in late 1970, when Oscar Tammur was serving a thirty-day sentence in place of a fine for non-payment of council tax, an anonymous well-wisher (?) from Canberra paid up for him, much to his indignation. John Kaputin thought it was an Administration attempt to ‘draw the teeth from Mr Tammur’s protest’. Tammur complained that when he tried to return to prison he was ‘chased out . . . like a dog’. Australian colonialism was baffling.

After the Somare government came to power in 1972, the Gazelle Council was suspended and teams of indigenous conciliators were dispatched to the Gazelle to bring the opposing Tolai groups together. They had little success, though peace was maintained. What had been ominous for the emerging nation was that the Mataungan leaders seemed unprepared to accept anything less than an extreme decentralisation of power. The Select Committee on Constitutional Development reported in 1971 that Oscar Tammur seemed to want an independent government for the Gazelle Peninsula . . . [He] requested your Committee to record in this Report that the [Mataungan] Association and its followers would break away . . . if its wishes were not satisfied . . . whether the Association would be any more satisfied with a united Papua and New Guinea central government than it is with the present central government is not clear to the Committee.

By mid-1972 Tammur could say that the central government could control ‘the bigger things like army, navy, airforce’ and some taxa-
tion but all other powers (police, education, etc.) should lie with the region 'if we don't want Papua New Guinea to break-up into small nations'. John Kaputin's view that Mataunganism was just 'raw nationalism' or 'nationalism on the horizon' was thus left in some doubt. The issue, however, was probably being solved by the fact that the Gazelle could not absorb the energies of young Tolais who were now being involved throughout the country at all levels of public and private enterprise. The Tolais had no copper mine, and they lacked sharp geographical boundaries and a distinctive skin pigmentation.

4. Papua

No violence occurred in Papua in this period, but it should have been apparent from the attitudes of Members of the House of Assembly (M.H.A.s) that the union of the two territories was not going to be a simple *fait accompli*. No doubt it was the direction from External Territories that caused otherwise responsible officials to give slippery answers in the House about the real status and choices of Papuans. On 22 November 1968 the Secretary for Law, W. Watkins, replied concisely that 'Papuan men and women are *full* Australian citizens and British subjects'. On 5 March 1969 Les Johnson quoted a Barnes statement of 1966 which said that differences of status between Papuans and New Guineans were 'of little consequence now' but that 'Ministers gave an assurance that there is no intention to change the status of Papua or New Guinea except in accordance with the wishes of the respective Territory'. On 16 March 1970 Johnson pointed out that 'Papuans do not enjoy privileges not available to New Guineans', and to show that Papuans were not really *full* citizens he emphasised that they needed permission to enter Australia, did not have to perform national service or pay Australian income tax. Obversely, a leading Papuan, Oala Oala-Rarua, who had been President of the Port Moresby Workers' Association and a founder of Pangu Pati, was Assistant Ministerial Member for the Treasury 1968-72, and became in 1972 first Lord Mayor of Port Moresby, could say in 1967 that Australian citizenship 'has no value at all in practice' but on 19 November, 1971, in his last speech in the Second House, he said:

There is nothing to stop Papua becoming a seventh State of Australia. What is the matter with that? If the New Guineans have their quarrels, there is nothing stopping Papua becoming independent on its own, if Australia does not want it. If the small territory of Nauru with 4500 people can have independence, then it is good enough for 800 000 Papuans.

In 1967, Oala-Rarua had advocated Papua amalgamating with New Guinea as a Trust Territory. His change of heart may be ascribed to various fears: that New Guineans would prove lawless after inde-
Papua New Guinea's significant population growth, that Papuans would eventually be outnumbered in government, and that government of such a large area would prove impossible.

Papuan ambivalence was also evident in the way expatriates were allowed to lead the Papuan cause, although Oala-Rarua, Lepani Watson (a Trobriander who was an Assistant Ministerial Member) and Ebia Olewale (Western district) openly supported V. B. Counsel (Gulf) when he successfully moved (31 May 1971) that no change should be made in the status of Papua or Papuans 'without the express approval of the Papuan people or their elected representatives'. The motion was carried by 30 to 25, Southern Highlanders (Papua) voting against it, but men who would be prominent in the National Coalition after 1972 voted in favour (men like Michael Somare, Julius Chan, Kaibelt Diria and Thomas Kavali). It was, interestingly, supported also by the anti-Mataungan United Party minister from the Gazelle, Matthias Toliman, and all three Bougainvillean members, although Joseph Lue (Assistant Ministerial Member for Transport) was anti-secessionist. Somare conceded that Counsel had accurately gauged Papuan (or coastal Papuan, perhaps) feelings, condemned the use of force and called for a committee of enquiry, but not a referendum, into Papuan opinion. Percy Chatterton, although Chairman of the Territory National Day Committee, deplored the prospect of 'a unity imposed by the arrogant upon the unwilling [which] can only end in disaster and misery for the people of this country'. He wanted to look at 'viable alternatives': 'a federal state, possibly with a legislature on the lines of the Australian Senate, that is, with equal representation of provinces' (i.e., Papua, Highlands, New Guinea Coast, New Guinea Islands) or 'small independent states linked together by common market, customs union and a mutual defence pact'.

On 16 November thirty-one-year-old Olewale, who had been Papua New Guinea’s first indigenous secondary teacher and who had founded a Papua action movement in late 1970, asked for a referendum rather than just consultation as the only way to assess the wishes of the Papuan people. It was the climax of a year in which Papuan members of the House had warned that their people would revolt against the economic neglect to which the World Bank Report had consigned them. In comparison to the Islands region Papua was certainly underdeveloped if the location of the capital was not taken into account, but the Highlands was still worse off by comparison even though an arterial road at least stretched from Mt Hagen (Western Highlands) – and, in dry weather even Mendi (Southern Highlands) – to Lae. Developmental spending in Papua, exclusive of Port Moresby, was going into exploration and feasibility studies in oil, mining and hydro-electricity. The threats of revolt had to be seen in relation to the 1972 elections but in January 1972 a London-
based firm of consultants could refer to the lack of an infra-structure in Bangladesh and warn that 'the neglect which led to the collapse of the administration in East Pakistan has parallels in Papua New Guinea'.

The most disturbing plaintiff for Papuan development was the Speaker, John Guise, who was the only political survivor of the 1961 Legislative Council, who had won 68 per cent of the primaries in his Milne Bay electorate in 1964 and 75 per cent in 1968, and who aimed to be just as successful in 1972. The mixed-race grandson of an English remittance man of gentle birth, Guise had started life as a Burns Philp delivery boy on 2s. 6d. a week plus food. Drafted into an army labour battalion, he ended the war as a sergeant, joined the police, was sent to England for Queen Elizabeth's coronation and rose as far as he could go, to sergeant-major. Entering first local government and then the Legislative Council, he realised his destiny must lie with the true indigenous and not the mixed-race community and emerged as the first nationalist spokesman. In 1962 he was urging unity of the two territories and the creation of a national flag and national anthem. By turns effusive, choleric and sanctimonious, he was not generally trusted as he pursued his independent destiny, being first a member of Pangu in 1967 but, when that would have deprived him of office in the Second House, by 1968 an independent. His election as Speaker was a tribute to his authoritativeness but also came in part from support from Highlanders who wished to see such a persuasive 'radical' off the floor of the House. However, although he was a self-proclaimed nationalist, Guise knew how to beat the Papuan drum. His hold over Milne Bay and by extension his prestige elsewhere in Papua made taking notice of him seem the price of unity between the two territories. Yet whatever his ambition – and he spoke for a presidential form of government, not Westminster – no one begrudged him his honorary doctorate at the first graduation at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1970.

Whitlam and Liberation

In July 1969 John Gorton quashed any further equivocation about Papua New Guinea becoming an eighth State of Australia or of having any future status short of complete independence. However, the publicity given to the Bougainville and Gazelle crises was almost too opportune for any radical Australian statesman looking for a flourishing issue. A minor imperial power which was growing increasingly unsure of the value of its ‘forward strategy’ in Vietnam could be expected to become wary of possible confrontations with colonised peoples. Nothing could have been more unfashionable at the end of an epoch in Western strategy and no one could have wanted to seem more progressive than the leader of the Australian
Opposition, Gough Whitlam. Looking for issues in the 1969 Australian elections after the Labor debacle of 1966, Whitlam did think of injecting decolonisation into his campaign. However, he may have subsequently reflected that he himself had not been to Papua New Guinea since 1965, while the party’s radical ideologue, Dr Jim Cairns, who wrote several books on behalf of the Southeast Asian masses, had spent none of his parliamentary travelling fund on a visit to Papua New Guinea. Perhaps Whitlam was also unsure of the effect of shattering the bipartisan consensus on Papua New Guinea so suddenly; so he planned his sally for the election aftermath. It would be unfair, however, to imply that Whitlam was simply concerned with opportunistic image-making. He personally had made four previous visits to Papua New Guinea and in 1965 had been sufficiently avant-garde to urge independence by 1970.

Although Whitlam, with his trustworthy advisers, William Hayden and Kim Beazley, was supposed to be on ‘a fact-finding mission’, he swept into Port Moresby on 29 December 1969 with target dates for self-government (1972) and independence (1976) and a predigested critique of the economic system. Quickly he developed a manifesto which was full of liberating aphorisms to disperse the Barmesian fog. The fact of independence, he said, was just not negotiable; nor was the date as negotiable as most people thought. Australia had responsibilities which went far beyond its colony. They were first and foremost to the people of Australia. Only the form of independence was for Papua New Guinea to decide. That did not mean Australia was casting Papua New Guinea off; in fact, he was ‘appalled’ to find how widespread was the impression that Australian aid would cease on independence. He assured people that both Labor and Liberal governments would be committed to aid for thirty years and he personally favoured making aid a part of some treaty arrangement. Similarly, Australia would accept responsibility for Australian salaries and the welfare of families, so as to accelerate the desire for independence. He wanted Australians to be ‘envoys not masters, helpers not rulers’ and suggested that the Department of External Territories should be replaced by a department of Pacific Relations. He criticised ‘hostile elements’ in the Administration and the expatriate community and, referring to the troubles of 1969, he asserted that ‘batons and tear gas have no place in land sales’ and deplored the fact that there were more police in Rabaul than in any Australian city except Sydney and Melbourne.

Although Whitlam thought Australia had much to be proud of, he singled out plantation labourers as ‘the worst paid in the world’ and drew attention to the lack of indigenous participation in the towns. He urged a policy of vigorous localisation so that every new taxi plate in New Guinea should go to a local man, that every new tavern licence should go to a local man . . . and every new shop site in these towns should go to a local man.
This was timely for, although Whitlam had no statistics for display, expatriates did account for 95 per cent of professional and managerial manpower and 75 per cent of technical, subprofessional and middle-level managerial personnel. They owned 60 per cent of all export crops, all except about 2 per cent of manufacturing goods, most of the mining output and construction and service industries. Cooperatives were the most important business activity for locals; in 1969-70 their turnover was approximately $6.3 million. It is doubtful if the 2 500 000 local people earned much more than 30 per cent of the monetary sector income; some 40 000 expatriates earned the rest. In 1967-68 the average expatriate income ($2000) was approximately fourteen times that of the local ($140).

Whitlam’s general statements of principle were refreshingly forthright; nowhere else did it seem to be so necessary to underline the obvious:

The only thing in which New Guinea is really unique among the countries of the world is that alone among significant populations its people make no final decisions on any matter affecting their welfare.

It is not unique in its economy, in the difference of economic standards between sections of the country, its educational or social standards, its need for economic aid from abroad, its need for advisers, the diversity of local customs or even the multiplicity of its languages.

All these matters present complex and difficult problems for any future government of New Guinea [sic].

None of these problems require colonial rule for their solution or easing. In fact, many of them will worsen if foreign techniques, methods, laws and customs continue to exclude local custom, knowledge and experience.

An outside administration cannot teach or impose unity. It can by its errors unite a people against it. This is the very situation which Australians at home will not permit, and Australians in New Guinea must most avoid.

The visit was generally unpopular, particularly among Highlanders and expatriates. Even in Hanuabada, Oala-Rarua told Whitlam that he had stirred up enough trouble and should ‘pack up and go home’, while Toua Kapena M.H.A., a leading Papuan separatist, charged him ‘with varying his statement from place to place to suit his audience’, thus deepening misunderstanding in the Territory. Whitlam was alleged to have riposted that Oala-Rarua was ‘a stooge’ and Kapena ‘an Uncle Tom’. Even with black people he was unable to avoid the abusive put-down. Particularly disturbing seemed to be his courtship of the Tolais. While exhorting them publicly not to be violent, he was alleged to have encouraged the contrary and this brought Barnes and Gorton out fighting. Whitlam, pertinent, congratulated Gorton on being provoked into making his first public statement on Papua New Guinea.

Even a sympathetic observer, however, might have pondered the glibness with which Whitlam approached the issue of national unity, an issue to which he gave more emphasis on his return visit in early 1971:
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Australia's obligation in the United Nations is to hand over Papua-New Guinea (sic) as a single entity as soon as possible. Papua-New Guinea has a chance united only if self-government comes quickly. Self-government will be the real unifying force in this country. To delay self-government is to promote separation. Self-government must be given quickly to the people as a whole; otherwise section after section will seize, with anger and bitterness towards us, what we should grant wholly and wholeheartedly.

In emphasising that Papua New Guinea was not unique, Whitlam overlooked the need to treat inheritance problems as distinctive and thus worthy of close analysis. He seemed to think that secessionism was generally caused by expatriates and simply threatened breakaway groups with withdrawal of financial support, while suggesting by his precipitate decolonisation that Australia wanted to escape before any coercion had to be used against them. Geoffrey Hutton of the Melbourne Age accompanied Whitlam in 1971. He referred, in the Age, 1 June 1971, to

... proposals which Mr Whitlam seemed to pull from the top of his head under close questioning. When he was faced by the proposition that Bougainville was nationally and ethnically part of the Solomons and not New Guinea, he floated the idea that Australia could dispose of secession by taking over the British Solomons and make them all one big, happy family.

In April 1973, during a visit to London, Whitlam returned to this theme in the face of increased overt secessionism in Bougainville. ‘I would think,’ he said, that ‘the Solomons are too small politically or economically to be on their own.’ He seemed to have no idea that the British Solomon Island Protectorate had a larger population (around 160 000) than any country in Oceania except Fiji, and he suppressed the notion that the Protectorate’s future dependence on foreign aid would not be unique. There was an indignant reaction in the Solomons. Peter Kenilorea, who was to become the Solomons’ first Prime Minister, called Whitlam ‘most undiplomatic and unnecessarily paternalistic ... in dictating to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate without full consultation’. If fact, Whitlam stirred up Solomons nationalism. Moreover, in conceding that Bougainville was ‘a part of the Solomons both geographically and racially’ he virtually validated a ‘Solomons reunion’ on the basis of ‘natural boundaries’ and ‘self-determination’. Press reaction to this in the Solomons was not unfavourable.

Geoffrey Hutton reported that Whitlam also redrew the map of Queensland by suggesting that the islands within a few hundred yards of the Papuan coast should be turned over to Papua New Guinea and the boundary fixed somewhere near the middle of Torres Strait.

Whitlam obviously did not bother about the corollary: that the only principle on which Bougainville could be coerced into Papua New Guinea was that of adherence to colonial boundaries, and that it would be a remarkable inconsistency if the 500 inhabitants of the
northern Torres Straits (who wanted to remain Australian citizens) were forced to become Papua New Guineans or simply expropriated. Thus expediency was matched by that of the UN Mission which in 1971 seemed to concur with both Whitlam’s proposals.

After Whitlam’s Visit

‘The political climate in Papua-New Guinea can never be the same . . . And that, at least, is a very good thing,’ said the Melbourne Age, 14 January 1970. Whitlam’s visit pushed forward a series of events. On 5 May 1970 Warwick Smith was transferred to the Department of Interior (and, after Whitlam came to power in 1972, to Greece) while the smooth-talking David Hay took his place at External Territories. Les Johnson was recalled to the Public Service as Administrator just as he was going to Tasmania to become principal of a college of advanced education. Far from designing his own uniform, Johnson did not require coats and ties at Government House and together with his wife avoided pro-consular postures without loss of dignity. Egalitarianism, that fabled characteristic of Australian life, had found room at the top to the great benefit of social and political communication. Johnson was genial, pragmatic, a careful bureaucrat and an adroit parliamentarian. He genuinely consulted where Hay politely listened. He believed in localisation and decentralisation. Paulius Matane, soon after, became the first indigenous departmental head (in Business Development) and Sere Pitoi led the Public Service Board. Johnson’s first speech dealt with the creation of Area Authorities which would replace District Advisory Councils as consultative bodies, with more say in the raising and spending of district revenue.

Whitlam also caused Gorton to visit Papua New Guinea where, however, the Prime Minister’s craggy self-assurance could not cover a general lack of interest and grasp. At least he did not, like Barnes, play the imperial buff and was prepared to confront John Kaputin on a stage at Rabaul airport, even though his oratory — and fluency in English — suffered by comparison, and he was thought to need the backing of over 500 riot police, as well as helicopters in the sky. It was a lack-lustre tour as he strained over a few quips, always mispronounced ‘Papua’ and un成功fully tried to avoid me-tooism. He refused to set a date for self-government because (in a typical periphrasis)

there will necessarily be progress along it step by step and anyone who seeks to say that at a given month at a given year a period will have been reached when that can be achieved is, I think, dangerously simplifying the problem and is acting to the detriment of the people in the future.

Yet Gorton did not come empty-handed. He increased the status of ministerial members who were now given control over depart-
mental heads and thus fuller responsibility for the activities of their departments. While they were to be ultimately responsible to the Administrator and the Administrator's Executive Council, the Administrator henceforth had to accept the views of his ministers within their areas of responsibility. Gorton itemised these with a blend of admonition and forced humour as

educational – primary, secondary, technical, but not tertiary, public health, tourism, co-operatives, business advisory services, workers' compensation, industrial training, posts and telegraphs, territory revenue including taxation (for inherent in what I have said is the need for the House of Assembly to take greater responsibility in the levying of revenue in this Territory), price control, coastal shipping, civil defence, corrective institutions – that's prisons in case anybody's wondering – registration of customary land, land use, leasing of land and town planning and urban development.

The official members of the Administrator's Executive Council would continue to sit there and offer advice but 'they will not take part in any vote that Council may have as to what it finally does'. The Council was to have a spokesman in the House of Assembly to answer questions as to what the Administrator's Executive Council has done and why it has done it. And we also propose that the Parliament of Australia will not exercise its veto in relation to ordinances if those ordinances affect the actual responsibilities handed over to Ministerial Members.

Henceforth, the Australian financial allocation was to be divided into parts: a 'grant-in-aid' which was to be added to the locally raised revenue and was to be the responsibility of the Administrator's Executive Council and the ministries: a 'development grant', the expenditure of which was to remain with the Australian government 'because we will want to see that it is properly expended' on specified projects; and overseas allowances for expatriate officers 'so everyone can see that this comes from the Australian tax payer . . . and not from what is provided in the Territory'. Gorton proposed to reconstruct the Australian-based public service so as to provide reassurance to key personnel who might otherwise feel insecure and leave Papua New Guinea while their services were still required. He stressed that Australian aid would not cease, at the same time emphasising its limits and the need for greater self-reliance, and he concluded:

I believe it is against all logic and all sense to put a timetable on . . . [full internal self-government and full independence]. We don't want to remain in the Territory one week against the wishes of the majority of its people. We don't think we ought to get out . . . against the wish of the majority of its people. We don't want to rule any peoples without their consent. We don't think it proper to move out and possibly help a vocal minority rule a majority without that majority's consent.

To show that Australian control had not slackened, Thomas Leahy M.H.A. (Markham), a member of the wealthy Leahy clan of explorers, farmers and traders, was appointed spokesman for the
Administrator's Executive Council without the actual position being endorsed by the House or discussed with its Select Committee on Constitutional Development. In fact, the Administration had intended to appoint Leahy without an election in the Council, possibly because no agreement could be reached on a suitable indigenous member. When Leahy was elected over Tore Lokoloko, M.H.A. (Kerema), there was anger that an indigene had not been given what seemed to be the post of proto-Chief Minister. Members of the House were indignant: conservatives because it seemed to push devolution forward, radicals because the House was disregarded. However, the post lacked personal momentum as Leahy could speak neither for himself nor for a coherent party. Perhaps on the evening he appeared in drag in the House, he unwittingly revealed the ambivalence of his position. Yet it had one, probably inadvertent, effect: it precipitated clearer party alignments. Ron Neville, ex-kiap and wealthiest man in the Southern Highlands, who baited Pangu probably more than any other member, felt, on 3 September 1970,

that prior to these changes I was one-ninety-fourth of the Government of this Territory. Now that fraction appears to me to have been reduced . . . We have come to a point in time where a proper party system must be operating in this House . . . [to] exercise some control on the ministerial members . . . who at this point of time are largely acting on our behalf without knowledge on most subjects, and very often without our consent. I am not trying to say that this is the fault of our present members of the AEC. I think it is a fault of evolution we have not yet properly overcome.

Pangu was vindicated. In spite of its small representation, it had attempted to be a party of principle and unity, and had not flinched at arousing strong reactions. In his maiden speech in 1968, Michael Somare (East Sepik) had informed the House that he had been made his party's parliamentary leader and that none of its members would accept ministerial posts, because this could lead to a conflict of loyalty between party and government. Pangu wanted to be a 'loyal opposition' which would try to foster a two-party system and realise a particular platform. Somare sounded an egalitarian note in declaring that benefits to ministerial members were 'overgenerous' and would possibly lead to corruption. By the 1972 elections Pangu's policy was for immediate self-government but not independence ('until we are really ready for it'), rapid localisation, government support for political parties, land reform, higher pay for workers, rural development, a national shipping line and national unity ('One name, one country, one people'). There were possibly twenty branches, some of them, however, existing only on paper. Significantly, it was in Voutas's electorate, Morobe, that organisation was most dynamic. In April 1970 Pangu published a monthly newspaper, Pangu Nius, which struggled on until 1973, mostly run by
expatriates who also paid one-third of its 20 cent membership fees. Even Pangu’s accession to government in 1972 did not stimulate grass-roots organisation.

Pangu had a few minor legislative victories in the Second House but was most effective in exposing the intolerant tendencies of the Administration and its supporters. This was most notable when in 1969 its Secretary, Albert Maori Kiki, was ordered to appear before the Privileges Committee of the House for a statement made in Australia. He had called ministerial members Barnes’s ‘stooges . . . elected New Guineans made to accept the ministerial portfolios with money, status, cars . . .’ Kiki refused to apologise, as did the Post-Courier for simply printing his remarks. The Post-Courier was banned from the House for the rest of that meeting. Nearly all the official members voted for this measure, though the Secretary for Law abstained. Naturally, it remained to be seen how such direct education in issues of principle would affect the future. What it illustrated at the time was the preparedness of the white conservatives, with black support, to gang up on Pangu ‘bigheads’ – and the strength of Administration support for the gang.

One major gain for Pangu was certainly the fledging of Michael Tom Somare as leader. Born in 1936 at Rabaul he was the eldest son of a police sergeant. During World War II he returned to his father’s village in the Murik Lakes, East Sepik, where he attended a school run by Japanese and learned to respect them as people. He eventually became a school teacher, an interpreter for the Legislative Council, a radio announcer and journalist with Information and Extension Services, and a founder of Pangu. He won East Sepik Regional in 1968 by 7000 votes. No doubt his experience around the country gave him a national perspective but he had a naturally gregarious and conciliatory gift in personal relations without being too diffuse or lacking basic commitments. He understood the hurts of colonialism without allowing them to cloud elemental human problems and sympathies. Facing up to the problem of organising parties, he said:

Unless people are politically sophisticated and have a common aim there will never be a sense of oneness in our community. At present we are confronted with a powerful organisation which makes it difficult for people to organise themselves. This element is an established force, the Administration, which is the giver of all things and people do not care so long as they are at the receiving end. Our people are so accustomed to getting things for nothing that they demand more which, of course, is always given at their request.

On another occasion, he simply referred to his people as ‘bludgers’. Somare clearly profited from his friendship with Tony Voutas in learning parliamentary strategies. It was, however, a tribute to both of them that Voutas never seemed to be – and never was – a ventriloquist.

Because of their fear of Pangu, and the instinct for political huddle, about fifty members of the House were meeting as a group towards
the end of the first sitting of the Second House. Eschewing the notion of party, they were spread over both government and opposition benches. Their leadership was expatriate and their object was to slow down the progress of independence. Eventually, in September 1969 one Regional member, John Watts, founded the Western Highlands Political Association, and hoped that similar groups would form on a district basis elsewhere and affiliate into a national union, the Combined Political Associations or Compass. It stressed the need for economic before political advancement and the need for ‘an efficient non-political public service’. Watts was, however, a little before his time. Some indigenous initiative was also needed if the move was to be effectual.

Meanwhile, in 1968 an indigenous Western Highlander, twenty-four-year-old Anton Parao, who had been educated in Catholic schools in Wewak and Banz and a seminary at Rabaul, began the ‘Four Brothers’ Association at Goroka Teachers College. He wanted to bring the educated people of the four Highlands districts together. It had a sports’ club base and a branch in Lae. It opposed early self-government and unequal district development and eventually attracted support from expatriate businessmen, including an airline owner – Parao was able to fly around the country organising contacts. In November 1970 Compass was formally instituted with Parao as Secretary and Tom Leahy, Tei Abal and Sinake Gireigire as leaders. In March 1971 it changed its name to the United Party. In 1972 it advertised itself as having forty-seven members who ‘had control’ of the House, ‘and through its Ministers, control of the Administrator’s Executive Council’. It (in 1972) regarded ‘the development of a strong political party system as essential’ because it was confident of victory. Nevertheless, ‘independence should be decided by the House of Assembly, after it has ascertained the desires of the people’. While urging localisation in all spheres it also believed ‘that conditions of employment must be attractive enough’ for overseas public servants. Although it attracted men like Tore Lokoloko (Papua) and Matthias Toliman (Gazelle), its Highlands orientation came out very clearly in the final sitting of the Second House on 19 November 1971 when a letter written to students by Anton Parao was tabled, by Michael Somare, for debate. The letter read:

There are quite a few smart coastal fellows who . . . have realised that now is their time to press on and get all the top positions in the Government and also in private enterprises. They have put us in the grass cutting level and reckon that we will always be there . . .

Remember, my young friends, when you finish your education, you will need to apply for a job that you want to take up according to your studies. But people who will be in charge of department happen to be from a particular area and they will surely give preference to their fellow wantoks or district groups. Therefore, now is our time to get together and press on to get what we want before we ask for self-government or independence. When, and only when, we have some of our fellows looking after some of the departments, then we will surely ask for self-government because this is our country . . .
Somare accused the United Party of arrant regionalism without pointing out that, far from being ‘stooges’ of white men, as Whitlam had implied, Highlands members regarded expatriates as ultimately expendable. Their capacity for radicalism had yet to be probed. By 1972 some students had formed a Highlands Liberation Front which condemned ‘colonialism and neo-colonialism’, wanted all ‘industrial and economic development’ to be shared on a ‘50-50 basis’ and the removal of all expatriates who refused to co-operate. Highland attitudes, however, were not monolithic. Thomas Kavali M.H.A. (Jimi in the Western Highlands), with one supporter in the House, Siwi Kurondo (Kerowagi in Chimbu) formed the National Party. It had a program similar to Pangu’s and a cheerful attitude towards coastals. It attracted student supporters who wanted to play down regionalism. They, however, were described by Parao, as ‘complete bigheads who pretend not to be Highlanders’.

The other significant faction to emerge from the Independent Group was the People’s Progress Party (PPP) which attracted eleven members of the House led by Julius Chan, a mixed race (father, Chinese; mother, New Guinean) business man from New Ireland. Born in 1939, Chan had matriculated and had abortively studied agricultural economics in Queensland. He had built up a small-scale shipping business in Rabaul which had assisted the development of remote New Ireland areas. Although an Australian citizen and a prominent rugby player, he had known the humiliation of being thrown out of the Kone Club in Port Moresby. A thoughtful and lucid speaker with a grasp of finance, he had been impressed by controlled development in Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore. The PPP refused to lay down ‘a dogmatic plan’ but pragmatically sought ‘to gather ideas from its members and branches from all the various parts of Papua New Guinea and to include those for which there is general and wide support’. Particularly, these would be based on the Westminster system of government, free enterprise and a multi-racial society for Papua New Guinea. The PPP attracted supporters from the Islands and coastal regions, including two Bougainvilleans, Lue and Mola. It was ‘not at all concerned about timing of self-government’. Its policy was: Not When, How?

In March 1971, the Select Committee on Constitutional Development tabled its final report in the House. It had done two circuits of the Territory trying to explain and discuss the intricacies of constitution-making at the village level. Presumably it familiarised many people with the notion of self-government, if not with the means of articulating demands and competing for resources. The report bent towards consensus to the point of outright inconsistency. While there was strong support for internal self-government during 1972-76 in urban areas, as well as in Bougainville, East Sepik, the Mataungan sectors of East New Britain, New
Ireland, Manus, Central and Gulf, the majority wanted to wait until 1976-80. The Western and Southern Highlands, however, ‘did not suggest a timetable or period when internal self-government should be achieved’. Therefore the Committee felt

that target dates . . . should not be arbitrarily set [but] . . . that an approximate timetable will provide a sense of direction . . . If programmes are developed now with the view that the Territory may become internally self-governing during the life of the 1972-1976 House, your Committee feels that this should ensure a smooth transition to internal self-government when the people are ready for it.

The Committee condemned secessionism and rejected any idea of a referendum in disgruntled districts. In spite of pundits like Whitlam who had said that Papua New Guinea ‘in all probability will have a presidential system similar to that in the United States’, the Committee confirmed the inexorable trend towards a centralised, unicameral Westminster system while warning that ‘area authorities will need to be able to exercise real authority and responsibility if they are to satisfy the aspirations of the people’. It could not make suggestions that would ‘satisfy the aspirations of the Mataungan Association’ – or Papua or Bougainville. It expanded the number of regional electorates from fifteen to eighteen and open electorates from sixty-nine to eighty-two for the Third House. Three additional members could also be nominated and the official members reduced from ten to four. The offices of ministerial and assistant ministerial members were to be replaced by up to seventeen ministerial posts. The Administrator’s Executive Council was to consist of ten ministers, the Administrator and three official members. The Committee also recommended the names ‘Niugini’ and ‘Niuginian’ and that a national flag be adopted. The winning design was a triangulated black-and-red ground with a white Southern Cross and a gold bird of paradise in the respective sections; the winner a Papuan girl.

