CHAPTER 2

THE ORIGINS OF THE BORDER PROBLEM
AND THE BORDER STORY TO 1969

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A n Indonesian nationalist movement developed in the early years of the twentieth century but had gained few concessions from the Dutch by the time of the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Japan’s occupation of the Netherlands East Indies was thus at first welcomed by the nationalists. However Japan was to prove little more receptive to the nationalists’ cause, at least until their increasing military defeats from the end of 1944. On the eve of their surrender on 15 August 1945, Japan appeared willing to grant independence: two days later the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed.

The Dutch refused to recognize Indonesia’s independence and set out to reassert their authority by force. A bitter struggle followed which lasted for four years. At a Round Table Conference in The Hague in 1949 the Dutch eventually agreed to the transfer of sovereignty from the former Netherlands East Indies to the Republic of Indonesia, with the exception of the territory of West New Guinea whose future was to be decided in negotiations between Holland and Indonesia within the following year. The talks broke down, and by 1952 the Dutch appeared determined to retain this last outpost of their former empire in the East Indies. In the subsequent decade the Dutch went on, deliberately and contrarily, to develop a sense of separate West Papuan nationalism which was destined to come into head-on collision with the assertive nationalism of an Indonesia, under President Sukarno, determined to return West New Guinea to the ‘fatherland’ from which the Dutch had, in its view, illegally excluded it. Through the 1950s, therefore, President Sukarno escalated the campaign against the Dutch for the return of West New Guinea, and by the
end of 1960 was sending ‘volunteers’ to the territory to procure that end.

Australia, which had supported the Indonesian nationalists in their struggle against the Dutch, thereby laying down firm foundations for good relations with the new Indonesia, was nonetheless made increasingly nervous by the emerging nature of Sukarno’s regime. Although it had entertained a sporadic concern for the security of the region to its north for more than a hundred years, it had had little to do with it in practice, at least until the Second World War. It was therefore the force of traditional fears and phobias, rather than the exigencies of contemporary realities which required Australia to live and work with Indonesia as a good neighbour, that led Australia to support and encourage Dutch retention of West New Guinea until forced to a turnabout in 1961.

Developments in Indonesia in these years appeared to make the judgement a correct one. A deteriorating domestic economic and political situation in Indonesia, which included a struggle for power between the communists and the army, encouraged President Sukarno to a foreign policy adventurism which included the acquisition of West New Guinea, by force if necessary, and then the confrontation of Malaysia. Australia’s worst fears appeared to be founded; its nearest neighbour looked increasingly unstable as a battle for political dominance was fought at home between the Communist Party and the army.

In the circumstances Indonesia’s even closer presence to Australia in West New Guinea - already opposed by Australia’s agricultural interests as a threat (from disease) to Australia’s majorexporting industries - was out of the question. One solution was to engage in an administrative cooperative relationship with the Dutch for the joint development of their territories in New Guinea. A united New Guinea proceeding to independence together was one option held open.

Such plans as there were, however, were overtaken by events. Different views were held by the governments of Holland and Australia of the pace of progress towards joint development, and external developments exerted pressures. As Sukarno escalated his campaign for the return of West New Guinea, and seemed to fall increasingly under the influence of the communists at home, the United States came to determine that West New Guinea was a small price to pay to keep Sukarno out of the communist camp abroad. In
1961 the United States therefore exerted pressure on the Netherlands and Australia to change their policies with the result that in August 1962, with the New York Agreement, the administration of West New Guinea was transferred to a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority. Seven months later Indonesia succeeded to administrative authority in the territory pending an Act of Free Choice which was to take place at some time before 1969.

Australia's extreme apprehension about the implications of an Indonesian presence in West New Guinea, at a time when Indonesia had gone on from the West New Guinea campaign to confront Malaysia, was illustrated by its closure of the border in New Guinea, the pursuit of a defence and development programme designed to turn the orientation of the people determinedly eastwards, and a defence build-up in Australia itself. The West New Guinea crisis had been an undoubted shock bringing home to Australia both the realities of its alliance relationship and some realities of the region in which Australia lived. The process of adjustment consequently called for by Australia's foreign minister, Garfield Barwick, was slow to be made. In Indonesia's case it was not until President Suharto replaced President Sukarno following the coup in 1965, and the subsequent western effort to stabilize Indonesia in 1967, that Australia set about mending fences with Indonesia. This included better management of the border mending fences with Indonesia. This included better management of the border in New Guinea.

All international borders contain within them the potential for trouble between neighbours. Whether they do so or not depends on a host of factors - historical, geographic, ethnic, economic - but most obviously on the state of relations between the countries concerned. In the case of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, the existence of a border problem is the product not of relations between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia per se, for both have declared the best of intentions towards each other. Rather it is a problem which, in its essence, they inherited from their colonial predecessors, the Dutch and the Australians, and from the kinds of policies they pursued both separately and together in their respective halves of the island of New Guinea. The border problem in New Guinea thus arose not simply out of the geography and ethnography of a remote and ill-defined border, nor even out of the economics of uneven development which gave rise to the argument in some quarters that refugee movement across the border from West New Guinea was in fact primarily economic in origin.
Rather it arose out of the policies of the administrative powers which developed a sense of separate West Papuan nationalism and held open the prospect of a united New Guinea.

The Indonesia-Papua New Guinea border is a classically arbitrary product of colonial history. The problems that have arisen on account of the border since are equally a classic result of the assertiveness and sensitivity of newly independent nations and, once Papua New Guinea became the sovereign power, an illustration of the limits of small states' diplomacy. This chapter sets out to show that the character of the border problem in New Guinea is also the product of a particular history.

**Australian-Dutch administrative cooperation in New Guinea**

In 1545 Inigo Ortiz de Retes took possession of the island of New Guinea in the name of the king of Spain and in 1606 the Kingdom of the Netherlands first laid its claim to the western half of the island. Dutch interest in West New Guinea was as a buffer, to prevent another European presence which could challenge its monopoly of the lucrative spice trade of the Indies. Hence the Dutch government did not establish its first settlement in West New Guinea until 1828, and then in response to anticipated British interest and intrusion. With the exception of the highland areas, major exploration of West New Guinea had been undertaken by the start of the Second World War, but the extent of contact was slight until the Dutch decided to develop the territory in the early 1950s.

Following West New Guinea’s exclusion from the transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands East Indies to the Republic of Indonesia, Australia’s diplomacy was directed to encourage the Dutch to retain the territory when the Dutch had not yet determined to do so (Haupt 1970; Feith 1962). Speculation about joint cooperation or condominium accompanied Australia’s effort, which resulted in a Dutch decision, by mid 1953, to hold on to the territory and develop it towards self-government and independence, and a corresponding decision to enter into a cooperative relationship with Australia.

With Australia’s own postwar extended development programme for Papua New Guinea, Australian officers on the spot saw advantages in some level of cooperation with their Dutch counterparts across the border. Colonel J.K. Murray, administrator of the then Territory of Papua New Guinea, was proposing as much to the secretary of the
Department of Territories as early as March 1949\textsuperscript{1} (he had particularly in mind plant and animal quarantine to protect Australia’s major exporting industries). Although Murray was cautioned for his over-enthusiasm for joint cooperation and restrained from initiating it, it was Australia, initially, which proposed the formalization of cooperation with the Dutch in New Guinea. Following talks which took place in July 1953, Australia’s foreign minister, R.G. Casey stated:

\begin{quote}
In view of the