A rambling and sometimes impassioned debate followed on 11 March 1971 in the House of Assembly. Regional electorates were retained, forty-seven to seventeen, after spirited criticism by Pangu
that they favoured expatriates. The flag was adopted only on the casting vote of the Speaker because Highland members wanted the issue referred back to the people. Paulus Arek, Chairman of the Committee, admitted that at first ‘some people refused to accept the flag; some people threw the flag away, and some people took the flag and hit dogs with it’. Arek appealed for elected leaders to make decisions and not waste time:

Who is here to take the flag to all the people in the country, showing it to tree dwellers, cave dwellers and to the people who do not wear any clothes? Do not be a fool by saying, ‘Take the flag to the people’.

The two Tolai members, Tammur and Toliman, who were present, supported the Highlanders, but the Papua and Bougainvillean members supported Arek.

When the name ‘Niugini’ was debated, both Papua and the Highlands combined to have it deleted from the Report without even a division of the House. Toua Kapena proposed the amendment because ‘We Papuans are going to talk about our standing with the Australian government’. Bert Counsel saw Papuans as being gradually and deliberately sold down ... this dirty drain ... for the proposed obscene union between the two different countries ... Ask any Papuan whether he is a New Guinean and you will probably get a punch up the bracket.

Traimya Kambipi from the Western Highlands said:

Yesterday I found that the name ‘Niugini’ had been spelt differently from its English spelling ... I am afraid that if we accept this name spelt phonetically in the Papuan language, many people will feel very disappointed. I do not know who the New Guineans are supporting this name spelt in this way. My party, Compass, is not in favour of it.

In fact Compass had supported the name but could not control its members.

Finally, in July, an ordinance deleted three words from the designation of the colony in the official Gazette. The ‘Territory of Papua and New Guinea’ became ‘Papua New Guinea’. The House had reserved the right to change the name in the future but it was not until the eve of independence that the issue was seriously raised again by Michael Somare. In his valediction to the Second House, the Administrator thought that, between 1964 and 1971,

We have grown to think of Papua New Guinea as one country and that is, without doubt, the most important thing that has happened. It has happened because we in the House have had to make decisions which have affected all Papuans and New Guineans.

The fact that Les Johnson was unable to use a collective word for the people of the country showed this achievement to have been very partial. As for decisions, they remained generally in the hands of expatriates and not merely those within Papua New Guinea. Without strong political parties it could hardly have been otherwise.
Many members learned little more than how to formulate questions about roads and bridges, how to remain accommodating in the face of their own impotence, and how to be resigned to the inevitability of self-government. Yet, however unentrenched they were, some symbols of nationhood had emerged.

When Port Moresby hosted the South Pacific Games in 1969, a flag of green ground with gold bird of paradise had been improvised and, although it had reminded Bert Counsel and others of an advertisement for South Pacific Brewery, it not only had held its place beside the Australian flag but had looked more authentic than the ensign of colonial Fiji or the tricolour of New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Similarly, the use of the anthem ‘Papua, Arise’ (though it outraged Bert Counsel) was a lurching gesture in a more realistic direction than ‘God Save the Queen’ or the ‘Marseillaise’. Australians, after all, were rather bashful about empire.

In September 1969, just before Commemoration Day commemorating various Australian September triumphs such as the proclamation of Papua as a Crown Colony in 1884, the eclipse of Germany in 1914 and of Japan in 1945. Tom Leahy moved that it be renamed forthwith ‘National Day’ so that the people would ‘look to the future as well as to the past’ and ‘develop a sense of unity’. There were perfunctory protests by two indigenous members of the House that they did not understand the motion. No one bothered to explain, and the uncounted ayes had it. National Day lacked bombast in 1969 and 1970 but Les Johnson saw to it that 13 September 1971 was prefigured by displays of the new flag and that members of the Chambers of Commerce stimulated enthusiasm with stickers in shops, in business-houses and on cars. Shirts with linked figures and the tri-lingual caption ‘UNITÉ, BUNGWANTAIM, AHEBOU’ appeared on the streets, and the children in schools were taught a national jingle (albeit geographically not quite accurate) for flag-raising days:

This is our flag, flag of our land
Proudly it flutters and proudly it stands,
Flag of our islands, home in the sun,
Papua New Guinea, we are One (bis).

The great day itself was marked by speeches, marches and a twenty-one gun salute from the Royal Australian Navy and in the Hubert Murray Stadium Susan Karike was allowed to unfurl the flag she had designed. Meanwhile Anzac Day 1972 was being scheduled as the last Australo-centric holiday.

Although these gestures seemed factitious, goodwill was in many cases triumphing over predilection, no more clearly than with the Chairman of the National Day Committee, Percy Chatterton, who had been quite frank about his preference for a separatist Papua and must even then have been planning to promote a Papuan sub-nationalist, Josephine Abaijah, to the Third House of Assembly. At
Christmas parties in 1971 many mature Papuans would sing 'Papua, Arise' more self-consciously and with more emotion than ever before. Meanwhile, in Bougainville, at the Marist Brothers Secondary School, the new national song was being followed by a rescript, 'I Love My Country, Bougainville', written some years earlier, like 'Papua, Arise' by a mission teacher. Rather oddly, it went to the tune of 'Advance Australia Fair'.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 11

Chapters 11 to 13 are based primarily on personal observation, reading and research since 1968. However, in the writing of this survey continued reference has been made to the valuable 'Political Chronicle - Papua New Guinea' published in the Australian Journal of Politics and History, vols 14-24, 1968-78, (hereafter AJPH) and, to a lesser extent, the 'Political Review - Papua New Guinea' in the Australian Quarterly, vols 43-48, 1971-76 (AQ). The authors of the AJPH chronicles have been: E. P. Wolfers (April 1968-April 1969), J. R. E. Waddell (August 1969-August 1971), David W. Hegarty (December 1971-April 1975; April 1977-April 1978), James Griffin (December 1975-April 1976) and Donald Denoon (December 1976). J. L. Goldring wrote the AQ reviews in 1971-72 and Bill Standish in 1973-76. Clippings from the Port Moresby South Pacific Post (SPP) which in 1969 became the Post-Courier (PC) have been consulted, as have those from Australian papers such as the Melbourne Age, Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), Australian etc. Acknowledgements have been made when quotations have been significant. If it has been expeditious to do so, dates of publication have been recorded in the text. The same procedure has been adopted with quotations from House of Assembly Debates (HAD) where only the date of the speech is recorded. The quarterly, New Guinea and Australia, the Pacific and Southeast Asia (1966-76) has been cited under its common title New Guinea; the Australian Broadcasting Commission and National Broadcasting Commission as ABC and NBC. The co-authors of this book, R. J. Sullivan and N. D. Oram have made helpful comments on these chapters but it was not always expedient to accept them. The viewpoints expressed are very much those of the author of this segment of the book.

Association or Independence?
autobiography is *Kiki: ten thousand years in a lifetime*, Melbourne, 1968. The World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) Report was published as *The Economic Development of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea*, Baltimore, 1965; the Commonwealth Government’s brief to the Bank is reported there. The ‘notable observer’ of Barnes was P. W. E. Curtin, Director of the PNG Development Bank; see ‘Comment: West on PNG’, *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1 August 1972. The proceedings of the University of Papua New Guinea’s ‘invigorating seminar’ were published as Marion W. Ward (ed.) *The Politics of Melanesia*, Port Moresby and Canberra, 1970.

**The Second House of Assembly**


**The Emergence of Secessionism**


Whitlam and Liberation
Gough Whitlam issued statements during his two visits to PNG in December-January 1969-70 and January 1971, notably on 7 January 1970 (‘to a Meeting of Supporters of the Mataungan Association’ at Matupit Oval, Rabaul) and on 11-12 January 1970 (‘Labour’s Plan for New Guinea’) and on 17 January 1971. The visits were extensively reported in the PC, Age, Australian, SMH etc. Whitlam’s 1973

After Whitlam
The Formation of the Somare Government

Charles Barnes resigned his portfolio on Australia Day (26 January) 1972. It was an efficacious if belated gesture. Although he had his apologists, even academic ones, there was general relief among realists in Papua New Guinea. This relief was almost certainly felt even by Oscar Tammur although, without any apparent irony, he declared that the Tolai people were disgusted at the resignation:

Mr Barnes is pulling out now that he has instituted dozens of policies that don’t take into consideration the customs of the people of Papua New Guinea. All our troubles have emerged during his term of office. He has mucked up our education system, allowed Japs to fish in our waters, ruined our economy and made our country like a police state. The least he could have done was stay around until he straightened up his blunders. As far as I am concerned as leader of the Mataungan Association, I say Mr Barnes is a coward.

Tammur went on to say that he knew little of Barnes’s successor, Andrew Peacock, except that he understood he ‘was a shrewd and hard man’. Peacock, who was thirty-three years old with no experience of Papua New Guinea, had been allotted the Army portfolio in 1967 in order to project a handsome and vigorous image of military service and in order to reassure Australian conscripts in Vietnam that their plight was not simply the result of a governmental generation gap. Once again the decision to appoint a Minister of External Territories did not seem to have been made with Papua New Guinea’s interests in mind. Peacock was given a tricky post because he was a potentially hostile colleague in William McMahon’s tottering government. Barnes, in fact, advised the young man not to accept it – as did many of Peacock’s friends.

At first face Peacock seemed neither hard nor shrewd. On the contrary, he seemed too trendy, superficial, brash, narcissistic even,
to palliate accrued hurts and establish sincere relationships with whatever ‘home rulers’ emerged in the forthcoming Papua New Guinea elections. However, he turned out to be diligent as well as urbane, with an exuberant grasp of public relations and a flair for unpatronising cross-cultural friendship. At one level it was important that he wore informal coloured shirts, enthused over weapons and artefacts, and enjoyed parties and backslapping. Basically he accepted Whitlam’s view of decolonisation with, however, the important nuance that he should facilitate independence rather than precipitate it even against the will of the legislature. By the time Michael Somare unexpectedly formed his government in April, Peacock had already visited Papua New Guinea five times and was in a position to be a confidant of the incoming ministers as well as a subtle pace-setter.

He quickly moved decision-making to Port Moresby. In February a senior position was set up in the Administrator’s department to smooth and encourage the transfer of powers from Canberra to Konedobu. This post went to a law lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea, Thomas Barnett, who was popular in Pangu circles. He was instructed to side with the incoming government in the event of conflicts of interest with Australia. The new House of Assembly, said Peacock will thus be different from its predecessors… The actual business of getting measures through the House will be the responsibility of Papua New Guinea ministers… We believe the best way for people in government to learn the skills of government is actually to practise them. The Government believes it should help Papua New Guinea towards self-government. We should be remiss if we sat back and just waited for it to happen. This is quite different from imposing self-government regardless of the wishes of the people.

Peacock reduced the role of the remaining four official members in the House to a cipher and did not demur when Somare ‘flatly refused’ to admit Tom Ellis into his cabinet because he was ‘the symbol of the kiap’ and in particular was the man who had once tried to shame Oscar Tammur by crawling on all fours like a dog around the floor of the House. When he came to power in December Whitlam freely acknowledged that Peacock had done well. Thus 1972 saw almost a return to an Australian bipartisan policy on Papua New Guinea. The subsequent Labor appointment of a former diplomat, William Morrison, to External Territories only highlighted, however, Peacock’s finesse in an awkward job and emphasised that a progressive ideology alone did not guarantee tact in inter-racial relations. Morrison’s approach was to push target dates that suited Labor rather than the needs of the Papua New Guinea government and in May 1973 he startled the Waigani Seminar audience with overtones of Barnes by declaring that future aid would be project aid, its deployment virtually decided by Australia. Josephine Abaijah put the matter tersely:
The Labor Party is more paternalistic in its approach than the Liberal Country Party. The Labor Party's policy is to tell us what to do, whether we like it or not, and the other mob are saying we can think it out for ourselves, providing we come to the same decisions.

Elections for the Third House took place between 19 February and 11 March 1972. Pundits expected that only the United Party would be able to muster the ‘cohesive group’ needed for a government although Pangu was expected to make gains as a prelude to bigger things in 1976. Of 605 candidates, 150 bore party labels. Although the UP claimed some 315 candidates were supporters, less than eighty took accreditation, while forty-five were endorsed by Pangu and twenty-nine for PPP. The UP campaigned mostly in the Highlands and Port Moresby and went in for elaborate advertising, perhaps as a result of having employed a New South Wales Country Party organiser in 1971. The UP managed to raise over $70 000 of a projected $100 000 campaign fund, which was spent on transport, leaflets, party caps, T-shirts and newspapers; it also enjoyed the patronage of private airline operators. However, the UP campaign seemed to have been directed too much towards expatriates who were, after all, only a small minority and who were concentrated in towns where their influence on voting was slight. Nevertheless, the UP campaign did help to legitimise parties among people who had previously been taught to fear and resist them. By contrast Pangu raised a mere $4500 or so, $3000 of which was a sum that Bougainville Copper donated, almost without strings, to each of the three major parties. Pangu's only other extra-party support came from a certain Sasakawa, a Japanese businessman, whom Michael Somare had met on a visit to Japan. Sasakawa, says Somare,

was prepared to support us with money, but I said, 'No, don't give us money, give us equipment. Give us some secondhand vehicles with which to conduct our campaign.' He sent us a jeep and a bus. They were new and we had to pay $2000 duty. I had to borrow this money from the bank.

In his autobiography Somare identifies Sasakawa as simply 'the chairman of the Japanese Shipping Foundation'. In 1975 Sasakawa was identified by the Guardian weekly of London as 'one of the most influential and wealthy men in Japan; with far more power than either an Emperor or a Prime Minister,' whose activities 'are a mystery to most Japanese' and who runs 'a kind of shadow government of Japan'.

In spite of the lowering of the voting age to eighteen, only 60 per cent voted, as against 63 per cent in 1968. While this may have indicated in some areas a disillusionment with the fruits of parliamentary practice or simply a growing awareness that voting was not compulsory, or both, the results showed a distinct advance in the sophistication of those who did vote. Considering the available indigenous talent (few public servants resigned to stand) and the
reluctance of Papua New Guineans to accept young leaders (only two university graduates stood, both unsuccessfully), it would have been euphoric to have anticipated the election of a group of parliamentarians at once more elite in training and, at the same time, more representative. The average age of M.H.A.s dropped from forty-one to thirty-five; 70 per cent as against 58 per cent in 1968 had some formal education and could be classified as literate. Highlanders in open electorates with some education increased from three to twelve. Of the new M.H.A.s, 40 per cent were businessmen, 30 per cent had been government officials, 17 per cent school teachers. Of seventy-three M.H.A.s who sought re-election all but two (including Somare) were opposed and only thirty-nine were successful. Eleven were returned for the third time. Men of the stature of Guise, Lapun, Chan, Tammur, Olewale, Toliman, Arek, Abal, Kavali, Giregire, Langro, Poe, Lokoloko, Wabiria and Matiabe Yuwi were returned and gave stability to the procedures of the House. There were few serious losses of talent among indigenes although one ministerial member and five assistant ministerial members were defeated, and Oala Oala-Rarua did not contest. Just as heartening was the reduction of the expatriate M.H.A.s to nine, only four of whom now were Regional members. Most remarkable was the eclipse of such major UP manipulators as the Australian Executive Council spokesman, Tom Leahy (Markham), Walter Lussick (Manus and New Ireland), Denis Buchanan (Eastern Highlands) and William Fielding (Northern). Tom Leahy, who was beaten by a Pangu candidate by 99 votes, was now aghast at ‘party politics and power politics’ which were ‘frightening hell out of him’. He feared that ‘whites and private enterprise’ would be scapegoats and be ‘booted out’, ‘the people would next turn on themselves’ and the third stage would bring the army. Far from getting sympathy, Leahy tasted the derision of sour grapes. Of the expatriate Regional UP members only Ron Neville (Southern Highlands) survived, significantly from the district where it was hardest to muster the necessary educational qualifications. Even his Papuan patriotism could not save Bert Counsel (Western and Gulf). More sophisticated foreigners like Voutas and Chatterton, had had the grace to withdraw from the elections, as Ian Downs, the most formidable politician of the First House, had done in 1968.

Pangu ended up with some twenty-four members among whom were the union organisers, Maori Kiki and Gavera Rea from Port Moresby and Tony Ilia from Lae. Barry Holloway, a founder of Pangu, married to an educated Papua New Guinean, won Eastern Highlands Regional from the wealthy airline operator, Denis Buchanan. The Voutas organisation saw eight Pangu men win in nine seats in Morobe district. The carving up of Paul Lapun’s electorate so that his loyal cultic base around Kieta was transferred to a
new Central Bougainville electorate did not prevent Lapun from winning South Bougainville with an absolute majority although he did not bother to campaign. Lapun's running word ensured the election of the 1969 Rorovana leader, Raphael Bele, as well as the second placing of Barry Middlemiss, who were respectively Treasurer and Secretary of Napidakoe Navitu. Lapun also engineered the election of Fr John Momis for the Regional seat with a majority of 82 per cent over the Assistant Ministerial Member for Transport, Joseph Lue, whom Lapun had supported in 1968 but who had become closely tied to the Administration. Another Assistant Ministerial Member, Donatus Mola of the PPP, reworn North Bougainville but with clearly reduced support and, in spite of his being a facile and humorous trimmer with less than the combined votes of a young secessionist graduate and the Hahalis candidate, Mola remained a friend of Lapun whose performance over the years had continued to exasperate the kiasps and mining company officials with its ambiguity and occultness.

The kiasps were even more outraged by the success of the Mataungans who would also support, though not join, Pangu. Officials seem to have believed that Mataungans would get no more than 20 per cent of the vote and it was rumoured that the District Commissioner, Arthur Carey, 'had prepared a radio broadcast for his regular weekly program based on the political annihilation' of the Mataungans. In fact, the fearsome John Kaputin (Rabaul) and Damien Kereku (East New Britain Regional) won absolute majorities, while Oscar Tammur (Kokopo) needed preferences to defeat six other candidates but won easily. On the other hand, in the fourth Gazelle electorate, the former Ministerial Member for Education, Matthias Toliman, who had supported the Gazelle Council, managed to defeat his Mataungan opponent on preferences. The kiasps had become the victims of their own propaganda and Carey was 'reported to have reacted visibly when he first entered the polling centre in Rabaul at a time when it has just become clear that Mr Kaputin had been elected. The radio programme was cancelled.'

For the National Party Thomas Kavali (Jimi-Western Highlands) reworn his seat and Iambakey Okuk won Chimbu Regional. Within weeks they had recruited five other elected Highlanders for their party. All told, the UP mustered some forty-two supporters who won by 80 000 votes, while PPP comprised ten. The UP supporters included Anton Parao (Western Highlands Regional) and the PPP supporters included Chan, Mola, Poe, and the expatriate Bruce Jephcott (Madang Regional). Eventually PPP also recruited Paulus Arek.

And there were the mavericks. The non-arrival of his cargo at Mt Turu did not prevent Matthias Yaliwan from being elected. Somare compassionately described his performance in the House as
a sad one. He did not really know how to handle proceedings. He had no friends or supporters there. He just sat there and said nothing. Once he got up and said: 'I am the leader of Papua New Guinea.' Everyone clapped, and that was that. Another time he got up and said simply, 'Let's have independence.' On another occasion when the House wasn't sitting, he went into the empty chamber of the House and sat in the Speaker's chair. He had one of his supporters photograph him sitting there, presumably so he could tell his followers back in Yangoru that he had been recognised by the House as the leader of Papua New Guinea. Yaliwan become more and more disturbed and confused, and in 1973 he resigned.

Buaki Singeri (Kabwum-Morobe) had a different expatriate 'demonstration effect': drink. This was not an unusual problem in the House which in 1975 would cut out evening sessions because of drink. However, Buaki took it to extremes, having trouble not only with the sergeant-at-arms but with the police. In spite of a stint in gaol with hard labour and advice from the Bench to spark no more, Buaki in 1976 endured his fifth conviction. This did not prevent him from taking a busy, not to say over-compensating, interest in parliamentary affairs. One Notice Paper (22 August 1974) showed that eleven of 131 private business motions belonged to Buaki and they ranged in concern from the provision of roads and schools for Kabwum to the need for a national shipping line, support for radical students, curbs on expatriate businessmen and the legalising of prostitution 'in the main cities due to imbalance in sex ratio'.

More ominous was Josephine Abaijah, the only female member of the House. She won Central Regional by 10 000 votes from the nearest of her six rivals. An attractive and articulate if strident woman, she had, with Percy Chatterton as campaign manager, tapped both the sympathetic expatriate vote in Port Moresby as well as that of the Papuan coastal villages and hinterland. In 1975 she dramatised her struggle as follows:

I was the first born of a family of seventeen real and adopted brothers and sisters. So I was always in the front and often alone. At an early age I had to fish for the family every day before I went to school. When a policeman would approach me I would hide until he went away and I seem to have been doing the same thing ever since. I was the first girl ever to attend Misima Government School [Milne Bay] and I was the only girl in my class during the whole of my schooling in Papua. I graduated from the first so-called teachers college established in this country, a grass hut at Popondetta. I was with the first people to be sent to Australia for secondary schooling. I passed the first year of the first class of the first tertiary institution established in the country. . . . I was at the first general trained nurses in this country and sang 'Papua' and 'The Lord is My Shepherd' while tears came to the eyes of Australian Minister Hasluck and the hardened colonials present, some of whom said that they had never expected to live to see such a day. I was with the first who experienced fierce and sustained competitor reactions from foreigners from the top down, as I slowly and painfully inched my way in the Public Service. I was part of the formation of the first indigenous Public Service. I was the first Papuan [or New Guinean] to study at the University of London, the University of the Philippines and a score of other places. I was the first woman to be elected as a member of parliament in the country . . . I can assure you that nothing happened before me and my contemporaries. We were the first of everything and the handful who escaped the iron grip of colonialism before me are so exceptional as to be of no general significance.
Abaijah took up the cause of Papuan separation with a vehemence not heard before but, because her statements did not entirely close the door to unity with New Guinea, most people assumed that Abaijah's attacks were simply a rhetorical strategy to get Papuan development. When, however, the Third House got underway, Abaijah's powers were used almost entirely for secessionism and she generally neglected constructive issues, even the cause of Papuan New Guinean women.

The month between the end of the elections and the first meeting of the Third House was one of intense lobbying as Pangu tried to seize the initiative and form a national coalition against the UP. Somare issued a confident press statement:

Pangu and sympathetic groups have the ability to form a strong and capable ministry... The election has shown a dramatic swing against the United Party and particularly its white leadership. This swing is sufficient to put Pangu and similar progressive groups in front.

There were unusual scenes at the airport as members of the House arrived for the first sitting. They were immediately nobbled by party organisers. A notable feature was the way Pangu fixers like Holloway and Voutas kept in the background, while the former UP members, Lussick, Leahy and Buchanan were conspicuous and over-solicitous. Pangu simply looked national to potential recruits, waverers and defectors from other parties. Guise, to whose seniority Somare showed marked deference, was recruited together with independents who took his lead. Thomas Kavali mustered his seven men, including Kaibelt Diria of the UP who had been Assistant Ministerial Member for Local Government. PPP then held the balance, and eventually Chan appeared to throw in his lot in return for the four bisnis portfolios of Internal Finance, Business Development, Trade and Industry, and Transport. Guise was to become Deputy Chief Minister, Chan was to be given Finance, Kavali Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries, Mola Business Development while – in an irony which put him but not Bougainville Copper into the highest spirits – Lapun became Minister for Mines.

With such a patchwork and loose majority the task of gaining acceptance for this ticket during the first crucial sitting called for both audacity and sensitivity. No judgement on the workings of the Somare government should overlook this near-run thing. The members at first were seated alphabetically according to electorates and had to be carefully tutored for divisions. In the first one PPP supporter, Perry Kwan, a mixed-race Chinese from New Ireland, defeated the UP candidate, Matthias Toliman, for the Speakership by 49 votes to 48 and this promoted some slight but crucial bandwaggoning. Toliman was then defeated 50 to 47 for Chairman of Committees by Fr Momis. Most precarious was the competition for the seven positions on the Ministerial Nominations Committee
which required those elected to consult the Administrator on the composition of the ministry. It was uncertain whether it had to be a representative committee of the House or not. Indeed, conservative Australian elements such as the Assistant Administrator A. J. Newman, who had once inferred in the House that Percy Chatterton was 'a socialist' because he had criticised the Administration, wanted 'a grand coalition' so that 'the eighteen most able individuals' would occupy official positions. 'We talk about unity - this would be a classic example of a united approach,' said Newman whose appreciation of parliamentary lore must ever after be in doubt. Pangu rejected this idea and won. After some muddling over procedures all positions on the Committee went to the Coalition by 55 to 42. The seventeen ministries were allocated with six going to Papuans, four to New Guinea 'coastals', three to the 'Islands' (Manus, New Ireland, New Britain, Bougainville) and four to the Highlands. All in all, the Pangu-PPP etc. National Coalition had only eight Highland supporters.

The 1972 elections thus had two rather surprising effects: for elated progressives it had thrown up a node of politicians who were prepared to grasp the full responsibility of autonomous powers; incredulously, for those who had been loyal to the kiap, notably the Highlanders, it had excluded from power the most numerous party and included only those representatives of the most populous region who were virtual 'renegades'. UP leaders tried to represent the National Coalition as a giaman (gammon) government and there were threats of violence, even one death threat, against Chimbu members, Iambakey Okuk and John Kaupa. Somare, backed by Les Johnson and the Post-Courier, stood firm and declared they would enforce the law. But Somare also bluntly opened the door to opportunists: 'If they do not join the National Coalition Government, they can only talk and they have no power to do anything.' Anton Parao discovered this in June when he complained to the United Nations in New York about the persuasive tactics and unrepresentative nature of the government which had sent him. In fact the demonstrations against Okuk led by Sinake Giregire petered out and in July Somare personally toured the Highlands where he revealed a bland, temporizing but by no means irresolute or directionless style. He cautioned people that he was in fact only anticipating the inevitable result of a Whitlam victory by preparing for self-government; he warned expatriates not to alarm people with talk of the exodus of their cargo on self-government and advised them to localise their enterprises quickly; he allowed himself to state on at least one occasion that a 75 per cent majority would be needed to ratify a date for self-government; and he speculated openly about a one-party system. He returned from the Highlands having won respect by his concern and conciliatoriness. The attitude of Toiman
also helped: Toliman had been given the full dignities of Leader of the
Opposition by Somare; he had a traditional repugnance for
c fossils politics; and Somare had seen to it that, politics aside, he was
a personal friend. Toliman advised the Highlanders to accept the
bizarre rules of Westminster government. In any case the *kiaps*
themselves, who now flanked Somare on tour, were doing just that,
going with the strength, just as they should according to the conven-
tions of bureaucracy.

**Problems of Government**

The Chief Minister faced a daunting range of problems and neither
his education nor his experience equipped him to grapple with many
of them personally. Somare had had a negligible acquaintance with
finance, law and comparative government, and no top-level experi-
ence of bureaucracy. By temperament he eschewed ideology and he
came to power without a coherent policy. Neither did he show much
taste for the more lofty and solitary rigours of leadership. His read-
ing certainly did not take in fine print; he barely found time to read
important submissions before cabinet meetings.

The more gregarious potentialities of office, however, he did
relish. His door was open to all ranks of politician and to the general
public, and this worried advisers who were concerned with the
efficient use of time. Some were also concerned about his penchant
for amateur consultants who, if agreeable enough, might be brought
on staff. He seemed to lack vindictiveness towards white people,
simply disposing of the Tom Ellises as past history and apparently
accepting a controlled multi-racialism as part of Papua New
Guinea’s heritage. He was extraordinarily resilient in personal rela-
tionships and could amaze passionate men, like Momis and Kaputin,
by the facility with which he recovered from vituperative quarrels.
Outwardly, at least, he had supreme confidence in his ability to
handle awkward opponents:

*There are people who talk about secessionists . . . and so on, but since the forming of
the Coalition, I’ve found that if you involve people in a system . . . it’s very difficult
for them to separate themselves.*

Soon after self-government (1 December 1973) Somare deferred
to tradition by going through the final stages of his very modified
but uncomfortable initiation as a Sepik ‘tribal chief’ (all suitably but
not unduly publicised). He lived unpretentiously in the flat suburb of
Boroko rather than on the harbour heights of Touaguba Hill; he
drove a Datsun sedan; and, when the need came to pull in the
national belt in 1976, officially slashed K1000 from his own salary to
set an example; perhaps it was not his fault that for a long time the
clerks failed to deduct it. He did not, however, neglect his own
business interest in Wewak, or his fellow Sepiks in allocating jobs, and he sent his children to a non-government school run by Australian nuns. In fact, after independence he sent one daughter to school in Australia. He set a standard of national dress — though not aggressively — with his laplap and open sandals, but he followed the kiaip and the 'neocolonialist' statesmen of Southeast Asia in his fondness for golf while encouraging his Department of Cultural Affairs to pay a national scholar to research traditional games with a view to reviving them. Charisma is not a word that could be applied to Somare but he was utterly credible within both the traditional Melanesian and modern capitalist value systems. He had become Chief Minister without seeming over-ambitious and he had such tact with people that he eventually created a consensus, including even the Opposition, about his own indispensability. His ignorance of the workings of his own army would confound the Indonesians in early 1977, and his lack of expertise in major policy areas necessarily made him vacillating at times, but he rallied at each political crisis and, not without some strokes of good fortune, always emerged with more poise than before.

Part of that good fortune lay in the 'time-spirit' which, drawing lessons from such places as the Congo, Biafra and the left-leaning and military-dominated states of the Third World, advised support for Somare by the capitalist media and those opinion-makers who wanted restrained and amenable leadership. The major churches, except in Bougainville, preached nationalism: the Catholic Church in 1975 declared St Michael to be patron of Papua New Guinea; even the United Church, incorporating the London Missionary Society which had contributed so much to trans-Papuan sentiment, made it almost a sin to be a secessionist. Provided its own interests and those of foreign investors were not seriously threatened, the editorials of the Post-Courier supported Somare, sometimes with a laboured inanity which had not been quite as obvious when it supported the conservatives before 1972. The Post-Courier was owned by the Melbourne Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd, Australia's largest newspaper combine, which without irony appointed an ex-Australian Foreign Affairs press officer as editor of the Post-Courier in 1976. As the Post-Courier's profits were too modest and expropriation too plausible to raise a potential buyer, Somare was in a position to expect the only national daily to support him without detailed manipulation and without denying opponents moderate access. He was also spared the expense and bother of setting up a national press which could be accused of prima facie bias and was more suited to a one-party state.

If anything the Australian press was — and could afford to be — even more enthusiastic about Somare, whom it supported in his claims on monetary aid. In 1974 a leading columnist of the Mel-
bourne Age tried to jolly his readers into believing that a Papuan women’s rampage through the Konedobu offices, and their assault on Kiki and pelting Somare’s car with stones on the eve of his departure for Australia, were all just pieces of exuberance. Somare himself exercised the greatest circumspection in returning to Port Moresby unheralded. Extracting the sanguine from the potentially sanguineous, it was said that

Politics in Papua New Guinea has always been a joyfully physical affair, carried on with much shouting and threatening and posturing, most of it good-natured in a slightly intimidating way. The people of Papua New Guinea had perfected the rough-and-tumble techniques of mass political participation years before.

Somare, in the same article, was given virtually a free advertisement for that night’s prestigious Roy Milne lecture to the Australian Institute of International Affairs in Melbourne. An almost unprecedented crowd turned up. Within the same month the Age editorial could refer to Somare’s ‘rare political finesse’ but, never backward in palaver hyperbole, Andrew Peacock had some weeks before called Somare ‘one of the great political leaders of the world’.

The citizens of a discrete emergent nation cannot, however, be allowed to live by pragmatism alone. Some ideology was necessary within which national objectives could be stated and to which their implementation could be constantly referred. If independence was to be achieved without bitter, even bloody, struggles, three immediate aspirations had to be recognised: firstly, that a manipulative rather than a command system of government would be retained, with a significant degree of decentralisation; secondly, that there would be a mixed economy with the State facilitating local participation but allowing for controlled foreign investment; and thirdly, that egalitarian ideals would have to be posited in relation to persons and provinces (called until independence, ‘districts’). A program not recognising these aspirations might have cracked any prospect of national unity, for the achievement of which there was neither an adequate coercive force nor a potential body of persuasive cadres.

The visit of a United Nations Development Program team under Professor Michael Faber of East Anglia in mid-1972 virtually rejected those principles of the First Development Program 1968-1972 which had elevated the growth of the national product through foreign capital and skills above an indigenous distributist economy. The Faber Report faced up to the rural basis of Papua New Guinea society, to the problems caused by capital-intensive industries, to the need to bridle foreign enterprise and to the demand for localisation of bisnis. It gave an impetus to the formulation of national goals known as the Eight Point Plan in December 1972. This was a somewhat ambiguous, even inconsistent, program which was to become as much a catch-phrase for critics as a signpost for policy-makers. Succinctly, the eight aims were localisation, equal distribution of incomes and services, decen-
neutralisation, small-scale industry, self-reliance in production, self-reliance in the raising of revenue, equality for women and government control of the economy where necessary.

At first, as there was no co-ordinating body charged with the interpretation and application of these aims, the Plan seemed likely to be more of an embarrassment than an asset to the government. However, with the establishment of a Central Planning Office (CPO) in late 1973, a team of rather idealistic but not impractical young economists brought a more specific focus to bear on these aims and on the setting of priorities. In 1974 the CPO began to publish an annual record, Strategies for Development (later titled Programmes and Performances) which tried to change the annual budget from an engine of adhocery to an instrument of planning in accordance with national goals. Julius Chan, who frequently warned that Papua New Guinea would have to live within her own and not Australia’s means, gave solid support to the CPO.

The major triumph of the period before Independence was the re-negotiation of the Bougainville copper agreement. The ‘Agreement’, boasted the Chairman of Directors of Bougainville Copper Ltd in 1973:

"... We have brought into... [Papua New Guinea] very large sums of other people’s money and those debts – with interest well over a quarter of a billion dollars – have to be repaid. The distribution of Bougainville profits basically favours the government rather than the company and its shareholders – some forty thousand in Australia, and more than nine thousand of them in... [Papua New Guinea]. That was the original intention, and I believe it is a fair division."

With 20 per cent equity, royalties and a variety of fringe benefits (not to mention multiplier effects) re-negotiation was, according to company officials, unthinkable. The company had invested $400 million and thought it deserved both its three-year tax holiday after its production began in 1972 as well as its freedom from income tax payments until 1978-79. After that tax was to be paid only on 80 per cent of the copper income at a rate of 25 per cent which would rise gradually to a maximum average tax rate of 50 per cent by 1981-82. Unfortunately for the company this was never acceptable to Kaputin and others. Then, as if to acclaim their sense of being cheated, a bonanza of high metal prices during the first full year (1973-74) of production brought $A158 million profit, not to mention gains on loans following inflation. Only those who deluded themselves about the sanctity of a contract which had been signed on Papua New Guinea’s behalf by a colonial government, or who felt multi-nationals would shy at the first rebuff and never invest in Papua New Guinea again, could have doubted that re-negotiation was politically and economically necessary.

Throughout 1974 Somare’s position was not easy. He was under
constant criticism from the radicals of the Constitutional Planning Committee for allegedly tolerating neocolonialism and failing to implement the Eight Point Plan. As his plans for early independence were awry, he needed a show of leadership in both secessionist Bougainville and the country at large.

Not even the Queen’s visit to Bougainville in March could prevent re-negotiation conferences beginning in April 1974. They did not end until October as the company resisted a government it really regarded as a junior partner. Finally, when Somare threatened to amend the agreement by legislation, Sir Val Duncan, the suave Chairman of Directors of the British parent company, Rio Tinto Zinc, flew into Port Moresby and left his Gulfstream executive jet waiting impatiently and expensively on the tarmac. He intended to deal personally with Somare. He was accustomed, he let it be known, to deal only with heads of state. As Somare’s advisers feared their chief’s pliability when faced with Old World charm, authority and expertise, Duncan was steered instead to Kiki – a different proposition, droll and stubborn, with a touch of malevolent glee at humbling a mighty white. It was not until negotiations were virtually concluded that Duncan got to see Somare. The Gulfstream’s jets were disconsolately and unexpectedly cold before Duncan decided to reboard to attend to other nodes of his far-flung empire. Under the new agreement the company was to pay tax on its total income from 1974. Company tax was to be levelled at normal rates (then 33½ per cent) until 15 per cent of net invested capital was earned when the tax rate would be 70 per cent. Other new arrangements related to socio-environmental effects and the restriction of further mining on Bougainville. Bougainville Copper Ltd officials turned out to be good sports and publicly expressed a newfound satisfaction. This, however, did not reach the pages of the shareholders’ Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia’s CRA Gazette; nor did the news of Duncan’s visit. Within a year, as metal prices slumped and BCL declined to agree to overseas pressure to cut production, Duncan would say, ‘We have great respect for the PNG government and I don’t think it is boasting to say they have some respect for us.’ The renegotiation became the basis for a resources policy. This policy did not deter Australia’s leading company, Broken Hill Proprietary, from seeking a major interest in the copper prospect at Ok Tedi in Papua after America’s Kennecott had withdrawn because it felt PNG’s terms were too tough.

The $93 million which Papua New Guinea gained from the Bougainville mine represented some 30 per cent of its revenue in 1973-74 but still left her well short of self-reliance, particularly as metal prices fluctuated sharply. Australian aid remained the fundamental budgetary prop, although it had come down from roughly 70 per cent of Budget receipts in the 1950s to some 40 per cent in the
mid-1970s. Although Australian aid was classed as ‘untied’, it nonetheless had a range of subtle political and economic implications. The CPO had been aware of these and of the need to scale down a public service which grew obese on Australian moneys. It had seen, however, a gradual rather than rapid reduction in public expenditure as necessary so as not to disturb too abruptly people who had become dependent on government. The vagaries of the Australian economic scene were also worrying. In 1974 the Whitlam Government made sensible provisions for forward planning by Papua New Guinea in guaranteeing a grant of $500 million for the three years 1974/5-1976/7. However, the Whitlam government was no sooner in financial straits in 1975 than differences of interpretation arose as to the nature of Australia’s commitments and Papua New Guinea found that compensatory payments to Australian public servants returning home were included in the grant. This resulted in a 12 per cent decline in the real value of the grant as against the previous year although the CPO had conscientiously pared its requests in line with self-reliance and austerity. The month before Independence Somare had to fly to Australia with Chan and Kiki to plead for the commitment to be kept. Whitlam refused to deal with the matter personally and would give no assurance of more consistency after Independence. ‘Australia has dumped us,’ said Somare on his return. He did not seem to realise that Whitlam took only a superficial interest in Papua New Guinea and had more grandiloquent objectives in foreign affairs than stability in the former colony. So Somare criticised Whitlam’s advisers rather than the liberator himself. ‘They have broken my back, but not the back of my people,’ he said. ‘We have enough courage to go on.’ A more acrimonious leader might at this stage have referred to the incongruity of Australia’s proposed Independence gift: a $2-million national library building for which there seemed at the time to be no demand and little prospect of adequate service costs; in short, a symbol of pretentious expenditure and false standards.

Yet even in this crisis Somare’s luck held. His friend, Andrew Peacock, now shadow minister for foreign affairs, saw the need and accepted the mileage of an immediate flight to Port Moresby where he was photographed at the airport with both arms studiously around the minister who had been sent to greet him. He vigorously criticised Whitlam, and warned in a rather Cold-War way of the danger that Papua New Guinea would now look to Russian or Chinese or Japanese aid. In October the Australian Development Assistance Agency (ADAA), then led by Leslie Johnson with Tony Voutas as support, visited Port Moresby to reach a better understanding and obviate further confusion. It was, however, Australia’s Governor-General who settled the issue by sacking Whitlam from office in November. Soon after the election of the Fraser govern-
ment ADAA was destined for the waste heap with other costly bureaucratic limbs but Peacock announced that Papua New Guinea would be given at least $930 million over the next five years and could plan accordingly. What could not be anticipated were the effects of possible devaluations, differential exchange rates and the pace of future inflation in Australia.

Somare has been continually criticised by radicals for lacking a more rigorous and self-reliant policy, but even if it had suited his own predilections it could only have met with incredulity and indiscipline in his ministry. He had the task of keeping not only disparate groups together but of placing individuals of varying stature in awkward niches of power. There were not only discrepancies of talent and application, but discrepancies of conceptions of ministerial role and of ability to speak English or to read at all. Just before Independence Pita Lus told M.H.A.s how hard-working ministers were: some of them did not leave work until 7 p.m.!

Lus, a minister from September 1973 to the present day, was a Melanesian success story. Like Somare, he came from the East Sepik district. He had received some education at a mission after his father had been imprisoned in 1936 for killing a white trader who had tried to recruit Lus’s adolescent brother for the plantations. Voluble, rumbustious and volatile, he was serving his third term in Parliament and was a senior Pangu member. Although a teetotaller himself, he was seldom far from any brawls in the House. He headbutted and punched an Opposition front-bencher on one occasion for calling him a ‘pumpkin-head’. Blaming even his violence on his former mastas he said he had been sensitive about his head since an expatriate M.H.A. had once referred to him as ‘prawn-head’. It is naturally not recorded with what amusement and perhaps compassion Somare allotted him the portfolio of Police and Corrective Institutions. As solutions to the crime rate Lus proposed curfews and, after BCL mineworkers rioted in 1975, death by shooting on the spot. He probably shook even the old Africa hands among his white police officers when he urged that people who criticised government leaders should be ‘executed’. He felt that convicts should have their heads shaved on one side to deter escapes and that escapees should be shot on sight. While rejecting such final solutions, Somare kept Lus in his ministry blandly explaining that Lus ‘would lose his temper regardless of whether he was a minister or not’. While others murmured about Idi Amin, it is just possible that, with rare insight, Somare saw Lus’s outbursts as holding a grotesque mirror up to nature, for the better restraint of others. No one, except apparently his electors, took Somare’s loyal wantok too seriously, and possibly were not meant to.

Some other ministers were less conspicuously inconsequential but the endemic rage of Iambakey Okuk was not so easily absorbed or
deflected. Okuk, who had done a Form 3 motor mechanic's apprenticeship course, scarcely met the qualifications for election in Chimbu Regional in 1972 – only a handful of locals did – but earned one of the National Party's portfolios in the Coalition. Unlike Chan and Guise he was unable to master his portfolios but nonetheless had the drive to outface his bureaucrats and his ministerial peers. His sense of impotence led him to a physical violence which kept the capital's restaurateurs (especially Chinese) on their toes. It was hardly ministerial conduct. His extreme positions on economic nationalism and citizenship could delight Momis and Kaputin but if he wanted to cut 'whitey' to size he still had every intention of more than filling those huge discarded boots. In the New Year of 1975, as Minister for Transport, he saw nothing odd about announcing that he had ordered a fleet of twenty-five Mercedes-Benz worth over $180,000 at a time when ministerial life-styles were under close scrutiny. It was obvious that he was also in the minds of Momis and Kaputin when they called for an open investigation of ministerial and bureaucratic conduct because of the possibility of 'manipulation of leaders by outsiders – foreign investors, politicians and ideologists'. Eventually, in the Cabinet reconstruction of December 1975, both Okuk and Kavali were 'reshuffled', Okuk from Transport and Civil Aviation to Education and Kavali from Lands to Natural Resources (which included Lands). Although on the face of it these were not serious demotions, it was believed the ministers were being removed from sources of patronage. A series of extravagant recriminations followed in which Okuk virtually accused Somare and the PPP of corruption and selling out to foreign interests, and of having manipulated him in their struggle against Kaputin and Momis. He then tried to broaden his local base by emphasising that the National Party was 'a Highland-based party' and played the rhetorical chords of the Highlands Liberation Front. In early January 1976 Somare was obliged to dismiss both National Party leaders from the ministry. However, in spite of their confidence that the other party members would follow them to the cross benches, Okuk and Kavali went alone. Okuk, who as minister had previously wanted to muzzle the media, was now more concerned that only the government would get a hearing. His performance as minister was an understandable blend of legitimate nationalist aspirations, erratic and inextricable self-interest clutching at regionalism, executive energy and impotence, systemic incomprehension and raging impropriety. His was a glaring case to feed the fears of those who doubted the appropriateness of the Westminster system to PNG.

Particularly conspicuous in a supposedly austere system was the way in which overseas trips and perks became badges of office. When Oscar Tammur was so appropriately made Minister for Provincial Affairs in early 1976, he immediately set off on a ten-week
global tour and was incommunicado for weeks although Bougainville was on the verge of civil war. Australian 'demonstration effects' were even more apparent in local government. In the Gulf Province in 1976 an indignant sally of local taxpayers led by their Member of Parliament just failed to prevent councillors of one local government council from boarding a plane in which they were going off to study the local governmental customs of countries to the north where, it was popularly anticipated, they would drink more than Asian tea and have a welter of professional female sympathy.

Even a stalwart like Paul Lapun had problems once he reached ministerial level. While his achievements had been substantial and his seminary education looked impressive on paper, his English had never, in fact, been particularly fluent. He had reached his plateau of prestige and personal achievement. As the Bougainville champion he had been essential to the ministry but, aside from his determination to re-negotiate the copper agreement, he had little to offer once he lost contact with Bougainville secessionists who voted no confidence in him in 1974. Somare sealed Lapun into 'the system' as Papua New Guinea's first knight in the same year — an honour that was eventually extended to Guise, Kiki, Tei Abal and Lokoloko in due course. However, while British titles were not excluded by the Eight Point Plan, they did not seem to match it. In late 1975 Lapun could be relegated to the Ministry of Health, the services of which were once the pride of the Australian Administration but had run down seriously under his fellow Bougainvillian, Donatus Mola. For that matter, so had the health of some ministers and senior public servants, who often had to contend with strenuous work loads by day and the temptations of a swinging lifestyle by night, not to mention the occasional gifts and blandishments of tycoons from Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Although there were necessarily times when leadership seemed indecisive and the government fragile, it was hard to see Somare being displaced. Guise, especially in 1973, was thought to be scheming for the leadership. Imperious, hardworking as well as sanctimonious and unpredictably choleric, particularly when confronted with white advisers or importuners, he inspired respect but also, on the whole, distrust. With his constant assertions of Papuan as well as national identity, it would have needed a disaster rather than a mere crisis for him to be elected over the amiable Somare — and crisis-management was Somare's forte.

There was also the dilemma of the Opposition. What was its role? Was it an alternative government? Or just an Opposition in form only, in fact, one so literally 'loyal' as to restrict itself to watchdog criticism of radical tendencies and stonewalling in the face of the thrust for early independence? Toliman was very often scathing in his attacks on the Government and sharp in his parliamentary tactics
but he seemed increasingly to take the view that Somare was the rightful leader for the term of the Third House. Furthermore, while having a Tolai leader took some attention from the United Party’s overwhelmingly Highland’s base, Toliman was still intensely preoccupied with Gazelle politics.

After Toliman’s widely lamented death in September 1973, the Opposition leadership went to Tei Abal who, though a man of virile sincerity, was self-educated, spoke poor English and was often in indifferent health. Born about 1932 in the Western Highlands, Abal saw his father treacherously slain while migrating from a local famine in the later 1930s, almost lost his own life in terrifying circumstances, was adopted into a Wapenamanda clan, saw a white for the first time only in 1945, became a medical orderly, virtually taught himself to read and write, and became undisputed big man and later parliamentarian in his area. Somare charmed Abal and manipulated his ‘sensitive awareness that rivalry for power brings about bloody events and civil unrest in newly independent countries’. After all the UP was the party of stability dedicated to moderation. Once Independence and the Constitution were settled, would there be any ideological cleavage with Pangu, let alone the PPP? Then there was intra-party strife. Under the influence of the Constitutional Planning Committee, Anton Parao became increasingly restive, accused Tei Abal of pussy-footing and neo-colonialism, abused him to the point of defamation and had to pay K1000 damages. When charged with white puppetry, Wally Lussick ingenuously volunteered: ‘Tei makes a statement and I put it into English’. The Shadow Minister for Education, Mackenzie Daugi, resigned from the party over ‘white elements’ soon after Independence. By 1974 the UP had already lost one-fifth of its M.H.A.s to a Country Party under Sinake Giregire, adding to the confusion of intra-parliamentary factional alignments.

While the state of the Opposition may seem to have made a radical recomposition of his ministry possible, Somare always had to take into consideration the lack of firm commitment to any party. The desire for self-aggrandisement, access to patronage to meet traditional demands, kinship, and local and district ties, inevitably made MPs difficult to bind through personal loyalties. They also made Somare susceptible to threats. In mid-1973 Donatus Mola, then Minister for Business Development, could publicly criticise the government for transferring one of his kinsmen, an inspector of police, out of Port Moresby and warn of consequences in Bougainville if he were not treated more considerately. Ebia Olewale, after being moved from the Ministry of Education to Commerce against his will, told the crowd at the Port Moresby Show in June 1974 that Papuans might reconsider union with New Guineans. Soon after, Olewale became Minister of Justice. Reuben Taureka as Minister for
Education in 1975 could disturb departmental policy but as he was on the fringes of Papua Besena it was wise to do nothing about it. If Somare seemed to consume a lot of energy trying to outsmart Parliament, there was method in it: the alternative of trying to mobilise the legislature boggled the mind.

In August 1973 Somare had completed his ministry by the inclusion of Lus, Yano Belo (an uneducated Southern Highlander) and John Kaputin. Some portfolio changes occurred. Absorbing Kaputin into ‘the system’ as Minister of Justice, however, was not so easy and Somare came under increasing pressure from the young radicals of the Pangu executive to implement the Eight Point Plan and to eradicate alleged ‘corruption’ and expatriate influence. This meant reducing the power of the PPP. In February 1974 Somare suddenly and drastically reshuffled the portfolios. Julius Chan stayed in Finance but the PPP lost the other three *bisnis* ministries, with the compensation of an extra party member, Stephen Tago, being brought into the ministry. The loyal Kiki added Trade to the Defence and Foreign Affairs portfolios he acquired in August 1973. Somare further entrenched himself by this move – particularly as it saw the Opposition offering support against radicals like Kaputin and Okuk. However, as departments were not restructured, the net result was to weaken further many ministers vis-a-vis their departmental heads but make the PPP a less obvious target for ‘corruption’ allegations. Apparently Kaputin had been earmarked for a switch to Commerce, with Olewale going to Justice, but he declined to budge although his New Guinea Development Corporation might have been thought to profit from the experience. Kaputin was at once too personally elusive and too ideologically rigid for the system. He was outspoken and cavalier in his treatment of Cabinet and, with no relish for desk-work, saw even less value in supervising the operation of ‘a white man’s law’ which was aimed to exploit indigenes. He could see no point in Minister As the debate over the Constitution became more criticisms became intolerable to Somare and he was sacked. In spite of protests and omens from the Gazelle, the Mataungans did not rise and Oscar Tammur said little. Perhaps ‘the system’ was working, if only gradually.

The House of Assembly continued to struggle with even the simpler conventions of the Westminster system but no serious alternative was posed for it even by the radicals of the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC). Preoccupied for the most part with local roads-and-bridges questions, parliamentarians had much less influence on policy than persuasive business and sectional interests or the *wantok* system. The party whips struggled to muster the numbers and, on some important occasions, even quorums. Party discipline was negligible and any grass-roots support disappeared. *Pangu*
Nius stopped publication in early 1973 and the UP's Poroman had more financial support than readership. There was a gulf between back and front benchers and, in spite of what seemed to be reasonable services and translation procedures, there was incomprehension and, inevitably, boredom. A three-week session four times a year proved too long an absence from home for many members who complained that their electorates (not to mention bisuis) needed attention. There were problems of absenteeism or, if not that, then of disorderly conduct. Yet the MPs were not keen to lose their salaries and in July 1975 deferred the next elections for a year (to 1977) by 50 to 29. In spite of Somare's ostensible opposition seven ministers voted for deferral. Apologists were right to point out that there were few incidents in Papua New Guinea's Parliament which could not be matched elsewhere, and notably in Australia and its states. There appeared, however, to be an anomic element here as well as a Melanesian way. Was the party system a remedy and could it be propped up? As he left PNG early in 1975 so that Somare would not have to blanch at having him for a white adviser, Tony Voutas recommended that parties be governmentally subsidised. Leaving aside the mosaic of discrete loyalties which is Papua New Guinea, even a non-system develops its own vested interests. If perceived as part of some Melanesian way they may be ineradicable by anything but drastic means.

It is hardly surprising that there was a retreat from open government in 1972, ultimately symbolised perhaps by the move from the slapdash prefabrications of Konedobu to the more dignified air-conditioned glass and concrete complex in Waigani suburb in 1975. Somare had by this time taken the information agencies, including the National Broadcasting Commission within his department, perhaps as much to protect them as to control them. The NBC ran nationalistic programs but interspersed with the rock music of New York and London which taught a different ideology. By 1976 program expenditure had been severely cut, hours were restricted and the NBC had agreed in principle to accept advertising. The media was curbed but not mobilised.

Because of such circumstances and the rapidity of social change, the heaviest responsibility lay with the over-large public service which had been constituted with Australian 'apolitical' routines and until 1972 had been treated 'as a subservient instrumental agency in continuous communication with Canberra'. The Papua New Guinea Public Service Board had been constituted only as recently as 1969, the same year as its Localisation Branch began operations. It still followed Australian procedures in relation to personnel and this impeded localisation. It was so stultifying in its approach that it tried to stifle political partisanship among the students at its Administrative College. By 1972 indigenous Second Division staff had risen to
34 per cent from 13 per cent in 1969 (i.e. 1836 local, 3643 expatriate). There were only four indigenes in First Division. In August 1971 a White Paper, ‘Accelerated Localisation and Training’, forced the advancement of indigenous officers solely on the basis of their ability to fill positions instead of their having to win promotion in competition with expatriates. Expatriate competitors were to be moved sideways and their efficiency was further reduced by an understandable preoccupation with compensation for thwarted careers and with the aura of their golden handshakes.

In its report of September 1972 the Public Service Board estimated that its manpower needs would still be 7000 expatriates (compare this with the then current figure of 7900) by 1976. Somare leapt in quickly and ordered a reduction to 3000 or 15 per cent per year by that date. As it turned out resignations well exceeded 15 per cent so that the target had to be revoked or efficiency would have dropped to what could have been a disastrous level. One problem was that the wrong expatriates tended to leave with many of the less competent staying behind. The Government had not seriously considered the pattern of localisation. By 1976 there were still some 4000 overseas public servants of a total of 29 000. Many of these had been recruited from non-Australian sources to replace Australians, diversify overseas personnel and provide cheaper service. Where the basic problem had been – and remained – the discrepancy in salaries between overseas and local personnel, there were by Independence thirteen different sets of overseas conditions of service, ‘creating a morass of relative dissatisfactions’.

There were, however, achievements: all departmental heads, provincial commissioners, public service commissioners and most heads of statutory bodies were indigenous at Independence although technical posts might remain in expatriate hands for another decade. Among senior appointees there were frequently a marked dedication and an esprit de corps but at the lower levels rapid localisation and the transfers of duty involved led to near breakdown in such areas as ‘accounts, personnel, stores, transport and works supervision’. Another chronic problem was the provincial imbalance in the composition of the public service. Of all classes of public servants 45.9 per cent came from the Papuan provinces (20.6 per cent from Central; 20.6 per cent from the New Guinea Islands; 22.6 per cent from New Guinea Coastal; and 10.9 per cent from the Highlands. (Each region’s population percentiles were 19.7 (Central 7.2), 14.1, 28.0 and 38.2 respectively.) Of the top thirty-seven public servants, twenty-five came from Papua, ten from the Islands, one from New Guinea Coastal and one from the Highlands. The implications for disunity were obvious but the possible remedies were not without problems: for example, compensatory recruitment from provinces with lower educational levels, and so more inefficiency. A sincere
attempt was made to forestall stagnation and the blocking off of career opportunities for younger aspiring leaders by adopting a personal classification system with three-year terms for department heads rather than fixed tenure. However, as this occurred without changes in salaries as positions were changed, it could only add to the cost of a service which already in 1975–76 paid out K117 million or 55 per cent of total departmental expenditure on personal salaries.

The question of whether Papua New Guinea could afford an 'apolitical' public service became contentious in 1973–74. Moi Avei, the President of Pangu Pati, wanted involvement; Serei Pitoi, Chairman of the Public Service Board, wanted the Australian model. The CPC, rather conservatively, thought public servants should not hold executive posts in parties; the Government advocated involvement and freedom of dissent. Towards the end of 1974 Simon Kaumi, the irascible Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Chairman of the Senior Officers Advisory Committee, vehemently attacked his minister and 'white advisers' for interference in running the Corrective Institution Service. He subsequently became leader of an Action Group, supporting the CPC's hard line against any easy naturalisation of expatriates – Kaumi was Kaputin's brother-in-law – and denouncing the Somare Government at an almost violent protest meeting. Eventually, on proving irreconcilable and uncompromising, he was dismissed from the public service. He then began to organise for Papua secession at home in the Northern province and at one stage seemed to be president-designate of a future separate state. The moral the Government drew from the affair was to adopt Pitoi's Australian model. Moi Avei resigned from the Village Development Task Force which was set up to win hearts and minds from Papua Besena and generate self-help. By this time, however, the Task Force had failed to match the despised manipulative techniques of the Government with mobilisation methods of its own and even its accounts were in dubious standing. It was a victory for the more conservative bureaucrats.

Until Independence centralists managed to stave off those who wanted radical devolution of power to the provinces although the politicians had been returned in 1972 with a clear enough mandate to implement it. The decentralisers were backed by academics. Professors Tordoff and Watts, consultants appointed by the Commonwealth of Nations Secretariat to assist the CPC, warned that it might prove as politically risky for the central government to ignore the aspirations of political leaders at the district level as for a colonial government to be unresponsive to the demands of prominent nationalists. This argument applies with special force where the Cabinet is not formed out of a single or dominant political party . . . Indeed, in our experience of political systems in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, we have not come across an administrative system so highly centralised and dominated by its bureaucracy . . . In our view, Papua New Guinea should not attempt to maintain the centralised system of administration which it has inherited, since this
system is totally unsuited to the needs of a developing country, the great majority of whose people live and work in the rural areas. It is also incompatible with the Government's own Eight Point Improvement Plan. We respectfully submit that a fully decentralised system within a unitary framework should be the ultimate goal and that this goal should be reached by a staged evolution.

However, while it could be said at Independence that 'continuity of colonial institutions was much more evident than actual instances of change', the Somare Government had at the very least muddled through and its survival had been imperative for national morale. While it had seriously begun to tackle in a gradualist and sensitive way the labyrinthine questions of land tenure and the repurchase of that 3 per cent of the traditional estate alienated to foreigners, it had not looked intensively at basic developments in village bisnis, at conflict resolution or at local government reform. However, to have taken the emphasis off national goals might have compounded the difficulties of disunity and expatriate influence. Critics of Somare ought to face up to the problems of limited resources, both human and financial, and the fact that no government begins with a clean slate. A people accustomed to depend on a masterfully centralised administration for benefits, services and employment, no matter how sporadically and spasmodically given, could not be switched to self-reliance and local initiative overnight. Not without the likelihood of a violence more disruptive than mere inter-clan fighting.

The tinder for such violence existed in the major towns which had, more or less, doubled their populations in the seven years of rapid development before Somare came to power and, by 1978, had approximate populations of the following order: Port Moresby (106 000), Lae (45 000), Rabaul (33 000), Madang (20 000), Wewak (17 000), Arawa/Kieta/Panguna (16 500). The migration of villagers, mostly preliterate or barely able to read, into conditions of casual employment, destitute housing and malnutrition was only possible if cushioned by the wantok system of reliance on other clansmen. Such ethnic enclaves within slums have created a pattern, familiar in Third World towns, of contention and violence between groups which, in the case of the villagers of the Port Moresby (Central Papua) and Kieta (Bougainville) areas exacerbate secessionism but, even elsewhere, threatened social integration and the legitimacy of government. The police force, in particular, originally recruited for predominantly rural patrols, gradually forfeited the respect of the masses. Whether poorly recruited or not, it had in recent times been inadequately trained and badly led, in the first instance, by white officers; conditions of service and equipment were a running sore for personnel and were contrasted bitterly with those enjoyed by the army, with whom the police on occasion have been on the verge of battle. Rampant drunkenness, uncontrolled prostitution (and with it venereal disease), burglaries and violence,
together with corruption and fear among the police reduced the security of urban life and led to demands for the re-imposition of such colonialist measures as curfews, identification cards and the 'repatriation of foreigners', meaning people from other provinces.

There was a tendency, also common elsewhere, to blame the education system for law and order problems, for producing frustrated dropouts who would not accept traditional controls; for, in general, failing to be community-oriented. Well-intentioned schemes for reform along Melanesian lines often seemed to ignore the inconvenient aspirations of villagers to want for their children the same educational and material goals as townspeople. Such schemes also ignored the fact that this apparent dysfunctionality has been common to all non-mobilisation societies of the Third World. As the noted educationist Philip Foster told Papuan New Guineans in 1974:

...I think we should be very cautious in asserting that what we must really do in Papua New Guinea is to effect some entirely artificial consensus between school and community in which in some mysterious manner all forms of value and culture conflict will be eliminated. This is an enterprise that is doomed to failure since it begins with a false premise based on notions of equilibrium and consensus that are antithetical to the whole process of social change. People will have to live with the problems of change; there is no way of turning the clock back and above all it is fruitless to expect the school to undertake such a task.

It should also go without saying that there were limits to what an emerging state might achieve, particularly if it did not contemplate draconic means and millenarian ends.

Integration or Fragmentation?

1. Micronationalism and Leadership
Parly because of the inability of the Somare Government to give its attention to local government reform and village development but also because of the insecurities felt at the withdrawal of a paternalistic imperium, micronational societies continued to proliferate before independence. The Hiri, Boera, Damuni, Eriwo, Koari, Purari Action, Negros, Tuale, Hood Lagoon associations and many others mushroomed, and seemed to proffer disaggregation rather than integration, particularly as they seemed to reject formal government structures. Local government councils had always been seen as central government agencies operating 'without the goodwill and interest of the majority'; they lacked power to enforce decisions and the knowledge of 'the proper limits of their authority'. Little account had been taken 'of the ecological conditions of the communities when deciding how big a council area should be and how many people it should serve'. Differences between ethnic groups had often been ignored. It was perhaps natural that Bougainville, which had
through its Hahalis Society in the early 1960s, thrown down the
greatest challenge to any council, should be the first to begin to
abolish LGCs and to create its own style of village governments as
soon as powers of interim district government were given in 1974.

The effective capacity of the micronationalist groups, and those
that were either trans-ethnic or trans-district in scope, depended on
leadership as well as control of resources to a high degree. Obviously
with Matthias Yaliwan as leader, the Peli Association could be
expected to achieve little. A number of associations, however, were
able to enlist the abilities of young university students and graduates
as mediators and organisers.

Students were apparently not as detached from their roots as some
of the early critics of the founding of a university of PNG feared they
would be. The decision not to have tertiary students trained abroad
had the consequence of much less alienation than had occurred in
Africa. On the other hand, it could be said that the nationalistic
integration of students on campus had not been so successful. It was
not until the Students Representative Council (SRC) became electo­
ronally organised on district lines in 1974 that many students took an
interest in it and two of its early presidents came from the New
Hebrides and the Solomon Islands.

However, John Waiko was an example of a successful student who
had acquired his education at an arduous cost to his parents and who
had gone on to a master’s degree in London. Rejecting, at least
temporarily, an academic career or an immediate influential posting
in the public service, he had gone home to the Northern District
(Papua) to help the Komge Oro association resist the attempt by a
subsidiary of South Pacific Timbers Pty Ltd to invest about $A120
million and take over parts of Binandere land. As early as the 1890s
the Binanderes had tried to defend their subsistence living against the
introduction of a cash economy. There was a continuity in their
traditional and modern secular self-reliance ideology and in their
response to what they perceived as neo-colonialism. As Waiko put it:

The alternative concept of progress of the people in the village differs quite markedly
from that of the foreign exploiters. The latter view ‘development’ as creating cash
dependence on the part of the people. The villagers regard progress as accepting the
subsistence living as a basis and seeking ways and means to earn limited cash to meet a
specific need as it arises. The cash earned must not contribute towards destroying that
basis, but must support and improve it. Moreover, this concept of progress does take
into consideration other inter-relationships of subsistence, such as cultural activities in
the villages.

From the national point of view, Komge Oro in fact pointed the
moral of the Eight Point Plan and decentralised government.

More dramatic and eloquent and, in the short term, wasteful of
talent and resources, was the writer, John Kasaipwalova, who had in
1972 resigned as President of the SRC at the University of PNG to
organise the Kabisawali (meaning roughly, communal self-help) Movement in the Trobriand Islands. Kasaipwalova had been educated in Australia and from radical students at the University of Queensland in the late 1960s had imbibed the heady brews of Fanon and Marcuse. A more practical influence on him – before financial problems aborted his reign at UPNG – was John Kaputin. Returning to the Trobriands, Kasaipwalova set up the Kabisawali Movement in vigorous opposition to the Kiriwina LGC, induced his supporters to refuse to pay taxes and established a People’s Government. Himself of a chiefly family in one of PNG’s few caste-conscious societies, he tried to organise such offices as king and judge. In 1973 the Kabisawali won a majority of seats in the LGC and Kasaipwalova became President. Calling a meeting of all pro-Kabisawali councillors, in Somare’s words, ‘he deemed it to be a meeting of the council and obtained a unanimous resolution to abolish the council and transfer all its assets to the Kabisawali Movement’. The result was a violent division of peoples in what through Malinowski’s anthropological classic had become known as the Islands of Love.

An alternative organisation not unrelated to traditional cleavages, the Tonene Komikwita, was formed by Charles Lepani, son of the former assistant ministerial member, Lepani Watson. Charles Lepani, a graduate in economics who had been trained in industrial relations in Australia, became Director of the PNG Bureau of Industrial Relations, and later of the Central Planning Office. He was particularly scathing about Kasaipwalova’s business dealings. Attempting to run the tourist and artefact trades, Kasaipwalova lacked any grasp of accounting procedures or the need for accountability. It was in the arts alone that he showed a flair for innovation and creativity; otherwise the outcome was disruption, financial chaos and the ruin of tourism. By 1977 Kasaipwalova was in gaol for allegedly misappropriating government grants. More tragic was the misapplication of his flamboyant talents.

Three other points may be usefully made about the Trobriands experience. Firstly, that while political alliances seem to have everywhere been flexible in traditional societies, modern innovations which do not aggregate all major interests will entrench old divisions or create new ones. Lepani Watson had before 1972 supported Papuan separatism but his access to central government was ensured through his son. Secondly, it may have been very fortunate that both Kasaipwalova and Charles Lepani were nationalists and that Trobriands isolation was a guarantee against interloping Highlanders. Abaijah’s Papua Besena thus scarcely reached a people who were likely on ethnic and physical grounds to be swayed by the same fears as the Motu. Thirdly, Somare’s mode of dealing with both factions was bland and accommodating but not lacking in some
show of latent strength as when he sent in the riot squad for a brief period to protect government property. Somare explained that Kasaipwalova
came to see me several times, arguing that if my government were true to the Eight Point Plan, it should give considerable cash assistance to local action groups like his corporation. He had planned a package of five major projects that, if realised, would no doubt make a major impact on the level of welfare and economic activity in the Trobriands. It was his application that caused me to take a major new policy step. I obtained cabinet approval to set aside budget money to be used as direct grants to groups or councils to assist them in carrying out village-level commercial activities. The projects had to be commercially viable, and applicant groups had to demonstrate that they could not raise all the necessary capital themselves or through bank loans. As soon as Lepani Watson and the pro-council group heard the Kabisawali were requesting a government grant they sent another delegation to see me about our continued support of the ‘communist’ types in the Trobriands. I explained that I was interested in village development projects, and I wasn’t particularly concerned about the political persuasion of the groups involved, nor was I concerned whether their structure was usual or unusual. If the pro-council group were willing to plan and set up village commercial projects, then its proposals would be considered by my government with just as much sympathy as the Kabisawali proposals.

The history of the Mataungan Association after 1972 was also instructive. The apparent absorption of its leaders into Somare’s system on the one hand and the identification, under Matthias Toliman, of its Tolai rivals from the Greater Tona Council with the Unity Party’s loyal opposition on the other, tended to eliminate secessionist rhetoric. This was in spite of the fact that John Kapustin, as political maverick, gave his blessing to secessionist Bougainvillians and Papua Besena because he believed they had no call to support a corrupt government – and they provided sticks with which to beat his own drum. The violence that broke out between the Tolai factions in late 1972, after which Toliman was sentenced to gaol for assault, was reassuring to the integrationist interest (as later in the Trobriands) if not necessarily to the legitimating one. Somare used his good offices, ironically through a Bougainvillian negotiator, to bring the parties together and peace was restored. It was impossible in the end that the Tolais would be satisfied with anything less than extreme devolution but this in itself did not portend secession. As perhaps the best educated group in Papua New Guinea, with its elite dispersed in good positions throughout the country, with high population growth and relative affluence but not self-sufficiency, the Tolais could only propagate secession in the future on an Islands-wide basis. The Melanesian Independence Front of 1968 had briefly attracted both future Mataungan leaders and their opponents. Such sub-nationalism or regionalism, however, was likely to be curbed by the reluctance of Bougainvillians to link up with any Papua New Guinea ‘redskins’, or, if only the Bismarck Archipelago was to be involved, by the fear among other groups of inevitable Tolai paramountcy. This is the sense in which the extreme diversity of Papua New Guinea is an asset to unification. But what could change this
trend would be the utter failure of central government, (thus casting the Islands adrift rather than their making a severance) and the emergence of an aggressive Highlands regionalism. The Highlands Liberation Front, however, failed to throw up the sort of millenarian ‘prince’ forecast in Ian Downs’s melodrama, *The Stolen Land*.

Ironically, besides Somare the only potentially credible nationalist leader before independence was the Bougainvillean Catholic priest, John Momis. Kiki was too fitful in application, at times almost frivolous; Guise too shifty and ambitious; Chan too identifiably Chinese and big-business-oriented; Kaputin too negative and too rooted in his own Tolai concerns. Momis was, oddly enough, part-Chinese and part-New Ireland but had been brought up in a Buin (South Bougainville) family. He was thus not a true *Mungkas* or black man but he had the charisma of priesthood and an unblemished moral reputation. His Catholic distributism blended with traditional concepts of individualism and communalism and his fierce rhetoric tapped sources of rage and hope in his parliamentary colleagues, towards whom he was unfailingly pastoral and educative. While he promised Bougainvillean he would advocate secession if that was their wish, he insisted that on this issue they should lead him. Meanwhile he would work for a national interest which would accommodate Bougainvillean needs both in terms of a constitution and the economic thrust of the central government. Apart from his own predilection for unity, his strenuous commitment as leader of the Constitutional Planning Committee stopped him from providing for the exigency of grass-roots secessionism which would require international support, clear governmental objectives, and arms. The onus was thus thrown back on secessionists who knew even less about the international order than Momis did. The result, in the end, was that the Bougainvillean tail would wag the constitutional dog. If one considers how close PNG came to having a Highlands-dominated United Party government in April 1972 and, as will be seen, how a different leader could have moulded Bougainvillians (or Papuans) it is impossible not to believe that the mix of personalities in PNG government proved remarkably opportune and gave the integrative process a sporting chance.

2. *The Highlands*

In the period before Independence the Highlands remained the principal referent for the insecurities of Islanders and Coastals. Warfare may have been more intensive there before conquest than in most other regions because of the terrain and population pressures, while the empirical power situation, in spite of an egalitarian ideology, was probably ‘one of serial despotism by powerful fight leaders’. Nevertheless, the criticisms made by some Coastal and Island leaders cannot be sustained. Leo Hannett, for example, asserted that, unlike the Highlanders in particular, Bougainvillean
believe in fair play at all times and . . . not . . . in mob fighting or in the law of the jungle, that might is right, and that individuals or groups of individuals can be a law unto themselves.

Highlanders, obviously enough, are ultimately no less responsive to acculturation (or pacification) than any other Papua New Guinea group. Brevity of contact has been a problem but land pressures, the impossible material expectations aroused, and the feeling of deprivation in relation to other areas have made the Highlands a threat to overall internal stability rather than a secessionist region in itself. Although they have nearly 40 per cent of the population of approximately 2.5 million, the five Highlands provinces—Enga became a separate province in 1976—have markedly the lowest percentage for any region of school attendance, construction works, health services, rural improvements funds, etc. Intense frustration makes it difficult for elected representatives or government officials to retain legitimacy and energies are directed into into-group warfare along traditional lines. The continual publicity given to riots and payback killings coupled with the natural resentment of unskilled, unemployed, and therefore often unruly Highlanders in the towns have created a stereotype feared throughout the country.

Very occasionally the word "secession" has been used in the Highlands to threaten the Government but is hardly to be taken seriously in view of the lack of unity among Highlanders and the way they are geographically locked into the mainland. The Highlands Liberation Front virtually died and in spite of the intermittent and unevenly spread bonanzas in coffee (and currently tea) the bulk of Highlanders will probably be arrested in what has been called the 'terminal pause' of most modern peasantry. Continued dependency on the rest of the country is the most realistic prediction and a cynic might prescribe, should a situation of widespread disorder occur, that the region be simply isolated once again from the rest of the country until it sorts itself out. The Highlands is not exporting surplus management, professional or technical skills to other areas but unskilled labour. This makes Highlanders as vulnerable as they are threatening. The distinct possibility, however, of violence in the towns leading to attempted expulsion of 'foreigners' (Highlanders) from, say, Port Moresby or Arawa could lead to the intensification of secessionism in Papua and Bougainville. It is also conceivable that the H.L.F. (or some such organisation) could revive to demand what it sees as a more equitable share of the goods of the nation and provoke intense inter-regional hostility over resources and power. In that case Bougainville, in particular, may want to cut the painter.

3. Papua
Once champions of Papuan development like Olewale, Guise and Taureka were absorbed into Somare's ministry, Josephine Abaijah
became Papua’s unchallenged spokesman. Before her election she was saying that Papua ‘was to be handed over to New Guinea as a destitute colony on much the same terms as West New Guinea was handed over to Indonesia’; afterwards she warned a Melbourne audience that ‘blood will have to be shed before Australia takes any notice of Papuans’. In mid-1972 she launched Papua Besena (besena in Motu means tribe) to guarantee political rights for Papuans and to foster a cultural identity through the promotion of local dance, costume and language. ‘Papua,’ she proclaimed ‘has a national name, it’s got a national language and a national image and a national history.’ At this stage she was advocating the setting up of four regions in Papua New Guinea (Papua, Highlands, New Guinea Coast, New Guinea Islands), each of which would be largely autonomous. Their functions were to be coordinated by an Executive Council consisting of four regional representatives with a President elected by the House of Assembly. This was more or less a fusion of ideas put forward previously by Guise and Chatterton. On National Day 1972, obviously cajoled by Les Johnson, she actually spoke in favour of national unity at the Hubert Murray Stadium. But by 1973 she was openly secessionist, embracing the view that her close friend and adviser, Dr Eric Wright, had put forward three years before at a Waigani seminar. Formerly head of the Papuan Medical College and alleged to be disgruntled because of lack of preferment, Wright seemed to fit Whitlam’s image of the self-interested expatriate ‘stirrer’. Wright, in fact, was probably a liability to secessionism because he was white and because he prevented others from speaking frankly to Abaijah and often conducted her interviews for her. As he wrote speeches for her and did the paper work, some observers deluded themselves that he was simply Svengali and missed the appeal of her sybilline statements. ‘Papua will be born of a woman,’ she could tell villagers, ‘just as Jesus was born of a woman.’ Some villagers literally plucked at the hem of her garment.

In July 1973 trouble similar to that of 1968 was forecast for the annual rugby match between the two former Territories of Papua and New Guinea (by then surely an obsolete custom which should have been displaced). Although it was the tendency for New Guineans rather than Papuans toriot if they lost, Abaijah persisted in making inflammatory speeches against them. Two days of rioting followed. The official casualty list showed twenty persons injured and minor property damage but there were many untreated assaults, unreported rapes of Papuan women and widespread damage. A part of Abaijah’s prophecy seemed to be fulfilled and her stereotype of the New Guinean immigrant (particularly the Highlander) as a hooligan fulfilled. She had resisted, however, placing the Southern Highlanders in that category. Comprising some 200 000 of Papua’s roughly 700 000 people, the Southern Highlanders were difficult to reconcile
with Abaijah's notion of a Papuan identity as their perceived ethnic-
ity was grounded in the same terrain as that of New Guinea Highland-
ers and in their short period of contact with whites and coastals. Abaijah tried to get over this problem by asserting that Southern Highlanders spoke Motu as well as they spoke Pidgin and that they supported her. In fact, to illustrate the ambivalence of their position and a possible bridge-building role in unification, they were ob-
served during the riot to join with Papuans when they were chasing New Guineans and to gang up with New Guineans when they chased Papuans but, appropriately for people from the last de-
veloped province, they were always in pursuit.

Abaijah showed her power on other occasions (as in the women's riot at Konedobu in 1974) but her most notable success was the capture of the majority of seats – and thus all portfolios of the Port Moresby City Council – by the Papua Party (a Besena offshoot) in the same year. The Council was subsequently criticised for flagrant patronage and bias and early in 1975 voted to support secession, yet quickly shut up when the Minister for Local Government threatened to abolish the Council altogether. Other secondary groups emerged with names such as the Papua Group (of educated people, including a future Vice-Chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea), the Papua Black Power Movement and the Papuan Liberation Move-
ment. To outsiders these groups seemed confused and ephemeral. The Black Power Movement, for example, wanted to expel expatriates as well as New Guineans from Papua, which must have appeared an alarming strategy to those villagers who saw whites as a buffer against inter-ethnic aggression and who did not want inde-
pendence. The most pathetic gesture of all came from Simon Kaumi, the ex-Secretary of the Interior, who in late 1974 founded his own micro-movement, the Eriwo Development Association in the Northern District and took over the Jiropa Plantation from an in-
valid Australian with the help of his Papuan Liberation Army. The Liberation Army in January 1975 then straggled through an epical march over the Kokoda Trail to Port Moresby only to be greeted by a few bored, cigarette-rolling policemen who had to keep them under loose surveillance. Kaumi turned up to meet them by car two and a half hours late. 'I think he is a part of history,' shrugged Somare and finally dismissed Kaumi from the Public Service. He might have said the same for Wright who was deported in July. Hardly anyone turned up to a meeting which was organised in protest.

At dawn on 16 March 1975 Abaijah raised the red, white and blue flag of an independent Papua at Tatana village near Port Moresby while her supporters sang the anthem 'Papua, Papua, Arise'. At her feet lay particular items of cargo: a hunting knife, some pink-figured calico, two sticks of tobacco, three ship's biscuits and a steel axe. They were meant to be replicas of the gifts made to tribal leaders
when Papua was annexed in 1884. 'Take them back, Australia,' she said, 'we wish you well, but we are free now and we claim our land as our own.' Later in the day in another suburb a satire was presented in which Abaijah had her hands tied behind her back while actors portrayed her fight against the new 'colonialism' of Somare and New Guinea. Such blantant gestures of emancipation did not obscure the basic hurt: that Abaijah saw Australia as a disobliging and unnatural foster-parent who could have yielded seventh statehood but insisted on a crude marriage of convenience. Australians by this time, however, saw the original adoption as unnatural and the marriage as predestined if not exactly made in heaven.

Predictions were futile: it was obvious that a well-organised and determined Papua Besena could destroy the emergent nation but then Abaijah did not believe in violence, without which secessionism could hardly succeed in Papua New Guinea. Moreover, she was obviously incapable of working with a number of other Papuan leaders and mobilising their latent secessionism behind her movement. She lacked a clear program of action. Meanwhile, at Independence the four top army positions and the majority of the departmental heads and district commissioners were Papuans. Port Moresby was still very much a Papuan town, with violence likely to hurt Papuans most. On the national level Papuans had the jobs, New Guinea the numbers. This was to prove to be an asymmetrical balance, but a balance nevertheless, at least in the short run. So much depended on the maintenance of prosperity and effective government, and on keeping leaders like Guise and Olewale within the system.

4. Bougainville
Somare's inclusion of Momis, Lapun and Mola in the sanctum of planning and power in 1972 suggested to most informed observers that secessionism would die in Bougainville. Even the fourth provincial member, Raphael Bele, leader of the Rorovanas in 1969 and a founder of Napidakoe Navitu, quietly warmed a seat for the Coalition. He had been taken on an admonitory tour by Moral Rearmament to Northern Ireland, Rome and Switzerland where he had been suitably impressed by chaos, the catacombs and inter-ethnic civility respectively. By December 1972 Napidakoe Navitu was alleged to be moribund: its bisnis wing had failed to fly in spite of both government and mining company patronage; its funds were either wasted or had mysteriously evaporated; its monthly, Bougainville News, had expired; and its impudent white secretary, Barry Middlemiss, was told to mind his own business by the young évolués. The two local government councils in the north of the district had refused to support the call for a referendum on secession and were ostensibly hostile to it. In November the Pacific Islands Regiment did a cautious
civic action patrol in the district and after initial suspicion was alleged to have won hearts and minds. In spite of obvious tension between Bukas and ‘Redskins’ (Tolais as well as Chimbus) both in the workforce and in people-police relations, company officials were confident that their admirable conciliation and inter-ethnic policies were working and, forgetting the enthusiasm of Americans at Carnegie Hall for the Bolshoi Company, pointed to combined *singsings* to prove it.

There was also the brain-drain to the mainland where Bukas could be found living genially enough in most centres and they had more than their share of places in the Administration, the army, the police, the Catholic Church and the tertiary institutions. Surely, it was said, Bukas would want a wider field for their talents than the 10 000 km$^2$ and the 90 000 people of Bougainville. Surely they were too materialistic and comfortable to upset colonial arrangements. A particularly notable addition to Somare’s personal staff in 1972 was Dr Alexis Holyweek Sarei from Buka Island. He had graduated at the Gregorian University in Rome with a thesis on the marriage rites of his people. Sarei had just left the priesthood and married an American who had formerly been a nursing nun on Buka Island. He spoke several European languages (and a little Japanese picked up in primary school) and was both suave and authoritative in personal style. Unlike Momis and Hannett he had not been a rebel at Madang seminary and was an obvious choice for first local Vice-Chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea. Government, however, needed him and in 1972 Somare used Sarei’s diplomatic but straight-talking talents to bring the factions on the Gazelle together. Such indices, together with the fact that any one of three Bukas might have become Commissioner of Police — and when less than thirty years of age Pius Kerepia did — was enough to convince many skeptics that Bukas would see the light of national unity.

Nevertheless, however integrated educated Bougainvilleans seemed to be, they had maintained their *laws* in the major towns. The Mungkas Association, which derived its name from a Buin word meaning black, had its origin in the meeting which declared itself for secession in September 1968 and was then established in Lae, Goroka, Mt Hagen, Rabaul, Madang as well as Port Moresby and Bougainville itself. It described itself ‘as a social or pressure organisation’ rather than a political one. ‘It simply agitates,’ said its Port Moresby President, ‘for what it believes to be its rightful claims but declines to hold public office or govern the country.’ This was discreet when living among ‘foreigners’. Similarly, although most of them were avowedly secessionists in private, Bougainville students at UPNG contented themselves at the graduation ceremony in March 1972 with presenting to Andrew Peacock a petition representing their minimum demands: the right to a referendum and to
self-determination. They planned, however, throughout the year a political awareness seminar which was eventually held in the disused church at Kieda in mid-December where they ate Bougainville Copper Ltd’s food and slept on company bedding in the sacristy. The goose that was to lay golden eggs for Papua New Guinea was expected, under threat, to provide at least ordinary fare for the locals. The company was not being rejected outright. Momis alone at this stage refused to visit the mine and accept multi-national hospitality. The seminar sought a referendum on the future and was otherwise uneventful but it brought together Hahalis leaders from Buka, and enough students and villagers to indicate that district wide rapport was latent and that communications, though not overt, were effective enough. Still, although Momis affirmed Bougainville’s ‘absolute right to self-determination’ and stressed that although he was the servant of the people, he was, as de facto Chairman of the Constitutional Planning Committee, hopeful that some device would be found to reeve even Bougainville into the new nation. He had learned it was a brutal world, he told his constituents, in which you got nothing without cost. What became apparent to a few was that Bougainville lacked only the cri de coeur of genuine oppression and the primordial battle cry that death might follow integration. The latter came, tragically, within a fortnight.

On Christmas morning a doctor, Luke Rovin, and a superintendent of schools, Peter Moini, both Bougainvilleans, drove recklessly around a corner near Goroka airport in the Eastern Highlands and, on the wrong side of the road, ran down and killed a child strolling with her relatives. After driving the car into a ditch, they got out and ran for their lives, only to be caught and kicked to death in an instinctive payback. Their black skins probably made no difference to their fate but the incident immediately told Bougainvilleans that the Mungkas were threatened everywhere, even at home, by allegedly brawling, insensate ‘Redskins’ (particularly Highlanders) who do not, said Leo Hannett, ‘share with us the conviction that human life is sacred and must be upheld with the utmost reverence’. The publicity and the post-mortem that followed did nothing to sheet some responsibility to Rovin and Moini (who certainly had been drinking) and the trial and limited sentence of the Gorokans did nothing to assuage the Bougainville desire for justification and revenge. At this level crisis-management was non-existent. The kil­lings brought the district to a united cry of mourning and secession. The occasion was made for a lost leader to return and combine studious concern for his people with genuine grief for his dead former schoolmates.

Leo Hannett had attempted in late 1971 to win support for his candidature for the Regional seat ostensibly to prevent either the allegedly ‘time-serving’ Joseph Lue or the ‘self-interested’
Middlemiss from winning. As Hannett came from Nissan atoll, some 60 km north of Buka, he had an inadequate base for an Open seat, particularly against an astute numbers man like Mola in the north. Unfortunately, Hannett’s continued strictures against the Churches, his association with the too-sophisticated Black Power Movement at UPNG, and his occasional lapses into strangled rage or abuse in public had been taken at face value and had alienated many of those to whom he had been so meaningful during the Rorovana crisis of 1969. His theme of returning to the healthy traditions of taim bilong tumbuna (ancestral times) seemed to be simply wormwood. Paul Lapun and the ecclesiastical king-makers decided that Fr Momis should get their nomination for the Regional seat instead, and Hannett retired, deeply hurt, to Hawaii. There a scholarship awaited him at the East-West Centre under the conservative anthropologist, Douglas Oliver, who controlled academic research moneys from Bougainville Copper. Hannett, whose original and speculative mind would have been very suited to philosophy at a radical European university, seems to have had little heart for demography, even when it took him on a research trip to the All-Weather coast of Guadalcanal. He had returned briefly from there to Bougainville to take a grudging part in the Mungkas seminar in mid-December and was obviously uneasy that events might pass him by. The Rovin-Moini fatality, however, brought him home again, this time for good, with a mission to his seemingly embattled people.

Coincidentally, in the second week of January 1973, Somare arrived in Bougainville for a scheduled tour, having been advised not to attend the official opening at the copper mine two months before – so that he would not be seen either as approving the original mining agreement or emphasising that the mine belonged mostly to ‘Redskins’. Somare heard the clamour for secession from all sides that January and was publicly confronted by Hannett, who, according to Somare, ‘in his angry tirade . . . wildly abused me and the policies of my government’. Ingenuously Somare, in his autobiography, goes on to say that ‘it was for that very reason that, in a few months time, I appointed this angry, table-thumping man as my special adviser on Bougainvillean affairs’. It was also certainly done with the cognisance if not at the suggestion of Momis and Sarei. In February Hannett gained the authorisation of the Bougainville Combined Local Government Councils to organise a Bougainville Special Political Committee (BSPC) comprising representative elements from all over the district. How ambivalent Hannett was about secession at this time is difficult to say as he often gave the impression that he was using it as a threat to gain the fullest autonomy for Bougainville within Papua New Guinea and as a vehicle for self-justification and future preferment. Certainly, he seemed unaware that threats of secession were a tactic which could blunt easily and that time was on Somare’s side rather than his own.
In July 1973 the BSPC met the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC) and asked for a district government with its own president and cabinet. It asked for the right to collect all taxes and excise from which it would remit whatever revenue it thought necessary to the central government because Bougainvilleans had been 'exploited' in the past. It sought the right to secede if and when it wanted to do so. Apparently, Bougainvilleans believed that this virtually confederal status would be compatible with Papua New Guinea sovereignty. In any case Momis seemed to be protecting their interests on the CPC and, in May, Somare had met their demands to have Bougainvilleans in control of their own district by making Sarei District Commissioner. Meanwhile, Hannett built up his own image as innovator, conciliator and unifier of his people and portrayed Lapun and Mola as failing to support BSPC in Cabinet because they had sold out to Somare and the place men. On 2 October Hannett's hostility came to a climax when he called over Radio Bougainville for the removal of the two ministers from office.

Somare had no choice but to ask for Hannett's resignation. At the Bougainville Combined Local Government Councils' meeting later that month Hannett failed to gain support for a no-confidence motion in the two ministers, owing in part to a superlative self-defence by the wily Lapun who shamed Hannett as a young hothead with plenty of brains but little experience. A resolution was passed, however, demanding instant interim district government: 'If this is not done, this Conference is afraid there will be great trouble between the Bougainville people and the central government'. Hannett was now given a new post as Planning Officer for the Interim District Government.

For three days from 10 January 1974 its first meeting was held, seven months before the handing down of the CPC's final report and unavoidably influencing its decisions. It was a carefully controlled affair with Sarei in the chair and Hannett taking a didactic course with the representatives, who were chosen not only from local government councils but from non-council areas as well, a sign that colonial structures would eventually be liquidated. Hannett, Sarei and their advisers were given a mandate to work out a new structure for grass-roots government. Village governments were to reappear and traditional leadership was to be reasserted. In the provincial government there were to be separate procedures for electing premier and parliamentarians, although this would have awkward implications for responsible government as the candidates for premiership could not stand for the Assembly. Perhaps this was deliberate for the procedure would probably have resulted in Hannett's election as premier if the elections had been held in 1974. However, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Officer never managed to enter the writs although they were continually promised, the ultimate excuse being that it was impossible to do so before the Constitution was finally
ratified. There were, however, other reasons: centralists, although they may have been prepared for deconcentration of administrative power, did not want provincial government and they feared that an alternative government was being set up on Bougainville.

In the communication snarls that followed it is difficult to know how much bloody-mindedness in Port Moresby and how much inefficiency and incomprehension contributed. The Interim District Government set to with unusual zest to invest in local enterprises and services. Relations with the Mining Company were amicable; its expertise was available; its multiplier effects could be harnessed for development. By March 1975 three-quarters of the district’s engineering program for 1974-75 had been completed, an unprecedented occurrence in Papua New Guinea. The local bureaucracy (with white officers) was functioning with an elan rarely seen before; the high morale was an augury for decentralisation. Bougainville Airways and its small fleet of Islanders and Cessnas was acquired by the provincial government and was flying under the subnationalist insignia of the traditional cultic upi hat. One source of funds to which Bougainvilleans had always laid claim was the full 1¼ per cent royalties from the mine which they insisted should be additional to their equitable share of central funds. In mid-1974 Port Moresby conceded this but by December Hannett had to create another crisis and threaten to cut off the water for the mine in order to get a final hard agreement. The vulnerability of central government and the company was now clear. Another brief euphoria followed until the day before the Australian *Financial Review* published an interview with Hannett (30 April 1975) in which, quite remarkably, he said that the word ‘secession’ was ‘dishonest’ and had never been used by Bougainvilleans. People had put the words into their mouths. Bougainvilleans were only searching for a suitable form of decentralisation.

However, on 29 April a central government team came to Arawa to discuss the 1975-76 capital works program. The district government sought $5.3 million exclusive of royalties. It was offered $1.3 million. Apparently the central government team was not told that the district government’s request was for a rolling program and that it could not possibly have spent such a sum in one year. Equally odd was the curt and offhand way the central government, in its specific allocations, disregarded the provincial government’s planning priorities, its achievements and, in effect, the very principle of de-volved decision-making. As neither side showed any capacity for pliant negotiation it is possible to infer either deliberate provocation on one or both sides, or perhaps just utter insensitivity to each other’s necessary interests. On 30 May, by an almost unanimous vote and with the support of, allegedly, ‘some 200 elected traditional leaders’, the Provincial Assembly resolved to secede from Papua New
Guinea. Hannett ultimately triumphed over Lapun with a vote of no-confidence in him and Mola. Lapun’s stocks had slumped in 1974 almost coincidentally with his knighthood and Lapun failed to gain mileage even from his long-sought renegotiation of the Mining Agreement. Momis and Bele announced they would resign from the House of Assembly. Sarei ignored the fact that he was still a public servant and supported secession. However, it was Hannett rather than Momis or Sarei who rammed home the point that secession was non-negotiable. A Bougainville negotiating team insisted that it wanted K150 million to set up its own government and in return it would be lenient in slowly phasing out Papua New Guinea’s 20 per cent equity in the Panguna Mine.

As will be shown in this chapter, this new crisis had a decisive effect on setting the date (16 September) for Independence, the decision being taken on 17 June. Somare had to head off this challenge to Papua New Guinea’s integrity without recourse to the army if Papua New Guinea was to emerge as a credible democracy. He set up a top-level team to monitor developments in Bougainville on a daily basis and advise lines of action. The Australian High Commissioner was astonished to have to face the unthinkable and one of its diplomats attached to Papua New Guinea’s Foreign Affairs roamed Bougainville trying to understand what was going on and talk sense into Hannett. Various ploys were suggested such as divide and conquer by paying allocations only to groups supporting integration, blocking off services, evacuating personnel and even sending Bougainvillean students home from the mainland. The mine, however, was Bougainville’s hostage and a workers’ rampage in May against wage rates made such tactics too risky. One faction wanted Hannett arrested but Somare refused ‘to make a martyr of him’. When confronted with the fact that he had no arms and that he faced arrest and even responsibility for what could be a massacre of his people, Hannett could espouse pacifism and take the visionary standpoint that Bougainvilleans would suffer passively but would in the end triumph over a corrupt neo-colonialist regime. At other times he threatened that he would be unable to control his people – and Bougainvilleans were proud of their guerilla record in World War II. He also offered better terms to the multi-nationals in return for support. The central government then tried to demonstrate, by a fact-finding tour led by no less than the former Papuan separatist, Ebia Olewale (who had succeeded Kaputin as Minister for Justice) that secessionism was a minority movement, or at least was not supported in the northern part of the district. The Mataungan, Oscar Tammur, tried to reason with villagers, who confronted the teams so forcefully that Tammur was still recounting in 1977 how he had barely escaped with his life. The Post-Courier and the National Broadcasting Commission picked up every hopeful skerrick of dis-
sent to prove that only one Bougainvillean faction was serious. But Sarei was close to the mark when he said that secession was supported by 86 per cent of the people. This became particularly credible once the indigenous Catholic bishop, Gregory Simkai, expressed his official support because, he said, of the wishes of his flock (75 per cent of the people). Explanation for this seemingly extraordinary phenomenon ranged from the allegation that secession was a Popish Plot cooked up in Madang Seminary in 1966-67 to its being the work of the multi-national, a view put forward by no less a pundit than the distinguished anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who had not visited Bougainville, and was presumably thinking about Katanga and the Congo.

In order to assure the world that it was not consenting to integra-
tion, Bougainvillean leaders set 1 September as liberation day and as if to perplex observers further, Sarei in July set off on six weeks leave to visit his wife’s relatives in the U.S.A. In August Momis, accompanied by the Hahalis leader, John Teosin, went to the United Nations in New York, hoping to enlist support or at least serve notice that Bougainville had a case. He was shocked by the rebuffs and came to realise that secession and violence would be inextricable. Olewale shrewdly advised the UN that allowing Bougainville to secede could result in the creation of 700 potential mini-states, although Josephine Abaijah herself served notice that a domino effect was unlikely when, instead of applauding the weakening of New Guinea, she sent the Bougainville Provincial Assembly a bill for K4100 million ‘payable to the Republic of Papua for damages caused to Papua and Papuans by Bougainville projects and policies’. Other Papua New Guineans (notably Oscar Tammur) were moving towards a common antagonism towards Bougainville, creating unity not fragmentation. Meanwhile Hannett was left with the initiatives on Bougainville and flew with a team via Bougainville Airways to Honiara to talk with leaders of the Solomon Islands, which had just shed its Protectorate status. There the Chief Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, had previously tried to make it clear that Bougainville was Somare’s problem, not his, but the visit soldered further links with the Solomons’ politicians and people.

On 1 September, a black woman, symbol of matrilineality, raised the flag of the North Solomons Republic at Arawa market. Its cobalt blue background was to represent ‘the seas surrounding Bougainville as a district entity in the Pacific’, the outer green disc with points represented the islands of the new nation, and a white disc was ‘the traditional shell used by Bougainville craftsmen to set off the black distinctive colour of the skin’. Hannett’s speech, which one observant diplomat thought worthy of Sukarno, began with a disclaimer of personal worth (Mi man nating: I am a worthless man), appealed to the spirit of the missionaries who had brought Christianity and the
brotherhood of man, cited Martin Luther King, and perorated to a vision of Moses leading his people to the promised land. The Methodist Church clergy (representing 10 per cent of Bougainvillean) were there, as well as Bishop Simkai and his black clergy. Even Seventh Day Adventists who had been so loyal to Australia were supporters. Back in Port Moresby Somare played golf. His view was that the *bisnis*-minded Bougainvillean would tire of lack of development and of leaders who, without arms or direction, could not supply purposive action. Every Melanesian apparently had his price.

**The Coming of Independence**

Even with Australian pressure, the actual achievement of self-government and full sovereignty within the Whitlam schedule required more tact, persuasion, manipulation and guile than was expected. Somare took pains to gradualise the acquisition of powers in order to allay fears of undue haste and power-grabbing. He preferred to acquire power through usage and then to present the *fait accompli* of being self-governing and ultimately independent in everything but law. This mode of operation also allowed ministers to test new arrangements before full acceptance. But there was not to be a smooth drift, let alone a triumphal thrust to freedom.

In June 1972 Somare announced that while he had ‘no intention of rushing our decision’, it was his government’s view ‘that self-government should not occur before 1 December 1973, but that it should occur as soon as possible after that’. Independence would come in 1976-77. This alteration of the 1970-71 Select Committee’s recommendation roused the United Party. Ninkama Bomai from Chimbu complained

Mr Speaker, the Select Committee produced a report as big as a Bible, and now we are blithely ignoring it. Just as we cannot ignore the Bible, we cannot ignore its report. The people of Papua New Guinea wish to obtain self-government after the 1976 election. This is 1972 . . . . All the people’s aspirations and hopes finished up on the rubbish heap.

To this a spirited Ebia Olewale, his Papua Action days obscured by his Education portfolio, replied:

Many people in many countries of the world do not understand what the government is. For instance, in Australia, how many people know what the Australian government is now? Or, for that matter, how many people would know their particular Member of the House of Representatives in the Australian Parliament – I bet not many. But here in Papua New Guinea we are taking the attitude that everybody must know his Member of Parliament and what Parliament is doing in great detail.

Also in June, Somare, against Peacock’s advice, announced the setting up of an all-party Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC) which would recommend on such issues as ‘the system of govern-
ment, central-regional-local relations, relations with Australia, control of the public service, an ombudsman, a bill of rights, protection of minorities, citizenship and constitutional review’. The aim was to create ‘a home-grown constitution’ but it was also to be a parliamentary exercise, said Somare, which would prevent the House from wasting all its time arguing about the date of self-government without tackling the mammoth task of planning a constitution. I argued to the House that the timing of constitutional change and the planning of a constitution should be treated as two separate questions. Of course, Pangu believed that if we could get the whole House thinking about a constitution, we were in practice bringing forward the possibility of early self-government and independence.

Somare, however, was also being cagey: bringing in members of the Opposition might convince them of the need to accept early independence and even wrinkle some of them into the government ranks. The CPC came to consist of sixteen M.H.A.s with Somare as ex officio Chairman, Momis as deputy (and virtually de facto) Chairman, Guise, Arek, two other Pangu members, one Mataungan (Kaputin), one PPP, one National and six United Party (including Tei Abal until he became Leader of the Opposition in 1973 and was replaced by Parao). Somare says he was aware that the CPC would make recommendations which might strengthen parliament against the executive and that he, Guise and Arek would be too busy as ministers to make the fullest impact. However, when he ‘endeavoured to have the most skilled backbenchers appointed’, it is unlikely that he foresaw the frustrations that bringing Momis and Kaputin and potential followers into his so-called system would cause. Probably Peacock did.

Momis attacked the task with passionate intensity, seeing it as a means of voiding neo-colonialism from the body politic and of building self-reliance on decentralisation. Kaputin shared these ideals and added the relish of self-vindication and, it often seems, revenge. They were determined the Constitution would last: they intended to have meticulous deliberation and the fullest consultation with the people. In effect, constitution-making would also be a massive political education campaign and in due course the CPC addressed over 2000 meetings in over 100 centres of the country. Momis and Kaputin also established a rhetorical paramountcy which crossed party barriers and profoundly influenced other members of the CPC. One major problem was that, with Bougainville (and apparently, the Gazelle) unwilling to accept anything less than quasi-federalism, arrangements would be geared to its demands rather than to the needs of less developed areas. Momis (and probably, Kaputin) could offer nothing less if he wanted to hold his home base.

Another problem was that a timetable for the transfer of powers
from Australia could pre-empt the CPC’s own conclusions, particularly on the division of functions. A portentous crisis occurred in April 1973 when discussion occurred between Morrison and Cabinet ministers on the progress toward self-government and the powers that might be reserved until after that date.

Momis reacted fiercely with a condemnation of “the continuing colonialist attitude of the Australian Government towards the constitutional development of Papua New Guinea – in particular its interference with the work of this Committee”. And there can be no doubt that Whitlam and Morrison, by pressuring for independence in 1974, were showing gross insensitivity to political formation in Papua New Guinea. Momis also singled out the Political Development Division of the Chief Minister’s Office for persistently seeing constitutional problems in “purely bureaucratic, legalistic and technical terms, and not as questions to which solutions must be found which accord with the political realities of this country”. In May, at the next meeting with Morrison the CPC was represented and it was announced that self-government would be achieved in two stages. All powers over domestic affairs would be transferred by 1 December, while in February 1974 the CPC’s final report and draft constitution would be tabled in the House for adoption at a special meeting in April. After that, in May, the Australian Parliament would presumably approve final alterations to the Papua New Guinea Act. The stage would then be set for Independence, say, in September 1974.

The date for self-government was met although the omens were not good. Not only were there riots in Port Moresby in July 1973 but less serious ones involving Highlanders and Tolaits in Rabaul and Highlanders and locals at Kimbe in West New Britain. On National Day the Papua New Guinea flag was torn down and burnt in the Chimbu, and the occasion ignored in Bougainville. Air Niugini took flight in November with a flaring bird of paradise insignia, but its booking arrangements caused havoc at the airport. It was decided not to make 1 December a day of flamboyant celebration. Liquor sales were banned and bars closed from 30 November to 2 December inclusive; over the radio the police commissioner warned off prospective disrupters; police squads patrolled the streets. At a simple ceremony, Johnson, by then High Commissioner, transferred responsibility for their powers to the ministers and swore them into the Executive Council. No more than 300 people gathered outside Konedobu to applaud. The only public celebration in the whole of Papua New Guinea seems to have been in the remote Duke of York Islands off the Gazelle Peninsula where ‘an end-of-the-year primary school function had been organised to coincide with self-government day, and choral-singing, dancing and speeches lasted all day’. As the Duke of Yorks were, ninety-eight years before, the site
of the first permanent European contact in New Guinea, this was somehow fitting. Papua Besena, on the other hand, held peaceful rallies in Port Moresby, and at Bereina, opposite Yule Island, in the region where the first Protestant and Catholic missions had been firmly established in Papua. The negative success, however, of Self-government Day gave Somare the confidence to plan more aggressively for Independence. A new phase began early in 1974 when Johnson retired to lead the Australian Development Assistance Agency and a career diplomat, Tom Critchley, arrived as High Commissioner. Critchley had made his name in the negotiations over Indonesian independence in 1948-49 and was widely experienced in South-east Asia.

Unfortunately, the CPC could not meet its February 1974 deadline and Somare in March proposed that Independence should come on 1 December whether the Constitution was ready or not. This gave the United Party a chance to insist that a constitution must come first even though it was not obvious that the CPC’s recommendations would be to its liking. The UP’s real motive was to delay Independence. Once the rank and file of the PPP also insisted on having a Constitution first, Somare was forced to agree in July that an Independence date would not be announced until the final draft of the Constitution had been revised and passed, and until its organic laws had been agreed on. As opposition mounted to their proposals, the non-ministerial CPC members organised themselves into a Nationalist Pressure Group (NPG) for the safe convoy of their constitution through parliament. The NPG cut across party lines and caused strange liaisons and misalliances after the tabling and debating of the CPC’s report together with the government’s minority statement in late June. It was a tribute to Somare’s personal ascendancy and to his skill in manipulating the resources of office that he remained safely enough in the saddle during the bitter slanging of late 1974 while other leaders jostled each other in a melee of principles and pragmatics. A Country Party optimistically claiming up to sixteen members emerged under Sinake Giregire and Michael Pondros from Manus, while a reconstructed Anton Parao brought CPC rhetoric to bear on the over-loyal opposition of Tei Abal.

The preamble to the CPC’s Draft Recommendations (August 1974) gives something of its exalted nationalistic aspirations:

Wishing to be guided in our lives by our worthy customs and Christian principles, we, the people of Papua New Guinea, set before ourselves these goals and directive principles . . .

The five goals were then headed:

Integral Human Development – Liberation and Fulfillment . . .
Equality and Participation . . .
National Sovereignty and Self-Reliance . . .
National Resources and the Environment . . .
Papua New Guinea Ways . . .
The Recommendations were wide-ranging and detailed and showed a pernickety distrust of executive and central government. They ran into 160 pages of mostly fine print and CPC leaders were infuriated by the government's temerity in tabling its own Minority Report. This report did not explicitly reject the principles of the CPC but it seemed concerned to stall any radical revision of the system that was emerging, if not already settled. The government was alarmed at what it saw as the crippling size of the proposed constitution and wanted to relegate much of the detail to the precincts of organic law and normal legislation. Kaputin called the Minority Report 'an abuse of the trust of leadership' and 'an abuse of power for political ends'. Momis accused Somare of being under the sway of 'white advisers' and of using his black staff as 'flower pots'. He referred to his own report as the 'black paper'; Somare's was the 'white paper'.

The main causes of acrimony were over the head of state, citizenship and provincial government. The CPC distributed the functions of head of state among the prime minister, speaker and chief justice; the Minority Report called clearly for a president 'elected by an absolute majority of the National Parliament for a term of six years'. Where the CPC wanted the provincial governments to be entrenched with their own premiers and assemblies and control of their public servants, the government submitted that it was concerned that the CPC proposals could result in an undue concentration of power at the provincial centre, and feels that the law should also safeguard the interests of local government bodies, including recognised grass roots organisation, as these bodies are closer and more responsive to the villages. The type of near-federal system proposed by the CPC could create many legal and administrative problems if introduced suddenly. The system should evolve through experience and it is not possible for the Constitution to lay down a blueprint for future development. A System of devolution of power by Act of National Parliament is favoured.

The most bitter dispute was over citizenship. Originally the CPC had argued that only people with three indigenous grandparents would automatically gain citizenship, which caused Somare to remark to Cabinet that apartheid in South Africa would now appear samting nating (something nothing, i.e. insignificant). The outcry of racism in reverse brought a compromise whereby two indigenous grandparents would suffice. The CPC wanted to use citizenship to equalise opportunities. Therefore residents who had at any time held other citizenship, and even mixed-race people who had accepted a foreigner's salary and status, were to wait eight years after Citizenship Day before eligibility for naturalisation. Citizenship was seen as a crucible for national identity; only those who were purged of colonialism should apply. This was anathema to Somare both because it injured important friends and ministerial supporters like Julius Chan and Bruce Jephcott, and because he genuinely believed in multi-racialism. The government offered instead provisional citizenship for those with eight years continuous residence who
could satisfy other naturalisation criteria. They could then stand for elections and hold public office.

The last half of 1974 was particularly difficult for Somare. Apart from having to sack Kaputin and Kaumi, he had difficulty lining up his majorities in the House where commentators were presented with apparently patternless floor-crossings and seemingly deliberate as well as feckless absenteeism. The United Party frequently voted with the government to thwart the NPG and Country Party. Tei Abal would appear to have been assured that Somare was not really a radical and was prepared to save the Chief Minister until the next election. However, in November, the government lost several minor votes in the House and ultimately the government barely survived when Abal supported the CPC recommendation that the ministry resign once the constitution was adopted. It was not that Somare would fail to be re-elected but that the United Party hoped to force its way into Cabinet, as did the NPG for diametrically opposite reasons. Somare won by two votes with a quarter of the House absent. Fortunately for him, Momis was ill in Australia. More fortunate still, Tore Lokoloko refused to support Abal and took seriously Somare’s threat to engineer an election if defeated. Several white members of the UP also feared the disruption a national poll would cause so soon before Independence and abstained. Oscar Tammur, on the other hand, seemed deliberately to arrive a day late rather than choose between Somare and Kaputin, while Pikah Kasau (who supported both Pangu and NPG) went home to Manus to prepare for his wedding. The indiscipline of backbenchers and the negligence of a number of ministers was counterpointed by a few government operators who sounded out backbenchers from both sides for possible ministerial positions and ... [watched] closely the movements of M.H.A.s out of Port Moresby particularly towards the end of sessions.

Somare had also suffered vigorous criticism in 1974 from the Pangu Executive under its President, Moi Avey, whose position, along with that of young radicals, was virtually that of the CPC. And there were the union leaders under duress from inflation and resentful of expatriates with their differential wage system and two-car families. Self-government had not brought many apparent benefits. The fringes of all parties and pressure groups were quite unreliable, however, and even their centres could prove soft. With the succession to Administrative rule, Somare had acquired whatever legitimacy there was likely to be and had maintained it by skilful manipulation and a composite integrity. Possible challengers were disqualified for one reason or another: in the case of Momis because there was no general support for radicalism. Somare meant continuity and so, more or less, security, as well as the personalised politics which
touched autochthonous chords. He was bound to lead Papua New Guinea to Independence. The onset of 1975 brought only an impasse in devolution which Australia attempted to break through early in March by transferring full sovereign rights over defence and foreign relations to Papua New Guinea. The Post-Courier, 5 March, called it a move unprecedented in modern political history... by definition no country can hold such power until it is a sovereign state, because formal international status does not exist before independence.

The Australian High Commissioner was to take his instructions from Port Moresby not Canberra, although he remained effective Head of State. Australia handed over her $66 million of military assets although her trusteeship for the old mandate’s defence had not been terminated. The Papua New Guinea Defence Force came into being under a new Defence Act; indigenous personnel were ‘discharged’ by Australia and ‘re-enlisted’ by the Defence Force while Australians remained on secondment. Kiki reassured the House ‘that Australia had undertaken to continue providing men and support for as long as required’. Morrison felt it necessary to stress that the move was a response ‘to the wishes of Papua New Guinea’ and was ‘further evidence of Australia’s belief that Papua New Guinea was now fully able to manage its own affairs’. Although Australia still had ultimate international responsibility, in effect ‘only electoral policy and House of Assembly matters’ remained till Independence. Somare was becoming exasperated; Whitlam and Morrison were said to be apoplectic.

Somare now set his sights on June but Abal declared it ‘totally impractical’ and asked for ‘a complete and meaningful’ constitution, not ‘a short simple Bill of general principles’ with ‘many loopholes’ as Somare wanted. Abal wanted to see the Organic Laws, ‘the fine print of the Constitution’, before he agreed to a day for I-Day. Distrust of Somare’s intentions was exacerbated when the Constituent Assembly found in May that the legislative draftsman had apparently altered the two-thirds majority rule for altering the Constitution to a majority rule principle. Even the Post-Courier, 25 April, felt that Somare might be flouting democracy. Kaputin accused him of threatening the unity of the country and the national Secretary of the 10 000 strong Teachers’ Union saw a trend towards ‘one-party dictatorship’. Somare became rattled and on 28 May, after losing four motions in the House, he bitterly attacked Momis and Kaputin and, this time, their white legal adviser and, it was believed, even approached the Australian government to have the adviser deported. Somare lost face and early in June Independence Day was still in the melting pot.

There were other surprises in May, not least the decision to make
Papua New Guinea into a monarchy. At the Governor-General’s investiture in April, at which Kiki dropped ‘Albert’ from his name and became ‘Sir Maori’, Somare repeated what he had said during Her Majesty’s visit early in 1974: Papua New Guinea was proud of its links with the Queen – but there was no intimation of her continuing as Monarch. In fact, in April, it was announced that the Head of State would be a citizen who was eligible for the House of Assembly and that he would be chosen by secret ballot. ‘Nothing can be fairer’, intoned the Post-Courier, trying frantically to keep its ear to the ground. This was better than a straight-out political appointment ‘with overtones of patronage’. Why, in some places, the President elected himself by force of arms and Idi Amin had ‘gone further by suggesting that he replace the Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth’.

When on 5 May, it was announced that Papua New Guinea would join the Commonwealth of Nations after independence, the Post-Courier noted that Somare favoured ‘the idea of Papua New Guinea becoming a republic within the Commonwealth’. There was nothing exceptionable about that as only ‘some Caribbean countries and Fiji . . . remained monarchies with the Queen as Head of State’.

On 19 May it was suddenly Cabinet would propose to the Constituent Assembly that the Queen become Head of State. The reason given was that the early years of our independence will be years of adjustment and settling down. Continued ties with the Queen would give a sense of security to a significant section of the community.

The position was to be reviewed after three years. The Post-Courier, 20 May, told readers that Papua New Guinea would have a Governor-General who ‘would be appointed on the advice of the government and act in accordance with its wishes’. Six months before the Australian Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, dismissed his prime minister from office, the editor continued:

There have been one or two notable instances of Queen’s representatives who, if they were not openly defiant towards their governments, were at least a little difficult to get along with. But anyone inclined not to comply with the democratic rules can be replaced – and that has happened.

This was a palpable reminder to John Guise, who on the Queen’s Birthday in June was to be made a Knight Bachelor of the British Empire (rather than a simple Knight Bachelor like his rival, Kiki) in anticipation of his election as Governor-General. Guise was the strongest candidate because of his seniority and talents, his unpopularity in Cabinet and because, as a Papuan with a large following in Milne Bay, he continued to give timely warnings on secessionism to suit his political needs. Somare, in fact, suggested that he would resign the Chief Ministership in favour of Kiki if a Papuan were not
elected, as New Guineans could not occupy both the leading offices in the country. Moreover, with Guise having shown himself too masterful when deputising for the Chief Minister and, having espoused a strong presidential constitution in the past, it was thought he could be more easily removed as the Queen’s representative than as an indigenous Head of State.

The protests at this new blatant admission of insecurity were generally incoherent and not sustained; people seemed to accept Somare’s plea ‘not to bring shame to us as a nation’ by involving the sovereign ‘in a political controversy’. Momis, however, consistently and clearly saw the Queen’s appointment as ‘detrimental to the real emergence of Papua New Guinea ideology, self-reliance and self-respect and commitment to our cultural heritage’. The students of the University of Papua New Guinea, on the other hand, took a week off close to exam-time to discuss the issue of national importance but many of those who protested showed more signs of intellectual luddism than of any desire to understand the matter. In spite of the Annigoni reproductions in school-rooms and courthouses throughout the country, some elites seemed not to know that the British monarch had been on top, at least in Papua, since 1888, or that she was not going to be a latter-day kiap. The raucous tok-tok blustered away and, after a reasonable spell, lectures resumed and no one thought not to holiday on Queen’s Birthday a few weeks later in order to catch up on studies or, better, as a gesture of rejection. Tei Abal felt it quite safe to say he was gratified by the links with the colonial past, so much so that he thought it would ‘be rather a good idea for the Queen to pay for the Governor-General and his office: I do not think we have all that much money to create and maintain such an office . . . I understand England has got a lot of money and I am pretty certain that they would very well meet the expenses of having the Governor-General.

In July Guise was duly elected over Sinake Giregire and Tei Abal on the second ballot but, if the Government had hoped to eliminate him from politics, it was not reassured when Guise claimed that because he was elected by the House and not appointed by the Queen he was ‘therefore very much a political animal’. He declared on radio that he would not be ‘a rubber stamp’. He thought the Australian Governor-General was hampered by ‘a helluva of a lot’ of red tape and protocol. ‘I’m John Guise,’ he said, ‘and it will take an earthquake or an atom bomb to change that . . . I’ll look at legislation and safeguard the rights of the Constitution and people.’ He thought there was nothing to prevent a Governor-General making submissions, say, in agriculture. He did not anticipate the Queen would remain as Head of State for more than three years. While he himself had remained silent when the national elections were postponed some weeks before because he knew the election for Governor-
General was coming up, he now berated the M.H.A.s for selfishness. Sir John, however, was careful to stress his ‘humbleness’ at his new honour – and his altruism. He would be seen only in a simple khaki jacket (though with a stiff collar) not with braid or a hat. The ex-police officer who had been jailed twice, once for notorious behaviour about a bowl of stolen rice and once for illegal drinking, was setting aside a room in Government House just for chewing betel nut and he could be found there after work sitting bare-chested with friends or employees. When the West Indian cricket team visited PNG in November, Guise could express satisfaction that Sir Hubert Murray had not allowed him to go to Melbourne to play cricket in colonial days because it would have alienated him from present preference. Before the end of the year Somare was incensed by Guise’s refusal to hand on the civil list to Buckingham Palace because it had been late in arriving for his approval and the list had been ‘quite lengthy and some qualifications were in doubt’. The Head of State, Guise’s secretary said,

had to scrutinise such matters before passing them on to the Queen . . . in future there would be seven candidates awarded honours twice a year.

Somare accused the secretary of ‘great impertinence’. Big men now coveted British honours and Somare was the source of patronage.

In the end the Bougainville crisis decided the date of Independence although there was also the threat that Somare might call an election if the date was not set and most members were resigned about the Constitution being virtually settled. Talks with secessionists broke down on Friday, 13 June. Over the weekend Somare took part in the Huon Gulf Open Golf Tournament with Tom Critchley and the Maori High Commissioner from New Zealand, B. Poananga. On 17 June the Post-Courier announced that legislation would be introduced the following day to ensure that Independence Day would be a legal public holiday, but it maintained that a date ‘was not likely to be announced until the Constitution had been passed’. Next day, at 3.45 p.m., with only sixty-six members in the House, Somare suddenly announced that he would move later in the day for Independence Day to be 16 September. The House rescinded the July 1974 motion that the Constitution had to be passed first. ‘Seven of our organic laws are in your hands,’ said Somare. Kaputin, counting the heads – and with Momis not present – tried to adjourn the vote till next day. Abal could only muster 15 votes to continue discussion of an amendment to put the date back to 1 December. The final vote came right on 5 p.m., the time specifically set down the day before for the end of the sitting. Kaputin and Abaijah left the House before the vote was taken. Momis later maintained that an outing had been arranged by the government for some UP members on that afternoon. Surprise and absenteeism did the rest.
The champagne had been laid down in advance. Immediately after
the vote, Somare was photographed, all smiles, with Chan and,
rather strangely, Mackenzie Daugi, a UP member who had joined
the NPG, but not so strangely, also with Tom Critchley, who must
have been on immediate call. Oddly for a country with only a
colonially recorded history, Somare gave some factitious historical
reasons for choosing the month of September for his Independence
Day: the Battle of the Coral Sea; the ratification of the union of Papua
and New Guinea by the United Nations; 15 September, however,
was not suitable because Australia had chosen it as National Day! Tei
Abal refused to be photographed because, ‘without the necessary
outlines of a Constitution, the foreign investors will not be able to
invest in this country’ and, repeating the gospel according to Barnes,
said his Enga district needed development before independence. But
he accepted a drink and appealed for unity. The next day, his deputy,
Paul Langro, complimented Somare on his perseverance and ability
to compromise and spoke of ‘having achieved our objective of a
good Constitution!’ The politics of liberation defied augury.

From May to July the various provisions of the Constitution were
ratified and M.H.A.s showed both a concern for the abuse of power
and for their own welfare. A fear of the young évolués as well as a
traditional regard for seniority ensured that candidates for election
would be at least twenty-five. An absolute majority of Parliament
would be required for a fresh election before a government had
served its full term. Parliament could have up to three nominated
members (which allows the government to bring in not only distin-
guished citizens but army or police leaders if expedient). An omb-
budsman commission was established (and eventually headed by an
ex-priest, Ignatius Kilage from Chimbu). The Judiciary and senior
public officials were guaranteed independence from government
interference. Rights to liberty, freedom of expression, conscience,
thought and religion and the right to privacy were set down (al-
though Matthias Toliman’s successor as the only Tolai UP member,
Martin Tovadek, warned that ‘human rights was not a Papua New
Guinean tradition but something imported and could be very
dangerous’ – and he pointed to the problem of not convicting
‘known’ murderers when there were no witnesses). The NPG failed,
however, in its attempt to require only a simple, rather than an
absolute majority vote for the disapproval of treaties and to remove a
provision that treaties could be kept secret ‘in the national interest’. It
also tried to require the Prime Minister and Speaker to consult the
Leader of the Opposition before a treaty was deemed too urgent to
be tabled or had to be kept secret.

When the Constituent Assembly voted on the citizenship provi-
sions, the NPG-Country Party wanted non-indigenous long-term
residents to wait five years after independence for naturalisation. It
was lost 14:62 in favour of a government amendment to allow foreigners who had been in Papua New Guinea for eight years or more at independence to apply immediately for naturalisation. Others were to wait eight years regardless of whether this was before or after independence. A Citizenship Advisory Committee would decide whether a person was suitable for citizenship and criteria would include whether a person had accepted pay or conditions greater than those offered to Papua New Guineans; whether the majority of his or her business interests were in Papua New Guinea; whether he or she was married to a citizen; what his or her services to, or sacrifices for Papua New Guinea and its people had been; whether he or she knew Pidgin, Motu or a vernacular; and whether any children were included in the application. While the concept of provisional citizenship proposed in 1974 was dropped altogether, the economic opportunities of naturalised citizens were to be restricted for ten years (e.g., in relation to Development Bank loans, shares in the Investment Corporation, preferences in government contracts, protection of small businesses). Thomas Kavali managed to convince the Constituent Assembly to restrict property rights for five years after naturalisation, but Iam bakey Obuk could not win support to exclude naturalised citizens from the next parliament.

Qualified citizens were given until 16 November to decide if they wanted citizenship and a two-month deadline was set for all foreigners who qualified in future. But the minister responsible retained the power to make exceptions. John Kaputin thought the Government had now taken a ‘nonsense attitude; it had given citizenship rights to foreigners but was now amending its proposals to take away those rights’. The CPC’s original proposals, which stringently restricted citizenship but which gave all who were citizens equal rights, should be reinstated. Kaputin said he ‘had felt the pain of being a person in two societies’. (He had children by two estranged white wives who lived in Australia.) He did not care if his children had to wait eight years ‘to get this piece of paper’ which in itself did not mean the recipients would have the respect of Papua New Guineans. ‘I want some assurances,’ he said, ‘I want some guarantees for my children.’ Somare’s attitude was, as usual, moderate. His government would not hand out citizenship to the undeserving but, if they took a tough line, ‘many of our own people who are no different from ourselves’ would be hurt. ‘We must not confuse vindictiveness with justice,’ he said, because ‘we are deciding the whole future of our country for years and years to come.’

The Post-Courier, 24 July, managed to rationalise the issue: the measures adopted ‘would mollify the bulk of the racists and satisfy most of the liberals’ and ‘provide the cornerstone for the multi-racial society envisaged by the Chief Minister’. Surely, said the editor with a sanctimony which glossed his paper’s racist past, ‘one of the criteria
for citizenship should be the colour of a man’s heart rather than the colour of his skin.’ Eventually, in spite of the Australian Government’s concern that Australians who lived permanently in Papua New Guinea and, particularly, the 3500 mixed race people who lived there would take out citizenship, only 500 had applied by the closing date, most notably the Speaker, Barry Holloway, and the Minister for National Resources, Bruce Jephcott.

Momis displayed both the idealism of the NPG Group and its profound distrust of neocolonialist government when he urged that the leadership code should not be seen as restrictive.

It should be accepted as a challenge to the capability and potential of our leaders to serve their people . . . You cannot serve everybody in your own electorate by screwing the system and handing out benefits to the people . . . [Leaders] need protection from bad influences from outside.

Parliamentarians were to be allowed to retain jobs and businesses but an independent tribunal was to be set up to hear cases of misconduct against politicians and senior public servants. While the tribunal would not have power to dismiss leaders it could make recommendations to the Head of State in the case of elected leaders and to the appointing authority in the case of public servants. Momis stressed that in the past foreign leaders had bought off the people with cargo. It would be harder to do this if government were more decentralised.

In fact, provincial government, the lynchpin of the CPC’s attempt to create participatory democracy, indigenous development, and self-reliance while heading off secession, was thrown out by the Constituent Assembly in less than twenty minutes of debate, although a Provincial Government Affairs Office was set up and people were advised that they should work for provincial government. This decision was made ‘on the spur of the moment,’ said Ebia Olewale, who explained that provincial government would cost ‘more than K15 million over five years’ and Papua New Guinea did not have ‘this kind of money at this stage’. However, the fact that he was smarting under his rejection in Bougainville and was projecting an authoritarian loyalty in the face of his own separatism and self-interest came out clearly enough. He did not admire the way the CPC ‘took their document to correct, without mistake in all its entirety’. The CPC report was not ‘sacrosanct’ and ‘the man who conceived the idea of provincial government’ (Momis) was now a secessionist. Provincial government ‘would cause massive problems with each province taking up different powers at different times and public servants becoming responsible to new bosses’. They must look to local-level leaders to build up traditional government structures from the village level, before trying to bring in something new like provincial government.

On 17 August the Constitution was formally adopted. Somare warned ‘of the dangers of having a Constitution not attuned to
people’s thinking and too inflexible’. Michael Pondros, Acting Leader of the Country Party, agreed but felt some members had ‘brought changes into the Constitution through some personal feelings of their own’ and he was afraid this might ruin it. He was not allowed to finish his speech. Olewale gagged the debate by putting the question to 60 per cent of the members and won 39:21. It seemed the culmination of the trend of the executive to foil the workings of Parliament. Even the Post-Courier was shocked:

It was a politically cynical move and soured an historic morning when members wanted to talk and clap and cheer . . . Perhaps the following exchange is the most fitting epitaph to the Constitutional Assembly in its dying days:

Mr Tom Koraea (Gulf): Mr Chairman, there is no quorum.
Mr Holloway (Speaker): Go ahead, sir (to Mr Olewale).
At the end there were nineteen members present.

The Post-Courier feature 18 August bore the headline AT LAST, BUT WHO’S CHEERING? This attitude tied in with the vote by the Constituent Assembly to defer the next election – scheduled for 1976 – until 1977. It was passed 50:29 with seven ministers in favour, and a ‘radical’ like Anton Parao out in the corridor. The proposer, Kobale Kale from Chimbu, who was to be rewarded with the next vacant ministry, said it was not his personal idea but had been put to him by members of the Government and the House. It would ensure continuity and stability. Within six months he was Minister for Education though he could barely read and write. One Southern Highlander wanted the election deferred to 1978 and mustered 26:50. In October Matiabe Yuwi, elder statesman of the Southern Highlands, moved for the election to be restored to 1976 but lost, with all ministers except Somare and Jephcott against. Olewale said it would set a precedent for changing the Constitution if the date was brought forward. This did not sound convincing and by then even Somare was suspected of having it both ways: keeping his repute as an apostle of democracy and profiting from its abuse.

Not all the signs were disturbing; some were just confusing. A national currency was introduced in April. The lead-up publicity was superb: there was little hoarding of Australian money and no cultic disruption. On the contrary, the holey kina coin (equalling $A1) which was pierced to resemble shell money, was so popular on the Sepik that some artefact sellers were trading it at $A3. A dual currency went into operation until December. Julius Chan gave an assurance that devaluation was not being planned and that currency speculators would be wise to think of appreciation. As Chan had just had a son he felt obliged to respond to pressure to affirm his confidence by calling the child Toea (i.e., ‘Cent’). Other national (and sub-national) symbols sporadically emerged and at the opening of the colourful Creative Arts Centre, Kiki could boast that ‘God made Papua New Guinea on a Saturday . . . and gave his richest culture to
the last man he made’. Papua New Guinea’s art ‘was not primitive – it was advanced . . . our culture is not written in any encyclopaedia, it is written in the head’. Those present were then treated to a performance of traditional music by Sepik flute players. Yet when the national anthem competition was finalised, not one of the five songs selected for the public poll rose, in either melody or verse, above the banalities of the mission school or had a tincture of national identity. The palm went to

O Arise all you (originally ye) sons of this land,
Let us sing of our joy to be free,
Praising God and rejoicing to be,
Papua New Guinea [pronounced spondaically, Guin-nee]

If the prosody was strained and it echoed fanfares from an ersatz ‘Marseillaise’, at least it proved less embarrassing in the end than the vanquished anthems, ‘The Past Ever Etched’ and, more particularly, ‘El Dorado, Papua New Guinea’, which in more sophisticated days would surely evoke the dross of exploitation.

At 5.11 p.m. on 15 September, Australian colonialism was ended. Sir John Guise, Governor-General, said

It is important that the people of Papua New Guinea and the rest of the world realise the spirit in which we are lowering the flag of our colonisers. We are lowering it, not tearing it down.

The combined Papua New Guinea Defence Force, Police and Royal Australia Navy bands played ‘Auld Lang Syne’ and after Prince Charles, dressed as a full colonel of the Welsh Guards, had inspected the troops with the Papua New Guinea commander, Brigadier-General Edward Diro, the troops gave a feu de joie. The Australian Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, himself once a member of Alf Conlon’s wartime think-tank and long an alleged expert on Papua New Guinea, received the folded flag and said that ‘both Papua New Guinea and Australia have been fortunate in that during the long period of colonisation we managed to avoid policies and relationships which have proved tragic elsewhere’. Mr Whitlam sat with Mr Somare in the grandstand and looked satisfied – perhaps, inevitably, a little smug – though even then, one suspects, his mind wandered to a grander world stage which he could thenceforth tread without what had become the ball and chain of colonialism. In spite of the exasperations of the past two years, he had achieved his vow of 1969: Independence by 1975. As he was to be dismissed as Prime Minister by Kerr in less than two months, it is interesting to speculate what might have happened had that event occurred a year earlier and the defter Peacock had handled the events. However, Somare treated Whitlam as the liberator and had apparently forgotten the recent cuts in his grant-in-aid.

At 10.25 a.m. the next day, the Bird of Paradise flag was raised on
Independence Hill near the new Waigani administrative blocks, the most eminent of which, ironically, was the Australian High Commission. Nevertheless, the Australian Mirage squadron, which had practised awesome acrobatics over the weekend, ran out of fuel and failed to provide symbolic defence cover. The Papua Besena rainmaker O’ongu Maughivu tried to ruin the day and early on there were unseasonable squalls, but the weather cleared for the ceremonies which were decorous and smooth. Police lined the routes with spanning efficiency. Sales of alcohol had been banned for a week. Prime Ministers came from Australia and Oceania but the most conspicuous visitor was Immelda Marcos, the Filipino president’s wife, who wore gorgeous dresses, brought an embarrassingly large entourage and invariably arrived late. In the provinces celebrations were cheerful enough, though many were doubtful about leaving their imperial mother’s breast. In Wabag (then Western Highlands) in the heart of Enga, Papua New Guinea’s largest language group, a man cut off his finger in a traditional expression of sorrow while Tei Abal reported that his people wept. They ‘were sad because they are conscious of the great help Australia has given us so that we can be independent’ and wanted Papua and New Guinea and Australia ‘to maintain ties of friendship and work closely together’. In Bougainville, in spite of the secessionist boycott, an estimated 18 000 non-locals were curious. Like Josephine Abaijah, many Papuans stayed away. She was with Eric Wright in Sydney, where she told the press that Australia had groomed Somare ‘to play the role of dictator’. If there were portents, there were no disruptions. In fact there was an invigorating air of self-confidence and magnanimity. Independence Day in Papua New Guinea seemed a heartening if perhaps minor event in world history.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 12

The Formation of the Somare Government
Problems of Government

Somare's remark about secessionists and the 'system' was made on ABC Monday Conference 8 May 1972. The Age columnist was Creighton Burns, 'Somare's real test ahead', 14 June 1974. Somare's Roy Milne lecture, 'The Emerging Role of Papua New Guinea in World Affairs' was published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 14 June 1974. F. F. Espie was Chairman of the Directors of Bougainville Copper Ltd and is quoted from his 'Taim Bipo, Taim Bihain', non-technical aspects of large-scale mining construction in a developing country: the development of the Bougainville copper deposit 1964-73, The Julius Kruschnitt Lecture, Brisbane, 6 August 1973. The attitude of Fr Momis to the Copper Agreement is stated in 'Taming the Dragon' in Peter G. Sack (ed.) Problem of Choice: land in Papua New Guinea's future, Canberra and Port Moresby, 1974, and is preceded by a chapter, 'Mining Bitterness', by three Bougainvillean graduates J. Dove, T. Miriung and M. Togolo. Duncan's statement is from PC 30 April 1975. Kaputin's contempt for 'white man's law' is manifest in his article, 'The Law: a colonial fraud?' in New Guinea, vol. 10, no. 1, May-June 1975. Quotations and figures relating to the Public Service are from J. A. Ballard, 'Public Administration in Papua New Guinea, 1972-1976', Australian Journal of Public Administration (henceforth AJPA) vol. 35, no. 3, September 1976, and Richard V. Welch, 'Manpower Planning Problems and the Public Service in Papua New Guinea', AJPA, same number. Serei Pitoi's 'Localisation in the Papua-New Guinea Public Service', AJPA vol. 32, no. 2, June 1973, was also useful. In view of its critical importance in every locality and its relation to the achievement of the Eight Aims, the land issue may seem to have been unduly neglected here, all the more so because it has not so far precipitated any national crisis. Readers are referred to Sack's Problem of Choice and to the review of it by Alan Ward in the special Independence issue of Meanjin Quarterly, vol. 34, no. 3, September 1975. Ward was a consultant on land matters for the PNG government. He outlines the cautious legislation on land passed before independence and states that the basic task has been 'to revitalise or replace traditional checks and balances and make them more effective in modern institutions - this is, if the stated principle of egalitarianism is to be taken seriously.' Ward had formerly published in New Guinea, vol. 6, no. 4, January 1972, an admonition, 'Agrarian
Revolution: handle with care’. Foster’s statement is in J. Brammall and Ronald J. May (eds) *Education in Melanesia*, Port Moresby and Canberra.

**Integration or Fragmentation**


**The Coming of Independence**

For the events of 1975 this section leans heavily on Griffin’s chronicles in *AJPH* December 1975 and April 1976. Somare’s remarks on the CPC are from *Sana*. The protests by Momis against Morrison and the Chief Minister’s office are quoted from Hegarty’s *AJPH* chronicle, August 1973; those by Momis and Kaputin against the Minority Report are from Hegarty, December 1974. The work of ‘a few Government operators’, is quoted from Hegarty, April 1975. Guise on the Governor-Generalship is from NBC *Contact*, 7.15 p.m., 29 July and *Interview*, 7.30 p.m., 16 September 1975. Other quotations are from *PC* 1975 as follows: Kiki and Morrison, 10 March; Tei Abal on I-Day, 21 March; rationale for the Queen as Head of State, 19 May; Somare’s ‘plea’, 22 May; Momis’s protest, 6
June; Tei Abal on the governor-generalship, 13 August; Guise’s Secretary and Somare on the civil list, 30-31 December; setting the date for I-Day, 19 June; Tovadek, 27 June; the debates on citizenship, and Momis on leadership, 23-30 June; Olewale on provincial government, 31 July, and on deferring elections, 3 October; Kiki on PNG culture, 24 February; Kerr, 16 September; Tei Abal on the sorrow of his people, 22 September.
The Regions

In spite of doubts as to whether parliamentarians ever meant post-independence elections to occur and doubts about the ability of the public service to stage them, post-independence elections were held in July 1977. Although her Westminster-style legislature was rickety and parties had failed to take local root, Papua New Guinea could be described as a loosely knit nation-state and there were grounds for believing that problems of integration were being overcome. The North Solomons (formerly Bougainville) and Papua Besena went to the polls in spite of their ceremonial declarations of independence, thus acknowledging the legitimacy of the central government. The price exacted, particularly by North Solomons, was the restoration of the concept of provincial government, which had previously been regarded as too dangerous and too expensive of both money and human resources. The knowledge that decentralisation was expected throughout most of the country, and the hope that it could be an engine to break up the massive public service were factors in reviewing the plans of the CPC. However, for better or worse, the North Solomons was the prime mover and eventually provided the model for the second tier of government which was to spread political patronage and engage the energies of the ambitious and the dissident who could not reach the central stage.

After ‘North Solomonese’ rebels unilaterally declared independence, Somare took a fabian course with them. In October 1975 he abolished their provincial government, froze its assets and tried to isolate its leaders. No direct action was to be taken by police but clear breaches of the law were to be met firmly. Particularly, Somare did not want to make a martyr of Hannett. For Momis he still had a high (if exasperated) regard and the hope of reconciliation. He used every
device to prevent the acceptance of Momis’s (and Bele’s) resignation from Parliament. Disillusioned, Momis returned from the United Nations and via Honiara in the Solomon Islands for reasons of caution as well as to sound trans-Solomons sentiment. Like Hannett before him, he impressed leaders there with his idealism and a number of them had to be carefully dissuaded from moving formally in their legislative assembly in early 1976 to support North Solomons secession which seemed to offer the hope of eventual ‘re-union’ and economic viability for their emerging nation. In the last months of 1975 there was some testing of wills as local North Solomones leaders contrived a series of minor incidents which were in turn met by controlled police action. The North Solomones also set about preparing their own independent elections and dismantling their alien local government councils. Their hold on villagers was consolidated in an alternative government while Sarei and Momis themselves kept up informal contacts with Port Moresby. They, however, could not contain local ‘hotheads’. Violence erupted in January 1976, airstrips were dug up and government property destroyed. Sir Paul Lapun, whose life was allegedly threatened, was surprised to find himself rescued by police helicopter from his village. Somare was under pressure to use the army against rebels who had neither arms nor any palpable idea of gaining outside support. He carefully refused to call his own legitimacy into question and to bring his force of last resort into politics. The tension subsided, talks were held, and by March Somare was offering ‘a form of statehood’. Momis and Bele still refused to take their seats in Parliament. New elections had to be held but, only opportunists could be found to contest their seats.

In May riot police had to be sent to Buin but in August Somare was able to announce that a solution had been achieved ‘in a true Melanesian spirit . . . that will guarantee the Bougainville people an effective role in running their own affairs within the framework of the Papua New Guinea national government’. The province of North Solomons was recognised together with its quasi-state government.

Redistributing financial power, the national government was to retain the right to levy and collect export and import duties, excise, taxes on corporate profits and personal incomes, royalties on natural resources and vehicle-registration charges. It would, however, remit to the province proceeds from vehicle registration and from royalties on resources, derived revenue grants at the rate of 1¼ per cent of the value of exports (less royalties), unconditional grants such as that normally set aside in the annual Budget and conditional grants for specific purposes.

The provincial government was granted an exclusive right to levy a head tax and taxes on the retail sales of goods, entertainment and
land. It would have exclusive legislative rights over mobile traders apart from banks, over community and village schools, the sale and distribution of alcoholic drinks, public entertainment, cultural centres and sporting activities, local and village government, village courts and penalties for enforcing provincial laws. It could also legislate in other areas but would be subject, in these cases, to a concurrency law preventing it from duplicating or being inconsistent with a national law. This included the management and development of major resources. The national government could also restrain the imposition of taxes which it judged to be ‘excessive or discriminatory’. Only one (national) public service was to be envisaged and the national authorities were to have ‘the ultimate powers necessary to make this effective’. Somare’s communiqué on provincial government for the North Solomons stressed that the system of concurrent legislative powers could only work if both tiers of government had ‘realistic expectations of each other’s intentions on legislation’. The national government was bound to assure orderly management of the national economy and the development of the major national resources ‘for the benefit of all Papua New Guineans’. Somare was also careful to add that the Provincial government understood that ‘very large administrative changes’ would now be needed within the national government and that this would ‘create some problems of implementation’. Both parties had agreed ‘to approach the big task ahead with a spirit of national co-operation’.

A sign, however, that PNG may, in fact, have set up an alternative rather than a second-tier government in Bougainville was its acceptance of the change in the provincial name to North Solomons, a description which, not surprisingly, Somare found was acceptable to the Solomon Islands government. Starting off with a grant of approximately K5 million, the North Solomons was correctly called by Somare ‘a special case’ and hindsight may one day reveal that it would have been better if this had been most emphatically acknowledged earlier rather than letting that province act as a pace-setter. Other provinces, such as East New Britain and the Eastern Highlands, immediately staked a claim on provincial government before the new nation had any chance to perform an organisational retuning or to sound those ideological fanfares which were needed to rescue further developments from episodic improvisation. Soon most provinces were forming interim governments and looking for sites to house their new legislatures. Expectations of provincial government seemed far too high to be satisfied by hasty ad hoc preparations. Moreover, the new barrels of preferment which could dispense overseas trips to provincial representatives and costly headquarters for newly affluent patrons had not eased the tendency to fragment. The Jimi-Wahgi still wanted to be on their own, while the North Fly wanted to separate from the South. Only in the North Solomons did
the provincial idea seem to denote a fully shared identity, and there the problem was sub-nationalism. Its provincial government, headed by Alexis Sarei (who was elected Premier without a contest) was not so preoccupied with spending its immediate windfalls as not to slight the national government when necessary, or to want to repatriate PNG foreigners back to the mainland if they could not find employment, regardless of the consequences for its own people in other provinces. Secession was still in the air during the 1977 elections and there were local leaders who continued to believe further options might open once the Solomon Islands became independent. They were no doubt interested in the reaction of their jet-black ‘brothers’ of the Western Solomons, who protested on Independence Day (July 1978) against incorporation into the new state, tearing down the new flag at Gizo. Meanwhile, Momis and three of his supporters swept the polls in the national elections. Momis beat Hannett by some 13 000 to 8000, with Hannett using the un-Melanesian rhetoric that a priest should keep out of politics. Hannett continued to have problems with his colleagues, gave his attention to the local Development Corporation, and eventually accepted a scholarship to study agro-economics overseas. Momis remained the North Solomons’ deepest pledge that it would adjust to the national polity, particularly as both Lapun and Mola lost their seats.

Papua remained an enigma more than a problem. In 1976, when a National Capital province was detached from Central province, with Abaijah retaining the Port Moresby seat, an election was held for Central Region. In spite of his opportunities with the Village Task Force and government aid in his campaign, the National President of Pangu, Moi Avei, an articulate and sophisticated radical graduate, could poll only fourth among six candidates. The Papua Besena candidate, James Mopio, polled almost twice Avei’s votes. Moi Avei, married to an Australian, combined, like so many younger radicals, the life style of the white man with his critique of political corruption and neo-colonialism. He had, for example, protested vehemently against Pangu’s developing a business-arm in car-selling. After his defeat he resigned the party Presidency. Mopio was more credible to villagers. Mopio could tell a Townsville (Queensland) audience in late 1976 that Papua could not accept unity with New Guinea and that the Torres Strait border should be shifted as far north as the old New Guinea boundary, but in Besena style declared himself ‘a man of peace’, ostentatiously smoking through a huge bamboo peace pipe to prove it. At the 1977 elections Abaijah showed she had lost none of her appeal by trouncing Kiki, who unnecessarily and rather vaingloriously challenged her, while Gavera Rea was narrowly defeated by her Besena supporter, Mahuru Rarua, Lord Mayor of Port Moresby. Seven Besena candidates were successful, all from the Central and National Capital provinces. The
lack of success in other provinces was due in part to flimsy organisation, which Abaijah rationalised as follows:

The basic organisational structure is not based on that of a foreign political party in a Westminster system of government. It is based on an old and very efficient traditional Papuan social structure of ‘fission and fusion’ or coming together and drawing apart as each circumstance arises.

If a person wants to establish some Papua Besena organisation or conduct some Papua Besena activity he can call it any name he likes and the leaders of Papua Besena will support it.

Papua Besena comes together. If the organisation happens to become a power base of individual [sic] or for promoting interests or activities contrary to the principles of Papua Besena then we draw apart. Nobody is injured, nobody is hurt and nobody is disgraced...

It is a strict policy of Papua Besena that leadership must arise where it will throughout Papuan society and leaders must never be appointed. Leadership may assert itself in any form in any situation.

This to a Western mind, seems to be mere attitudinising and seems to suggest that Besena lacks fibre if not bulk. When two National Capital District seats were declared vacant by the court of disputed returns, Besena candidates won both of the consequent by-elections held in mid-1978. Rarua again defeated Rea and Dr Goasa Damena beat the luckless Kiki in Port Moresby North-East seat by 28 votes when the Pangu candidates divided their electoral strength. In spite of the fact that Mopio seemed to be drifting away from Abaijah and Besena parliamentarians had difficulty opposing the government without supporting the more aggressive New Guineans of the Opposition, Besena was not a spent force. But outside the Central Province, provincial governments – there will presumably be seven of them in what was formerly Papua – will acquire their own focus. This is probably the reason that Papuan leaders like Taureka (also defeated in 1977), Guise and Rea say they want a Papuan regional government within a united PNG and oppose discrete provincial governments in Papua: it keeps a separatist option open – just in case. Conversely, provincial government may, short of a breakdown in law and order, transmute trans-Papuan secession into a sentiment to be celebrated in pubs and at parties, late in the day.

The Highlands stayed in the turmoil of interclan fighting, made worse by the prodigious beer drinking on the high returns for coffee in a year when Brazil’s coffee crop failed. Prices rose from K1.46 a kilo to K4.56 within the year 1976-77. ‘Small pig’ (beer) competed with the traditional beast in exchanges for prestige but even this unproductive and unhealthy use of affluence did not prevent the growing differentiation in the wealth of the new peasantry, while it fattened the profits of the middle man. The sense of deprivation remained with Highlanders as their children continued to have fewer educational chances and their development remained inferior to that of the coast and Islands, but no political force or cult emerged to give
regional coherence. While in 1976 the major by-election in Western Highlands Regional was a triumph for the United Party candidate, Raphael Doa, and there were some grounds for believing the UP might gain from Pangu's failure to take root, the UP could not integrate local aspirations into a national policy. This was in spite of the eclipse of the National Party following Somare's reshuffle of his ministry in December 1975 in the interests of what he called 'teamwork' but what was, in effect, discipline.

The UP continued to suffer from the almost genteel cooperation of Tei Abal, who still every so often praised Somare's leadership, accepted a knighthood, and announced on the first anniversary of Independence that he was prepared to support Somare as leader after the next elections. In March 1977 his consuming feud with Anton Parao led to the latter's expulsion from the party of which he had been a vital founder. Parao also lost his seat. When the general elections came round, the UP's policy was hard to distinguish from that of others, as its major distinctive plank from 1972 to 1975 had been opposition to early independence. One of its few notable successes in opposition had been defeat of Olewale's Public Order Bill, a rewrite of the attempted legislation of 1970 which UP members had then supported and Pangu had bitterly opposed. Of this bill Kaputin said that it contained what was in fact practised by the Tom Ellis administration in the past because they considered Papua New Guineans had no sense.

In the debate Paul Langro, formerly a Pangu founder and later Deputy Leader of UP, claimed that the bill was 'against democracy' while, during the heckling, the new Highlands member, Raphael Doa, called Pita Lus (veteran Pangu) 'Idi Amin'. Government and Opposition looked like simply in and out as UP criticism focussed on allegations of corruption, extravagance, politicisation of the Public Service, inadequacies in education and electoral rules. Ironically, by 1977 it was the UP which had problems raising moneys. Many of its former expatriate supporters had accommodated themselves to Pangu moderation and sensed the inchoateness of the UP organisation. Somare had not been vindictive. For example, Denis Buchanan, a former MLA who had supplied the UP with air support in 1972, had been given an MBE in an honours list although he had stated publicly that he would not seek PNG citizenship because he feared PNG would end a dictatorship. The 'system' to which Somare had referred in p. xxx) could be considered elastic and/or magnanimous according to taste.

With preferential voting discarded in favour of first-past-the-post in 1977, no fewer than 105 men contested the seven seats in the turbulent and densely populated Simbu (formerly Chimbu) province, although it cost K100 as a deposit to stand. Most candidates
were unofficially UP, although the party endorsed only some 16 of them. Party cash was forthcoming where there was merit in splitting votes. In the flush of high coffee prices ‘green leaves’ (cash) were splashed about with ‘small pig’, especially by the younger *bisnis*-men and public servants who had less access to clan loyalties. Money, however, did not always win. All the sitting Open members were defeated, and Pangu made inroads into the central Highlands and UP territory. However, voters had not been attracted by Pangu’s policies and the party had established no effective organisation at the village level. Rather, Pangu leaders had sought strong local candidates and they in turn had wanted to be associated with those likely to distribute power and wealth after the election. According to Bill Standish, a close student of the Simbu,

An analysis of voting figures in the six Open seats reveals that voting in almost all areas went straight down clan lines. Those candidates won – whether young or old, Pangu or UP – who had ensured that their clan vote is not badly divided. I have no reason to believe that the Chimbu Open voting patterns were unusual, and the winning totals of formal votes under the first-past-the-post system ranged from 12 per cent to 24 per cent.

The only survivor in Simbu from the old parliament was the regional representative, Lambakey Okuk, whose intemperate and showy campaign emphasised the deliberate neglect of the Highlands and whose patronage was lavish. He won with 22 per cent of the vote, defeating Kobale Kale who, with even less formal instruction, had succeeded him as Minister for Education in return for services defeating Kobale Kale. Not long after, following an accident, Kale was gaoled for drunken driving and his life was in the jeopardy of payback. This was symptomatic of the ‘turbulence’ which Standish noted had followed the counting of the polls:

Upheavals occurred in each of the six Chimbu Open seats, and included thestoning of a government car and out-station, the intimidation of electoral officials, violence against those considered to have failed to deliver their support, and plain old orderly demonstrations with petitions. The candidates had had a lot at stake, and when they lost, they blamed hapless officials, but not themselves or their people. Needless to say there were few – if any – public servants willing to conduct future elections in Chimbu, or even to stay there.

The 1977 Elections and their Aftermath

Although Pangu and PPP failed to build themselves into a network with mass popular support, they had the advantage of political patronage which often proved decisive when minority votes could triumph. In the months before the elections, writes David Hegarty, all parties produced platforms which reflected a clear convergence of ideology and policy. They were bland documents all emphasising rural development programmes, foreign investment to stimulate industry and mineral-resource projects, extension of road and transport infrastructure, more education, law and order, and the mainte-
nance of stable government. Despite claims by Pangu officials after the elections that policy differences with the PPP had to be ironed out, the only discernible differences appeared to be Pangu’s slightly more cautious approach to foreign investment (viz. investment ‘which truly benefits the people’ compared with the PPP’s ‘appropriate incentives’, and returns for investors and ‘reasonable royalties’ for the people). The PPP was also less emphatic about decentralisation and it urged PNG’s active cooperation with ASEAN.

As only the former strongholds built by Voutas and Somare in Morobe and East Sepik seemed to retain any of the original Pangu organisation, many observers were sceptical of the party’s chances and Somare was expected by many to be likely to head a coalition with the UP after the election. In this they underestimated the aura of patronage surrounding Somare and why he might well dispense with ‘grass-roots’ organisation and, for that matter, a forceful ideology. On tour, he managed to resuscitate almost defunct branches and lay hands on likely candidates. More important, however, half-way through the campaign the slogan emerged, IF YOU WANT SOMARE FOR PRIME MINISTER SUPPORT YOUR PANGU CANDIDATE.

With coffee and cocoa prices at record levels, there was room for compliance in many rural areas. Of Pangu’s 82 endorsed candidates, 38 won seats at a cost of over K200 000 ‘financed largely by expatriate business interests and by a mortgage on party-owned real estate’. Fortunately, or conveniently, ‘the Organic Law prohibiting foreign contributions to parties had not come into force’.

Oddly, in the light of their respective reputations in 1972, the PPP, the party of bisnis and patronage, spent only half the amount used by Pangu. In spite of being part-Chinese and having once taken out Australian citizenship, Julius Chan was able to capitalise on his repute as the father of PNG’s hard currency (Papa bilong Kina na Toea) and the ablest of PNG ministers. He had kept down inflation, retained the value of the Kina against the devalued Australian dollar, and made PNG presentable for loans from international finance houses. A bisnis party drawing support from Island and coastal plantations, both indigenous and expatriate, stood to gain from rising prices for cocoa (K910 a tonne in March 1976 to K2006 a tonne in March 1977) and copra (K130 to K230). Adroit management of his followers, plus the access to emoluments which PPP provided, allowed Chan to recruit supporters during the Third House and to endorse able public servants for the Fourth. Between 1972 and 1977 PPP’s numbers grew from 10 to 16 and increased to 20 at the elections. Former strongholds in the Islands and New Guinea Coast generally held firm and gains were made in the Southern Highlands (where Chan had cultivated the Area Authority), Milne Bay and Western provinces.

More dramatic was the formal re-entry of Sir John Guise into politics. As predicted by himself he had not remained aloof as
Governor-General and this had led in 1976 to an unseemly alterca-
tion with Sir Maori Kiki, who called for Guise's resignation. Guise
countered with the charge that Kiki coveted his position, but eventu-
ally Guise resigned in early 1977 and was succeeded by another
Papuan, Tore Lokoloko, who was duly knighted. Somare cam-
paigned against Guise but could not shake his personal prestige in his
Milne Bay electorate. The remainder of the seats in that province,
however, were won by Pangu and PPP, suggesting that Guise's
wide patronage had waned.

All in all, 859 candidates contested 109 electorates, i.e. 8 per
electorate compared with 5.5 in 1964. Subsequently, almost 50 per
cent of those elected won with less than 30 per cent of the vote. A
candidate with a large clan base could concentrate on this to the
exclusion of more integrative vote-catching and electoral horse-
trading. Trends observed in previous elections continued. Where
72.3 per cent had voted in 1964 there was now less than 60 per cent.
Most incumbents had held merely a tenuous hold on their seats.
Only 35 of the 95 who sought re-election were returned, and nine
out of 18 ministers were defeated. The new parliament was better
educated with the majority now having secondary education and six
holding university degrees. 'Expatriates' declined further, from nine
to three, with Barry Holloway holding his position in the Eastern
Highlands and being responsible for much of Pangu's success there.
Two more women (none, of course, from the Highlands) joined
Abajiah. Somare won with 87 per cent; Holloway with 64; Boyamo
Sali routed the young radical graduate (this time with a UP label),
Utula Samana, with 69 per cent; Chan got 56; Momis 53; and Abal
49. That anomalous offshoot of the UP, the Country Party, lost all
but one of its 10 members, who came from Manus Island, not from
the bush. Sinake Giregire, the prince of Highlands bisnis-men and an
MP since 1964, was defeated with his 'party'.

Although it was a clear personal triumph for him, Somare seemed
far from being able to form a ministry in early post-election days. He
nevertheless immediately nominated Chan as his deputy, irrespec-
tive of Papuan and Highland feelings. He also appeared to close off
further options by saying he would not have Guise, who had sent out
word that he would receive overtures but subsequently lamented,'Has the nephew forgotten his uncle?' At one stage there was talk of a
grand coalition, with Abal getting a ministry for each seven suppor-
ters he could bring in. It is probable that Somare could see such an
alliance as being so grand as to be more unstable than a comfortable
majority. In any case Pangu had second thoughts. Meanwhile the
UP sought its own national alliance with Guise as leader. At this
stage Momis and Kaputin played a waiting game for the balance of
power, forming an Alliance for Progress and Regional Development
(APRD), but in the end the bandwagon ran for Somare, who gained
69 supporters (Pangu 38, PPP 20, Independent 9 and Mataungans 2).
Thomas Kavali now called himself a ‘pro-Pangu independent’ and got a ministry; Momis joined Somare; Kaputin stayed aloof as Independent Opposition; Papua Besena allied itself with UP. On 9 August Somare, in the vote for prime ministership, crushed Guise 69 to 36. In allotting portfolios Somare and Chan gave the first 18 to Pangu (nine), PPP (six) and Pangu-independents (three). Sensibly, Momis was made Minister for Decentralisation. The ministry was then expanded to 22 to give the broadest regional basis and then further inflated by the creation of eight ‘parliamentary secretaries’. These last positions were constitutionally doubtful but eventually became full-blown portfolios. It was another sharing of spoils.

In March 1978 the influence of Momis and the more ‘radical’ members of Pangu induced Somare, in accord with their Leadership Code, to propose restrictions on the financial activities of ministers, senior public servants and heads of statutory corporations. They were to be obliged to withdraw from business, place private assets (and those of their immediate family) in a ‘blind trust’ and be prohibited from acquiring further assets while holding national office. The Leader of the Opposition also came to be included. Plans were made to legislate political parties out of business dealings and provide a more equitable basis for their support. Somare put his own sincerity on the line by posing ‘support for his proposals as a fundamental question of confidence in his leadership’. Chan criticised parts of the proposals as so severe that they ‘could result in people of demonstrated ability having to leave government’, but he supported a general strengthening of the Leadership Code. Inability to ensure that the amendment to the Constitution which is necessary would gain the required two-thirds majority led Somare to announce in May that the introduction of the proposal was to be postponed, but he also referred to the ‘somewhat volatile state’ of Parliament. This concerned, in the first instance, the Opposition, the leadership of which Abal was finally forced to relinquish. Abal’s nominee, Raphael Doa, however, was unable to withstand a challenge from Iambakey Okuk who had formed a People’s United Front (PUF). Okuk defeated Doa 23 to 20 votes after he had ‘crossed to the Government benches and argued with several members, pulling at their sleeves, to join his group’. The members came from Simbu and joined with Guise (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), some former members of the diminishing UP, some Papua Besena supporters and some Independents in the PUF. Okuk’s policy statement claimed that he intended to ‘oppose, expose and depose’ Somare and that PNG was ‘over-governed’ and needed ‘four regional governments instead of twenty’ (viz. Coastal Papua, the Highlands, Northern New Guinea, New Guinea Islands). As for the new Leadership Code, it cut across the Highlander big men tradition: a leader must have personal wealth.

Okuk’s emergence as a nominally national leader finally led So-
mare to question the Westminster system. The ‘politics of personalities’, he said, is not ‘the right type of politics’. Regional loyalties were too demanding. He said, ‘It frightens me as an individual. I do not want people to be taken for a ride either by gunpoint or by threat . . .’ He shelved his Leadership Code temporarily because conflict

would prove to the rest of the people outside that there is no stability in government; there is no stability in PNG. Stability is the first criteria [sic] I had to bear in mind.

From this point, however, Somare consulted his PPP allies less and, in early November, unilaterally reshuffled his ministry, expanding it to include more Pangu members, downgrading the PPP (taking Forests out of Julius Chan’s Primary Industry portfolio), and bringing back from the wilderness John Kaputin as Minister for the National Planning and Development (including control of the National Investment and Development Authorities). Evidently the so-called ‘socialists’ (or rather, economic nationalists) were in the ascendant. On 7 November Chan withdrew his PPP from the coalition in spite of placatory efforts by Somare at the personal if not political level. The Australian papers saw Somare as ‘fighting for survival’ as Okuk moved to align his group with Chan’s. Somare made out that he was prepared to lose (‘I don’t think it is important me being the Prime Minister’) but the following day he had separate offers of support from Okuk and Doa, who were fresh from threatening votes of no confidence in him. Inevitably, he turned down Okuk as Deputy Prime Minister, accepted support from Doa and gave the UP in return five mostly unimportant portfolios with, at last, one for Sir Tei Abal, albeit the lowly Utilities. Abal, whom Okuk in late 1975 had prophesised might join Somare, had been advocating a one-party state and condemning Okuk’s idea of national parties based on regions. The UP, or what was left of it, had turned out to be the party of stabilisation, if not of stability – and Somare now seemed to have a bloc of Highlander support rather than a number of piecemeal recruits from that region.

On the eve of the debate on the vote of no-confidence that followed, the former National Party leader, Thomas Kavali (then Minister for Housing) once more defected, but Somare came through 63-45 with one egregious abstention. The whole chamber was present and the gallery and foyer were packed as Okuk tried to gain support by having Chan in his place as alternative minister. (Constitutionally, an alternative had to be named for the vote to be valid.) In doing this, Okuk antagonised the sexagenarian GOM of politics, Sir John Guise, who, after all, was his deputy. Guise walked out of each division and then resigned from the PUF. The Opposition needed time to reorganise and, characteristically he said: ‘I’m plain John Guise who wants to devote all his
time to representing the people who elected him'. In 1978 he still held to the superiority of Presidentialism over Westminster; and perhaps he felt that parliamentary chaos might still bring the call. His case was more dignified than 'the case of an honourable member who defected from the government to the opposition one day, and redefected to the government the next'; he was 'worthy perhaps of a place in the Guinness Book of Records', said Percy Chatterton. The 'politics of personalities' was brittle but the outcome appeared to be a further triumph for Somare who (with verbal support from Kaputin) was quick to dismiss Okuk's charges of 'socialism' and to reassure responsible investors. However, Ebia Olewale now became Deputy Prime Minister and the 'left-wing' of Pangu, ably advised by its group of young supporters in the Public Service, seemed to be in the van. The National Pressure Group (NPG) affiliations created by Momis and Kaputin in 1974 were still influential. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of Parliament may have been a casualty as MPs scrambled for places. Parliament, however, could not be refurbished because a motion of the House, not prime ministerial advice to the Governor-General, was required for a dissolution and, going on past record, the House would hardly forfeit the perks of the next three and a half years in looking for some revised mandate.

Relieved editorials appeared in the former metropole, with the Australian of 9 November (under a caption NEW GUINEA TREMORS) hoping that Somare knew what he was doing:

He has to be certain that PNG's new government will be at least as workable, democratic, progressive and well-led as the government it replaces. Nothing less will do. This is . . . not to say that the Australian government should intervene or seek to advise, except in the role of good friend. The last position Australia should adopt is that of some sort of uncle figure, jingling our annual grant and giving condescending advice. The democratic process must apply in PNG along the lines of the Westminster system which the country has adopted. But we should use whatever good offices we have to help the new coalition settle in as smoothly as possible.

Short of denying that PNG had acquired full sovereignty, it would be hard to envisage a more patronising public comment. Paternalism had been replaced by avuncularism in Australia, though now with a tacit chequebook rather than a jingling purse. To compound the patronage, a highly respected columnist in the Australian on the same day called Somare 'the world's smartest black politician since Jomo Kenyatta [because] he imposed a personal vision on a young country which not only never wanted it, but from a logical point of view seemed incapable of accepting it' [emphases mine, J. G.]. Whether black Somare, however, would turn out to have been as 'smart' (or as 'visionary') as his greatest white adviser, Andrew Peacock, who fathered this hyperbole (see p. ), only time would tell. It also remained to be seen whether the Melanesian variant was less 'logical' than the orthodox Westminster system.
Foreign Affairs

Australia was dilatory in preparing Papua New Guinea for foreign relations. Only in July 1971 was the nucleus of a PNG foreign office established as an ‘international affairs branch’ in the Department of the Administrator. By early 1973 one indigene was acting as protocol officer, twelve were in training and five vacancies for trainees had been advertised. Canberra was at this stage already referring foreign policy and defence matters to the PNG Chief Minister or Cabinet. Six months before Independence effective control was transferred to Port Moresby as a means of asserting that PNG was de facto independent and, soon after, Anthony Siaguru, who was Australian schooled and one of the University of PNG’s first law graduates, was appointed permanent head of the Foreign Affairs and Defence department. He was thirty years old and from Somare’s East Sepik district. The first effective minister was Kiki, who combined not only Defence and Trade with Foreign Affairs but a newfound enthusiasm for pedigreed pig-raising which, on the odd occasion, made it necessary for documents of state to be signed down on the farm. Kiki’s unsatisfactory preparation for such a task was all too clear at the first significant public seminar on foreign policy held in PNG in June 1972 but his incorrigible amateurism was publicly obscured by his jocose self-assurance and militant concern for the black man’s dignity. His decision that foreign missions to PNG could not be shared with Canberra seemed unrealistic when Djakarta and Manila were the next nearest possibilities. With the physical proximity of the former metropole a fact of life, critics thought that more constructive gestures of emancipation were available. But the decision had also been taken so that some major powers – particularly Russia and China – could be held at a distance until PNG had the resources to allow the outside world to compete on her territory.

Before Independence PNG set up missions in Canberra, Sydney, Djakarta, Washington, New York (UNO), Wellington and Suva and, just afterwards, in Tokyo. In 1976 offices were also set up in London and Brussels, PNG having been accepted as a signatory to the Lome Convention and given preferential access to European Economic Community markets on a parity with other former colonies. In Honiara, capital of the Solomons, a sensitive post in view of Bougainville secessionism, PNG, however, had to rely on an Australian mission belatedly set up in 1975. The inexperience and understandable immaturity of overseas representatives led to a series of scandals involving opulent living, negligence and suspicion of corruption. The style of some overseas representatives on race tracks and golf courses contrasted with the rhetoric of the Eight Aims. In late 1976 Oala Oala-Rarua resigned as High Commissioner to Australia because he was ‘frustrated and dissatisfied’. His government,
he said 'bypassed the Canberra office and dealt directly with the Australian government in defiance of the proper channels'. PNG diplomats, he maintained, were completely isolated from the Government:

The department does not give us information that we require to do our job effectively. We don’t know the movements of our Ministers. We didn’t even know that the Prime Minister was visiting Australia last week to complete the ESSO agreement for oil explorations in the Gulf of Papua . . . In Canberra we relied on the Australian media. If I wanted to find out what was happening I could ring Port Moresby, but our man in Washington is in a most difficult position. He just waits until one of our people goes there before he finds out what is happening.

Oala-Rarua went on to accuse Australian Foreign Affairs officials attached to the Port Moresby Government of running his department, an accusation which may have led to the recall at this time of the last Australian officer directly attached to it. It did not, however, prevent an Australian intelligence officer attached to the High Commission from approaching an Australian Professor of Economics at UPNG in 1977 for secret information on West Irianese in such a manner as to reflect not only on the spy’s intelligence – and he was himself a former tutor at UPNG – but on the actual security of the service which employed him. The High Commission was stoned. Both High Commissioners in Wellington and Suva were recalled in early 1976 and not replaced ‘because of lack of departmental funds’. Oala-Rarua thought the exercise in both cases had been a waste of money, could have been handled from Canberra and had damaged PNG relations with New Zealand and Fiji.

Put in a position in 1972 of having to suggest what PNG’s future foreign policy might be, Ebia Olewale, then Minister for Education, said:

I can see no reason why foreign policy should not be a part of national policy and a tool for nation-building to establish a consciousness of PNG amongst our own people. Kwame Nkrumah had many faults but one lesson that was learnt from him was that he made his role in African and world affairs a part of his internal policy. He helped Ghanaians forget that they were many tribes lumped together in one nation making up an African brotherhood.

The situation in PNG is, of course, different . . . PNG occupies a lonely place in world affairs. We do not belong to a large natural grouping like the African countries that reached independence together in the 1960s, we are not big enough, and do not have a long tradition of contact with other areas to have established an independent personality. We are probably comparatively too big to be content as part of the South Pacific island world. [PNG is much larger in area and population than all the islands of Oceania combined.] We are likely to be too proud to remain tied to the apron-strings of Australia. We shall therefore have to find an identity that is our own and that serves the dual purpose of gaining recognition for this country abroad and makes our people conscious of their nationality.

Somare was tackling this problem when, in October 1975, his country was admitted to the United Nations as its 142nd member. He tried to identify himself as an authentic ‘leader of a new Third
World government’ but simultaneously commended Australia for not inflicting ‘an authoritarian colonialist policy upon my country’, for being ‘a sympathetic and generous donor of aid’ and for guaranteeing ‘that this role will continue in our new relationship as partners and neighbouring states in the Pacific’. ‘Every action and attitude’ of PNG foreign policy was to be ‘dominated by our realisation that our first commitment is at home’ where development programmes had to be ‘consolidated’. As they were ‘ethnically’ South Pacific people Papua New Guineans would give priority to that region, Southeast Asia would come second, while towards other nations PNG would adopt a policy of ‘universalism’. He quoted Julius Nyerere of Tanzania: ‘We do not want our friends to choose our enemies for us.’ A year later Kiki told the UN:

Universalism, as practised by PNG, is not widely understood. It is often confused with ‘non-alignment’, which it certainly resembles, but from which it differs in many important areas. Universalism to PNG means taking the middle path without veering to either side on questions relating to political ideologies, creeds or governmental systems. We see it as a balanced policy with which PNG will make no enemies. But it does not mean just sitting on the fence. It is an active and positive policy.

Kiki reaffirmed that his government would condemn countries which practised racism or apartheid, and would uphold self-determination – and in September 1977 PNG did cut trade links with South Africa. In the Pacific PNG would support ‘a progressive movement towards decolonisation’ and ‘was deeply committed to a nuclear-free zone’. Somare could both give advice on decolonisation to New Hebridean leaders in 1978 and allow France to set up an embassy in Port Moresby, an acknowledgement perhaps of the importance of trade with the EEC. PNG ‘even-handedness’ was to be seen in the recognition of both North and South Korea; the latter was providing expert personnel for the construction of the Ramu hydroelectric scheme. In October 1977 Somare condemned Idi Amin in ‘the strongest possible terms’ at the 32nd UN General Assembly extending what Kiki had said on the occasion of the UN’s thirtieth anniversary:

We cannot accuse others of inhuman policy if our own actions at home are repressive . . . We cannot protest the racist actions of white-controlled African governments, if our own attitudes are equally at fault.

While these gestures did not add up to ‘an active and positive policy’ they put a brave face on pragmatism, the reconciliation of domestic interests and the lack of a substantive ideology.

The constraints placed on PNG by acculturation and geography may be illustrated in the efforts to establish and extend relations with China. Even allowing that China would scarcely become a Mecca for a government of *bisnis* and *big men*, she could still provide the stage for declarations of rural self-reliance, dedication to alternative
technology, and a determination to walk towards full independence, as Mao Tse Tung said, 'on two legs'. An accord with China would be a conciliatory gesture towards the Eight Point Plan and to urban radicals with austere ambitions for their rural brothers. With some such ideas in mind no doubt, Somare accepted an invitation to visit China in October 1976 and establish diplomatic ties. Just before this a Chinese trade exhibition was opened in Port Moresby at which the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Gavera Rea, said that it was his Government's intention to extend the country's external relations beyond those prescribed by the previous colonial administration. The extension of our international trade is one of the most important areas in which our universalist policy will be clearly apparent to all nations. The decision to hold a trade exhibition in PNG is an example of this policy being put into practice. . . . the vast majority of the people of PNG were rural dwellers . . . the country did not want machines that required specialised technicians . . . but those based on simple technology . . .

In Peking Somare enjoyed the prestige of being the first head of state to be welcomed following the death of Mao Tse Tung and the purge of the Gang of Four. Certainly without irony, Premier Hua Kuo Feng praised PNG for its 'protracted and unremitting struggle for independence' and a joint communique pledged, as soon as would be mutually practicable to develop diplomatic relations, friendship and cooperation between their two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful co-existence.

This bilateral agreement was in turn, according to the official PNG Newsletter 'to speed up trade, economic and cultural ties'. The Newsletter claimed that Somare had
succeeded in doing what he set out to do. He has established diplomatic relations with China without having to agree to the non-recognition of Taiwan. In this he had adhered to his country’s policy of universalism; taking the middle path on questions relating to political ideologies, creeds or governmental systems – of making friends with many countries and enemies of none . . . Mr Somare said he has been impressed by the practical achievements and methods of village level technology and agriculture in China . . . but he did not like the way the system had been forced on the Chinese community and he would avoid any form of regimentation or force in applying new ideas . . . If any of our villages want to turn themselves into the sort of society which China calls a production unit, then we will help them with ideas and technology. But we are individuals, and the motivation must come from the people themselves not from the forced society.’

On the way home Somare visited the Philippines where President Marcos gave him a ‘tumultuous’ welcome with walkways of red carpet and avenues of gaily dressed children. In November, when announcing Pangu’s guidelines for the elections, Somare referred – some thought ominously – to the creation of a ‘New Society’ for PNG, one ‘that will accept our old traditional values but, at the same time, adapt easily to an alien electronic age of the twentieth century’.

PNG and Indonesia

It is possible that the reference to ‘the New Society’ was made with an eye on Indonesia because President Soeharto seemed to choose Somare’s return as a chance to warn PNG of communist influence which, incongruously, he charged were behind the secession movements in the North Solomons and Papua. Indonesia, he said, ‘would not hesitate’ to deal with any communist movement ‘within or without’ that posed a threat to Indonesian security. His immediate concern, however, was with Irian Djaya and its Free West Papuan Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM) which had threatened during the Indonesian invasion of East Timor to seek communist support if it could not get assistance from PNG or elsewhere. The formulation of policy towards Irian Djaya has been potentially a grave issue in PNG’s affairs.

While there are few keen students of Indonesian history or language in PNG, Australian propaganda in the 1960s, pan-Melanesian fraternity and diplomatic contacts have been sufficient to warn people that Indonesia has a contemporary history of instability and redirected aggression, perhaps even subliminal chauvinism. A number of Indonesian leaders before their declaration of independence in 1945 had felt that greater New Guinea should be included in the nascent nation; the map of the ancient Madjapahit empire on the wall of Sukarno’s study had suggested the same; Mohammed Yamin, Sukarno’s adviser, had voiced slogans in 1950 which could be read as From Sabang to Samarai. In spite of a bipartisan policy in Australia in the 1950s that it was imperative for her security to keep West New Guinea out of ‘potentially hostile’ (i.e., Indonesian)
hands, it had proved impossible for Australia to contest the issue once the United States, in order to curtail communist influence in Indonesia, had forced the Dutch to relinquish West New Guinea in 1962. Equally, it had proved impolitic for Australia to protest in 1969 against the farcical musjawarah plebiscite (described as ‘The Act of No Choice’) which ratified final UN cession of sovereignty to Indonesia.

There had been, however, protests in PNG which were not unaffected by the urgencies of airstrip construction in the Western and Sepik districts, the recruitment of a further battalion to the Pacific Islands Regiment and the kiaps’ desire to encourage loyalty by posing Australia as the bastion of PNG freedom. But, more disturbing in the long run, have been the reports of observers, border dwellers and particularly refugees of the despoliation of the belated gains made from the Dutch. These reports tell of the immigration of Indonesians from other islands into the towns, which has effectively thrust Melanesians out; the resources development whether in mining, forestry or fishing which has paid little attention to traditional rights or the ecology; the assault on traditional custom and dress as barbaric; and the brutality of occupying troops. Internal colonisation in the island of New Guinea by other Indonesians has made the external colonisation by Australia seem genuinely benign and the experience of young PNG diplomats and visitors of the colour-consciousness of the Javanese has not made the Indonesian motto *UNITY IN DIVERSITY* a pledge of ethnic equality. Nor has the attitude of Indonesian Embassy officials.

Since 1963 the OPM has resisted Indonesia with forces variously estimated from 200 to 5000, more or less armed. As happens with most secession movements, its basis of support and capacity to survive have generally been underestimated, and policy-makers have disregarded its chances of success. Nevertheless, with limited funds from sources in Holland, Japan and perhaps even Australia, and abetted by a few white mercenaries and South Moluccan advisers, the OPM has shown its capacity to cut the slurry pipes of the $150 million Freeport mine, to kill and kidnap Indonesian officials, and even to shoot down an Australian military helicopter performing a dual function of mapping and reconnaissance for Indonesia. OPM troops apparently need access across the PNG border to avoid ‘hot pursuit’ by their enemies. This has led to a number of incidents breaching PNG sovereignty and endangering PNG villagers. Another difficulty for PNG is sorting out genuine refugees from militant fugitives. Some 500 already are living in PNG and, among the few who have been naturalised some are even members of the West Papuan government-in-exile. Over 1000 more seek brief periods of refuge east of the border. Kiki quite spontaneously expressed the pervasive pan-Papuanism in 1972 at the foreign policy seminar:
Indonesia is not going to attack us. But there are people like yourself, the same-skinned people of your own race who happen to chase maganis [i.e. wallabies] over the border and get lost. They will be coming to you for help when you are a self-governing nation. But Indonesia will say, 'Bugger you, this is a former Dutch territory and we took it over from the Dutch.' We will be saying, 'Bugger you, they are not the same as you; they are Papuans.' This is where trouble is going to come. My personal feeling is that if my brother is in trouble, I hit back. If he is not in trouble, then we are friends with the Indonesians.

When he became the responsible Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kiki came to feel the need for firm action to persuade refugees to return and, meeting secretly with OPM leaders on many occasions, to convince them of the futility of seeking official PNG support.

The Indonesian takeover of East Timor aggravated PNG fears. Pita Lus accused Indonesia of 'imperialism' and asked his government to 'stop sitting on the fence'. Bernard Narakobi, Chairman of the Law Reform Commission and pro-Melanesian ideologue, claimed that

Papua New Guineas must in future be mobilised. Our homes are no longer safe... pro-Indonesian generals caught during the struggle on Timor had letters from generals telling them to watch closely secessionist movements in PNG... Indonesia justified its invasion by saying that instability on the island would not be good for the region. If that logic follows to conclusion [sic] then instability in PNG would justify Indonesian intervention. Most of the people in East Timor are Melanesian and belong to the Pacific. If they cannot be safe, how can we be safe? Indonesia is proving itself to be a military imperialist...

Narakobi was supported by Paul Langro, by the National Union of Students and the Women's Action Group, the latter of which wanted PNG to participate in a UN peacekeeping operation, take in Timorese refugees 'through a UN arrangement' and support an independent East Timor at the UN. It organised a protest rally outside the government offices at Waigani. More emphatic were the UPNG students who, within days of Somare's having warned people against involvement with West Irianese in February 1976, demonstrated against Indonesia's East Timor policy, trampling her flag in the mud. An apology was demanded and given, but there can be little doubt of the depth of latent hostility and insecurity. Meanwhile Somare had taken a 'non-partisan approach' which suggested careful tutelage by Australia. Somare said:

I can understand the frustration in Indonesia that no action was being taken to correct a progressively deteriorating situation on their doorsteps [sic]. I want to make it absolutely clear that Indonesia had been prepared last week to strongly support the motion in the United Nations for United Nations intervention to supervise an orderly decolonisation in Portuguese Timor. Indonesia took unilateral action after a United Nations decision on the matter was postponed because of intervention from countries outside the region.

There was no need to fear Indonesia, said Somare, and there was no parallel between the East Timor and PNG situations as Australia had withdrawn only when a stable government had been set up.
There was one generally drawn moral however: Australia might be impotent to help PNG against Indonesia. In May 1978, as action on the Irian Djaya border increased and border villages were bombed, the Indonesian First Secretary in Port Moresby breached protocol by accusing West Irianese who had become naturalised of ‘double loyalty’ and warning that PNG must stop Irianese rebel activity within its borders. Olewale, by then Foreign Minister, issued a reprimand but subsequently visited Indonesia on a goodwill tour where he declined to agree to joint military action. However, in June some 150 PNG troops were deployed on border patrol and the rebels were under severe pressure. In September, Jacob Prai, the ‘President of West Papua’, and his deputy were captured in Vanimo where they appear to have been seeking medical help. By an extraordinary co-incidence, Somare and his Cabinet were meeting in Vanimo at the time, giving rise to a suspicion that Somare was solving his difficulty in a most ingenious way. Prai and his deputy were given two months gaol and, as there was no extradition treaty with Indonesia, it appeared that the fugitives would soon get asylum in another country. In December the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, was in Port Moresby to say that force against the rebels would be abandoned in favour of *musjawarah* (‘consensus and compromise’). Simultaneously Australian Foreign Affairs was scrutinising the authenticity of a document purporting to be a military plan to subvert PNG prior to integration with Indonesia in 1984. Meanwhile, although Olewale had announced at the end of March that Russia and China had been invited to set up residential embassies in PNG following ‘enquiries from their governments’, by mid-April he had ‘temporarily back-pedalled’ as ‘he had not realised that his department did not have the manpower to adequately cater for a sudden and large increase in the number of new resident foreign missions’. Distance was still desirable.

**Problems in Torres Strait**

The most immediately contentious issue between PNG and Australia after independence was the Torres Strait border. Since 1879 maps had shown a line between the Papua coast and Australia which enclosed all the 100 odd islands of the archipelago, both inhabited (seventeen of them) and uninhabited, within the state of Queensland. Therefore the alleged possession of the offshore (300-400 m) mangrove flats of Kawa, Mata-Kawa and Kussa placed Australian citizens, in Sir William MacGregor’s phrase, ‘within a bowshot’ of their colony’s coast. Although the nearest Islanders actually lived further off, from 5 to 10 km, on Boigu, Dauan and Saibai, Whitlam and others though it intolerable, when decolonisation came, that Australians should be able at low tide virtually to walk into PNG.
‘Cartographical absurdities’ were thus a matter of minimal blue water rather than a phrase that could be applied more cogently to land frontiers. This apparent anomaly caused by Australian chauvinism had been the subject of considerable dispute and attempts at territorial adjustment during the late nineteenth century. A former Premier of Queensland (1877–79), John Douglas, when Resident Magistrate of Thursday Island, had warned that ‘the territorial definitions of the present are not binding on futurity’ and had urged that the 10° parallel be accepted as a cartographically tidy and equitable boundary although it split the population arbitrarily in two. (Nine of the seventeen currently inhabited islands are north of 10°.) In 1893 the Queensland Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, later first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, proposed to concede Boigu, Dauan and Saibai to British New Guinea but kept a large part of their traditional fishing grounds and those of coastal Papuans within Queensland. Accordingly, Sir William MacGregor, with Papuan interests at heart, amended Griffith’s proposal and in 1898 a British Order-in-Council attempted to define the Queensland-Papuan boundary as running from a point 5 km southeast of Bramble Cay to a point midway between Pearce Cay and Dalrymple Island, then to the centre of Moon Passage in the Warrior Reef, passing further to 5 km south of Turnagain and Deliverance Island to the 130° E meridian. The people of Boigu, Dauan and Saibai were thus to be alienated from other Islanders although their language (Mabuiag) and customs were in general those of most other indigenes of the Straits rather than those of the Papuan coast. This Order-in-Council, however, was never executed because of unstable political conditions in contemporary Queensland and because, with Australian Federation pending, the Commonwealth Government could be expected to have a direct interest in what would become a national boundary. Federation, however, brought a formidable barrier to rationalisation because its Constitution entrenched States rights in the matter of cession of territory. Moreover, after 1901 the Queensland Government became increasingly unwilling to change her border and in 1925 specifically tightened up legislation to frustrate further attempted revision. The word border here is italicised because, in actuality, the 1879 line indicated on maps has had no status in international law other than showing the area in which islands, both inhabited and uninhabited, were at that time believed to have been validly annexed.

Once PNG was set for decolonisation in the early 1960s it might have been expected that the Australian Department of Foreign (then External) Affairs would have given close attention to those issues of natural justice, apparent equity, defence strategy, prospective political mobilisation and diplomatic influence which could facilitate some satisfactory outcome. This did not happen. The Torres Strait
Islanders, who in the mid-1970s numbered only some 10,000, were more marginal than the very different Aboriginal people. The possibility of the incorporation of some of them or their traditional land and marine resources into the future PNG obviously caused no qualms. Nor was it anticipated that, having acquired an identity as Australians, albeit second-class ones, that they might need to be defended against the moralising taunts of independents from PNG that Islanders should want to belong to the new Melanesian nation. What was grossly inconvenient in the case of the West Papuans of Irian Djaya might be fitting for Torres Strait Islanders. With a few exceptions, academics did not explore the issues, particularly from Islanders’ point of view, and the only notable and influential publication of the 1960s opined that ‘Queensland’s present title could be considered *malafide* in origin’ because the annexation of British New Guinea in 1884 had superseded its objective in drawing the line of 1879 and because Queensland had officially ‘suggested revisions more equitable to the Territory within the short period of Papuan recorded history’. Academic discussion with PNG bolstered the feelings of indigenes that, without revision, PNG would be cheated of part of its birthright at Independence and that, without Australian welfare handouts, Islanders would be prepared to join their ‘brothers’ in PNG. Islanders thus came to appear to be in the eyes of some Papua New Guineans virtually dole-bludgers.

Ebia Olewale, a resident of Daru (Western Province) took up the issue seriously in the House of Assembly in 1969 and urged the adoption of one of the British Orders-in-Council. His advocacy was shrugged off by the Administration as posing an insoluble problem and did not inspire Australian Foreign Affairs to consult either the general omens or the particular interests of the traditional peoples on both sides of the line. Olewale naturally had his own political interests in mind in the border province. However, a little foresight on the part of Commonwealth officials would have seen the issue as a potential *cause celebre* for the cantankerous States-rights Premier of Queensland, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, whose ‘native’ policies were out-of-date and paternalistic. When Olewale returned to the issue as a Minister in the Somare Government in 1972 he passionately urged a revision to the 10° parallel and claimed that Islanders were ‘traditionally Papuan’ people who had been bribed to remain Australians. Olewale refused to see a similarly justifiable irredentism for Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. In particular he was supported by Albert Maori Kiki, then Minister for Lands. Whitlam was undoubtedly sympathetic but the obstruction caused by Queensland’s apparent constitutional rights and the unexpected complexity of having subsequently to deal with separate issues of inhabited versus uninhabited islands, cays and reefs, territorial seas, contiguous zones, swimming fisheries, sedentary fisheries, seabed rights,
rights to the continental shelf, exclusive economic zones etc. made it impossible to achieve any agreement short of slick surgery (which Whitlam contemplated) before the Prime Minister's dismissal in November 1975. On Independence Day Olewale was still asserting that the Torres Strait 'was both historically and ethnically part of Papua New Guinea'.

Andrew Peacock, as Foreign Minister, took a defter approach to constitutional niceties than Whitlam. The High Court had established in 1975 Commonwealth rights over territorial seas and submerged lands. Peacock, not unreasonably, wanted personally to capitalise on a neat settlement and to enable his friends, Somare and Kiki, to do so before the 1977 elections. On 5 June 1976 he reached an agreement in principle with Kiki that a seabed boundary would be delimited south of Boigu, Dauan and Saibai, that it would be continuous, that those islands would remain Australian and that a protected zone would be established 'to protect and preserve the traditional way of life' of indigenes on both sides of the border. No mention was made of uninhabited islands (to some of which PNG still laid claim) nor were any guarantees given against mining the seabed. The so-called Ellicott Line (named after the then Australian Attorney-General) also fell far short of equity in the Strait. It was alleged that the agreement was the best Australia could hope for and that if PNG went to the International Court of Justice, a political decision would result in further concessions having to be made. Aided by what seemed to be 'a conspiracy of silence' in an Australian press which seemed pledged to Somare, it appeared that Peacock would prevail when, in July, Kiki virtually abrogated the agreement by declaring his opposition to (and Melanesian unacceptance of) the concept of plural boundaries: the seabed line rose to the surface, he said, and up to the sky until God himself pushed it down. Australian Foreign Affairs desperately treated this as an aberration and took steps to see that the statement would not be repeated, but it later became apparent that Kiki, aided by Australian legal advisers resident in PNG, felt that he could bluster the matter out. Recognition of Australian sovereignty even over inhabited islands was contingent on a satisfactory agreement; PNG would take unilateral action unless certain demands were met; she would go to the International Court of Justice (of which PNG was not a member) even if it damaged Australia and Australian-PNG relations; the Islanders were in reality not morally Australians.

Unfortunately for the two governments - which had virtually agreed to stifle public discussion - some public debate did occur, notably in Townsville, Queensland, and among the backbenchers of the Australian Parliament whose Joint Committee's Subcommittee on Territorial Boundaries in December 1976 recommended against change. As a result of subsequent pressure from the
Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Malcolm Fraser himself visited Torres Strait, the first Australian Prime Minister ever to do so, where he failed to persuade Islanders to support him and from which he returned with a more concrete view of local rights and feelings. No agreement could be reached between the two governments before the PNG elections in 1977; although, while Fraser was making a State visit to PNG in February, the PNG Parliament symbolically rushed through an Act enabling it to make a unilateral declaration on its boundary. The degree of manipulation in Australian-PNG affairs is well illustrated by the fact that Fraser connived at the gesture and listened to it through earphones in the precincts of the House. In fact, the issue failed to mobilise anti-Australian sentiment in PNG. Tei Abal wanted the boundary to stay where it was; so did Abaijah, Oala-Rarua, Mopio and others, at least for the time being. Meanwhile the Queensland Government was taking up certain suggestions made at a seminar in Townsville in October 1976 that the traditional fishing boundaries be used as a basis of demarcation and a resources treaty be signed between the two countries.

After the 1977 elections, Olewale became Foreign Minister but, instead of PNG intransigence increasing, the contrary happened for reasons not completely apparent, although in Torres Strait it had been rumoured for some time that Olewale, whose relatives had allegedly married on Yorke Island in the had regretted his earlier stance. In May 1978 it was announced that a new agreement had been reached. As a preliminary Australia, after a blatantly bogus piece of research by its department of Foreign Affairs, discovered that Kawa, Mata-Kawa and Kussa had never been Queensland territory, in spite of Sir William MacGregor’s ‘bowshot’ and the fact that Islanders ‘crabbed’ there. A new seabed line south of the Ellicott line was delimited but, where the archipelago was concerned, still well north of the 10° parallel. This went south of Boigu, Dauan and Saibai whereas the swimming fisheries line did not, but at least it seemed to trace traditional boundaries. All uninhabited as well as inhabited islands south of what had in reality been the 1879 line were conceded to be Australian. A Protected Zone was established so that indigenes on both sides of the border ‘will be able to continue their traditional activities and to move freely’. An embargo on mining and oil drilling was declared for ten years. Provisions were made for sharing commercial fishing. The treaty was to contain provisions covering freedom of navigation, passage and overflight. It would obviously leave Australia in control of the two international sea channels through the Strait. The agreement was signed in December 1978.

Some problems still remained with the Queensland Government and the Torres Strait Islanders. After first expressing himself satis-
THE TORRES STRAIT SETTLEMENT
OF 1978
fied with the agreement and declaring on their behalf that the Islanders felt the same, Bjelke-Petersen discovered that they were not so pliable and that they refused to accept what they saw as a change in 'the border'. He then declared that he had subsequently read the 'fine print' and that, as the agreement effectively changed 'the border', he would take the issue to the High Court if necessary. He was confident that body would require a referendum of the people of Queensland. By November, however, he had capitulated again, one suggestion being that he had been able to trade off his concern for the Islanders against possible intervention by the Federal Government into his treatment of Aboriginals on Cape York Peninsula. The Premier once again claimed 'a victory' for Queensland. It appeared that Islander leaders in the Straits were now persuaded that the agreement was the best deal they could get.

However, in mainland North Queensland, a small group of resident Islanders issued a High Court challenge alleging that Queensland had illegally annexed the islands in the Strait before Federation. It also intended to sue the World Court to recognise a new nation in Torres Strait which, its spokesman maintained, could subsist on fishing, tourism and postage stamps, but in reality would be the custodian of 'vast oil resources'. However unreal this proposition is, it does suggest that not only will a plurality of boundaries be insufficiently emphatic to prevent future misunderstanding but that Islanders themselves may at some future date feel duped.

The paternalism of the Queensland Government has left the Islanders in a state of arrested development. Even a problem such as the alarming venereal disease rate does not give the Queensland Government much concern. Quarantine and immigration regulations are laxly administered. Papua New Guineans work in the Straits and can easily gain entrance to the mainland. The Queensland Minister for Local Government in 1978 urged Andrew Peacock 'to resign' over the entry of Papua New Guineans into Australia. Any epidemic affecting humans or animals which is carried across the Strait could lead to friction and even embarrassing discrimination. Apart from questions of an equitable division of land and water, the present settlement will probably be satisfactory only so long as nothing happens in the Strait. Any economic, strategic or social change is likely to lead to disputes over the complex of different lines from different elements, which lawyers but not people will say they understand. There is now no simple answer to the question: where is the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea?

Trading Partners and Political Models

PNG does not appear to have, in the immediate future, very much room for independent manoeuvre in foreign relations unless she
makes some daring, and possibly disastrous effort of will, or unless there is destabilisation in the region. The former metropole is closer than France to Algeria and almost as close as the United Kingdom to Ireland, and there is a range of mundane problems to be tackled (aviation, potential terrorism, drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration, offshore drilling, tourism, quarantine) that will make a clear break with Australia difficult. In mid-1978 Somare was pushed by more radical ministers into reducing the salaries of Australian expatriates towards a level common to all, a gesture of independence which should be popular, at least until it can be demonstrated to produce further inefficiency and reduce foreign investment. The scope for procuring expertise elsewhere without strings is not illimitable, the problem of language being only one of the constraints. In proposing embassies for Russia and China, Olewale said his ‘main concern was how PNG could benefit . . . particularly in technological fields’, and that ‘he was impressed with the Chinese foreign aid program, particularly that given to Tanzania’. It has been implied that this would not have suited Indonesia and qualifications should be made to Olewale’s assertion in the face of criticism that ‘neither Australia nor anybody else controls our foreign policy’. Moreover, Sir Tei Abal voiced local fears that ‘the KGB and its Chinese equivalent’ would bring the CIA ‘to keep an eye on them’ and that this could cause ‘great animosity from the other countries in the South Pacific which are now our friends and trust us’. He could hardly have added that, although there has been great goodwill towards PNG in Oceania since self-government, there is apprehension even in the Solomon Islands about PNG’s potential radicalism and allegedly primitive anomie and this is not unmixed with a real sense of superiority, particularly among Fijians and Polynesians. Therefore, while PNG looks to the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation to cut an international mark unavailable elsewhere (and even in a corporate way to influence Australia and New Zealand), it also has to be satisfied to a degree with the range of options for assistance that this allows. Issues involving marine resources, inter-island communications and trade developments are also materially important to PNG. Other groupings offer relative insignificance. Experience of the UN in colonial days has not engendered blind faith in the world body; ASEAN offers domination by Indonesia and the overseas Chinese of Singapore; African leaders, like Tom Mboya in 1964, have come to PNG proclaiming them as brothers but have brought only the morality of liberation from colonialism rather than the prospect of a shared patrimony; Tanzanian socialism has been an incantation for a decade without engendering any close contacts with the non-capitalist states of Africa. Beyond all this and unobtrusive is the USA, which has been content for its clients, Australia and New
Zealand, to be virtual proxies in the Southwest Pacific but, for example, in the event of an offer like that suggested in 1974 by Michael Pondros from Manus Island to lease the great naval base to the Russians, the US would undoubtedly opt for a more active role. It is interesting that Pondros in 1976 thought that the US should be given the base instead.

An acceptable alternative source of aid and expertise has appeared to be Japan although, along with other Asian countries, she was not allowed to invest in PNG until 1965. Even in 1970 a plan to send young Papua New Guineans to Japan for study was rejected and a Japanese mission reported 'that the Australian Government dislikes intensely any contact' between Japanese and PNG people. By the time Somare came to power, however, Australia realised the need for PNG to diversify its trade and aid links if only to avoid the charge of monopoly and to provide some diplomatic support in the event of difficulties. Moreover, in 1972 an official reported to an Australian Senate committee that there was no longer any need to fear Japan:

as a substantial proportion of... major contracts... were awarded to Australian firms and subsidiaries of Australian firms. With increasing Japanese involvement... competition between Australian and Japanese interests could intensify but with the advantage of location, language, and a familiar government and commercial system there seems to be no reason why Australian interests should not continue to compete successfully... there is no evidence that Japanese activities under the existing policy have reduced opportunities for Australian investment. The joint venture concept developed by the Government for the purpose of enlarging local PNG equity participation has also created new opportunities for Australian investment in projects not viable without Japanese participation... Japanese markets, capital, and know-how can perform a useful role in hastening progress... towards economic viability. Australia is committed to continued economic support for PNG, even after independence. But increased trading opportunities and private investment inflows into PNG could help to lessen the present extreme dependence on Australian grants.

In 1972 Somare was also looking forward to the benefits of competitive trade and to the time when 'Australia is just one of our trading partners'. He even went so far as to announce that Japan would match Australia by giving 'direct Government aid... in the form of technical assistance and equipment' although Japanese investment 'will come only on our terms'. Japanese officials were surprised and pointed out that there had probably been some linguistic misunderstanding. Imports of Mazdas, Datsuns, Yamaha motorbikes, cameras and transistors increased; Japan took substantial quantities of Bougainville copper and invested in timber, fisheries, oil, minerals exploration and hydroelectric potential; and lubricated negotiations with presents and junkets for impressionable officials. At present it is doubtful if any Papua New Guineans, let alone Somare, see Japanese businessmen as other than tough and opportunistic, and those who read overseas newspapers sense what is happening in ASEAN countries. In 1976 the PNG Government severed a K9.5 million deal with the South Pacific Oil Palm De-
development Pty. Ltd., an Australian-based subsidiary of Tokai Level-
ner, after it had flagrantly breached the terms of its agreement. This
action was taken in spite of a Japanese Government threat to discon-
tinue all aid. (Similar action was subsequently taken against a
Singapore-owned timber company.) However, in December 1977
Somare was still able to pay an official visit to Japan and negotiate a
$A12.8 million loan to be spent on a ‘mutually agreed list of projects’
which

conformed with PNG’s stipulated development policy, in that the PNG Government
retained control of the priority source of supply and execution of the projects, all of
which were included in the PNG five-year National Public Expenditure Plan.

Somare was also careful to stress

that, on the question of access to the projected 200-mile fishing zone, Japan would be
considered equally with any other country, and that no favour would be shown.

In its report of Somare’s visit, the Australian Department of Foreign
Affairs gave a more than broad hint of its attitude to PNG-Japan
relations:

The new aid agreement represents a considerable advance in PNG’s relations with
Japan. Japan has much to offer PNG in investment, technology and aid, and PNG is a
potentially important source of supply for Japan of several raw materials. Until Mr
Somare’s recent visit, however, relations between the two countries had not progres­
sed with much rapidity, despite the perceived potential for development by both
sides.

The Department went on to note that since 1972-73 total trade
between PNG and Japan had been second only to Australia’s except
in 1973-74 (when the high copper prices brought Japan to the fore­
front). Japanese investment was said to be ‘second only to Australia’
but seems not to be sufficient for Australia’s liking.

It seems probable that the Australian Government would wel­
come substantial investment also from the US and West Germany to
lock PNG more firmly into the capitalist system and divest Australia
of some of the immediacy of its neo-colonialist image. As, however,
some three-quarters of foreign companies in PNG are Australian,
particularly oligopolists such as Burns Philp, W. R. Carpenter,
Steamships and their subsidiaries, Australia will take the brunt of any
radical criticism for the next decade. Complaints about foreign
parent companies acting contrary to national interest, inadequate
localisation leading to higher unit labour costs, selective production
in the interest of the former metropole resulting in high-priced
imports, and preference for Australian goods more highly priced
than those available elsewhere, will probably increase as the
economy fails to meet the high expectations generated in colonial
days. On the other hand, any drastic socialist solution to these
problems will be opposed by those who are labelled by their critics
‘compradors’ and ‘bureaucratic elites’ because they are said to fear
that a cessation of Australian aid would deflate their life-style. However, among those disparaged in this way will be people who will point to substantial achievements from the Somare-Chan strategies: the growth of indigenous-owned business through the preferential loans policies; the Bougainville Copper renegotiation; the refusal to allow the Kennecott Copper Corporation to dictate the terms for the Ok Tedi copper prospect and the success in attracting alternative investors such as Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd; the liberation of Air Niugini from domination by Australia's Qantas; the disciplining of Asian companies mentioned above; and the effective institution of the National Investment and Development Authority to control foreign investors and establish a PNG equity, even at the expense of discouraging or postponing economic activity. Foreign investors can hardly anticipate a rip-off when they approach PNG. Neither has PNG allowed the tourist industry to develop blindly but has preferred inertia to destructive profiteering. PNG has come to Independence with the lessons of exploitation in other countries clearly before her. As the Governor of the Bank of Papua New Guinea, Henry ToRobert, pointed out in 1973:

First of all, foreign economic relations in so far as they affect PNG or anyone else, involve not only economics; they equally, if not more, involve political considerations . . . Because countries want to satisfy their self-interest, and bureaucrats and politicians within countries want to make sure they stay in their jobs, economic policies are inevitably motivated in part at least by short-term expediency . . . we in PNG need to be aware of the fundamental nature of the international financial game: we would be fairly naive if we tried to convince ourselves that it has been taken straight from a macro-economics textbook.

Secondly, we cannot afford to forget our size . . . in the great world stage none of the important players really cares what PNG does . . .

All we can do is to move within that exogenously-set framework, so far as we are able, to adjust our own policies to minimise any external adverse effects and to maximise any benefits from involvement with other countries. Up to date the ability of PNG to adjust its policies independently to meet changing economic circumstances has scarcely existed: accidents of history and geography have seen to that and . . . we have been riding in mother kangaroo's pouch, quite often . . . as a somewhat uneasy joey . . .

Our own problems . . . are certainly not unique, and though I do not think we have special insight not shared by policy makers and theorists in other countries, perhaps the one advantage we do have is to be starting late and so be aware of the mistakes and ploys of others.

ToRobert's hopes have not gone unrealised. While the full impact of Chan's hard currency, wage restraint and price surveillance strategies is unclear and their benefits for the average citizen (particularly the villager) debatable, the determination to manage the economy has been in itself impressive as has been the attempt to lessen the force of export price fluctuations through stabilisation funds. However, PNG remains a dualistic economy with no immediately foreseeable prospect of integrating its modern and traditional sectors.
The Army and the Police

Whether, in view of the extent of military rule in other developing countries, PNG has acquired any special wisdom in controlling its defence forces is also arguable. However, if it is conceded that military rule often simply follows the breakdown of civil government and is not just the result of the ambitions of colonels, then the question is to a degree nugatory. Moreover, as the Army leaders have ostensibly kept to the apolitical profile drawn for them by their Australian mentors, conjecture by an outsider about their personal motives and capacities is not fruitful. The Pacific Islands Regiment was re-formed in Port Moresby in 1951 at the height of the Cold War and was increased in 1963 to a second battalion, based on Wewak in the East Sepik, when Sukarno was staging his Confrontasi. In 1968 it was announced that a third battalion would be formed but, in view of the change in Indonesian government and the feeling that numbers should be curtailed and costs curbed, the proposal lapsed. In 1978 the quota for the Army was approximately 3600 but it was under strength at some 3000. Other major elements in the Defence Force (constituted in 1973) are four DC3 aircraft, for which three indigenous pilots have been fully trained, two Nomads, five patrol boats and some landing craft. About 200 Australian personnel concerned with training and logistics remain and are scheduled to be phased out entirely by 1982.

The first officers of the PIR did not begin training in Australia until 1963 and by October 1968, when defence planning requirements were that over 300 indigenous officers would be needed by 1984, only six were on duty in PNG and six were training in Australia. As officer ranks did not increase significantly until 1970-72, professional training is incomplete. Equipment is confined to hand arms; there is no artillery except mortars; there are no helicopters or sophisticated logistical support except those which Australia may provide. No soldier has seen combat duty either through internal revolutionary struggle or in external war. The dictates of UN trusteeship kept PNG officers out of Vietnam, much to their chagrin. Army ranks are recruited on a nation-wide basis so that all provinces are more or less equitably represented. An entry standard of two years of secondary education is preferred. For officers Form 4 is required and commissions are issued on merit, which tends to keep less developed provinces under-represented. Training in civics has stressed the national role of the Army according to the Australian tradition and there is considerable optimism that a trans-provincial esprit de corps has been engendered and that, in the event of punitive action being taken in a particular province, loyalties would adhere to the state rather than to ethnic groups. The force does have a record of minor
mutinies, riots and strikes, and of hostility to the police, the only other body with arms in the country and one which resents the superior living conditions of what is a conspicuously elite group.

Police training was neglected by Australia except as a paramilitary patrol force and they were never adequately trained for urban life. In 1976 they were described as ‘immature, under-educated, underpaid and inexperienced’ and as receiving the same wage ‘as garbage collectors’. They appear as a feeble countervailing force to the Army in the event of any attempted coup while civilian institutions such as trade unions are weak. In the year of Independence the official government publication, Programmes and Performance, lamented:

Major problems are being faced by the Constabulary because of a lack of experienced and adequately trained staff. Of a total force strength of 4400 there are 239 commissioned officers, 96 below established strength. Sixty-two of the officers are expatriates and 177 Papua New Guineans. The average national commissioned officer is aged 28 years, has an average total service in the Force of less than five years and average service as a commissioned officer of less than three years.

In the following year, Programmes and Performances, said:

Newly commissioned officers do not offset the experience lost by the departure of expatriate staff, of which 43 left . . . in 1975-76. Only 30 expatriate staff remain in the Force.

In late 1978 Somare was expressing grave concern about the crime rate and the effects this might have on stability.

The Army enjoys prestige throughout PNG, particularly as it has been encouraged to perform civic action projects in bridge and road construction, in building schools, and in transport and rescue services. While being a sensible use of resources, this has built up the Army’s image among villagers and enabled it to acquire widespread intelligence information. The resemblance in authoritative style between the Army and the former kiap rule might also have made the military more acceptable. Moreover, the scant information from surveys conducted among tertiary students before Independence suggested a high degree of at least resignation to, if not preference for, authoritarian rule.

To stave off what appears to be an unavoidable involvement in politics in the event of secessionist insurrection, a breakdown of law and order or a serious border dispute with Indonesia, a policy of ‘containment’ has been put forward which would accept the PNGDF as a centre of potential political power and the proceed to place the military within the political system with a defined role in much the same way that other groups such as trades unions and political parties have legitimate political roles. The policy would seek to reduce the Defence Force’s corporate isolation and thus improve civil-military communications. In this way the potential for unilateral political action by the military might be significantly reduced. Similarly there would seem to be a diminished likelihood of political action by the military if their political outlook
and perceptions accords more closely with those of the civilian leadership... Legitimate political activity by the Defence Force might also serve the added purpose of political education. In this process, the military leadership would be able to develop an awareness of the overall problems of government. It would, hopefully, thereby develop realistic expectations of what lay within the resources of the government to change, of what was possible and what was impossible to achieve.

Such a proposal in more concrete terms could involve Defence Force officers as advisers and even participants in policy-making on socio-economic and foreign affairs issues as well as on defence. According to this scheme the Army commander might even have a nominated seat in Parliament and become Defence or Assistant Defence Minister. These ideas, however, have not commended themselves to the Constitution-makers or Somare and his immediate supporters, although they have to Sir John Guise. In late 1977 Brigadier-General Diro was 'carpeted' and reprimanded by Cabinet for holding a confidential meeting with an Irianese rebel leader, although similar meetings involving politicians had been tacitly sanctioned for some time and seemed a reasonable method of familiarising Diro with an immediate problem. What became apparent were antagonisms between the civil and the military and the emergence of Diro as a national figure who commands respect inside and outside government. It is possible that, in the event of a coup, the army could control Port Moresby and a half dozen major towns, but even that would necessitate some outside support (i.e. at the moment, from Australia), just as the current policing of the Irian Djaya border does. If a secessionist insurrection occurs, there are indications that Australia will provide, as unobtrusively as possible, the requisite support, particularly where Australian expatriates as well as investment are threatened. It is also probable that an Australian government would feel less embarrassed, in the immediate future, by a military regime in PNG than by national fragmentation. And Indonesia would find such a regime more comprehensible.

Whatever the outcome in PNG, whether it be the continuance of Somare's pragmatism with its embourgeoisement of the elites, or a radical revolution necessarily leading to distress and bloodshed, or a military coup, Australia will be blamed. Imperialism can never be just; no colonial power can escape criticism. One which has promoted rapid (and so, ruthless) modernisation will be written into the history books as a destroyer of autonomous custom and traditional arts; one which has seized on the main nodes of strategic and economic power but has left indigens to their traditional (and, apparently, torpid) ways will be accused of negligence. In the North Solomons Australia is accused of both. It has not been unknown for an academic critic, on the one hand, to berate France for assimilating her black subjects, necessarily ensuring that they would generally
remain on the lowest rungs of society while, on the other hand, to
depict Australia as racist for endowing Papuans with a citizenship
which did not allow them entry into Australia where they would
have had even less impetus towards self-realisation. Equally, neo-
colonialism (i.e. economically manipulated dependence), in whatever form it takes, must breed resentment and reaction. Because
Somare has accepted, at least temporarily, that his country as yet
lacks the vision and the personnel for radical systemic change, he is
accused of currying soft and corrupting options. Unfortunately, his
sterner critics will hardly be in a position to know what it means to
inherit unexpectedly a tenuous power over a government structure
which was almost certainly incapable of moulding the process of
politics. When the elections were over in 1977, Somare understand-
ably claimed that he had been given a ‘mandate’ to continue govern-
ing. However, as David Hegarty points out,
elections in PNG are not about mandates in the sense that they are tests of public
opinion on government performance and policy issues. Elections remain essentially
electorate level contests between competing clan candidates and personalities, with
the government being pulled together in the legislative arena.

Somare has by instinct built on the given rather than the withheld,
and pursued the known rather than the unknown. He has created for
his country a pause in which a degree of national integration has
taken place. Troubles may arise to interrupt that pause and cast
doubt on Somare’s wisdom and motives but he has at least the
consolation of knowing that countries with more radical solutions
have not necessarily prospered. Tanzania may have made a virtue of
its poverty and lack of resources. PNG is, for a developing country,
relatively rich in foodstuffs and mineral resources. A government
without coercive power and trained cadres cannot attempt to realise
the millennium of social justice desired by Somare’s radical critics,
particularly when it has not been achieved elsewhere. Neither can a
leader be expected to promote a radical program without a clearly
emergent social base. PNG was not in 1972 a blank page on which
new laws could simply be written but a table still inscribed with
immemorial customs which sanctioned individual acquisitiveness as
well as endorsing communal responsibility. Far from erasing these,
Australia had only written over them, albeit indelibly, with the
graffiti of her material demonstration effects and, in the case of
missionaries, spiritual aspirations. This is not to excuse all acts and
omissions by the Somare government – and in what has been
written here, the author has deliberately thrown into relief the tex-
ture of political life – but to draw attention to the necessary fal-
libilities in practising not so much the art of the possible but what
seemed to so many in 1968 the craft of the highly improbable. Just
one decade ago a popular magazine in PNG with buoyant advertis-
ing space and a wide readership could still call indigenes ‘coons’ and jeer at their pretensions to tertiary education and autonomy. More innocent expatriates than were in PNG then may one day pay dearly for that abuse of privilege, as in general may the more developed sectors of the world for the acts of the past. The contemporary politics of PNG has not, however, been concerned with payback but with accepting the experience of self-government, realising the limits set by history and geography and cautiously steering into the future, if possible, with the imperially designed nation-state intact.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 13
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While writing the section on foreign policy the author read with profit H. N. Nelson’s ‘Papua New Guinea’s Foreign Policy: Universalism, trade, aid and borders,’ *India Quarterly*, April-June 1978.
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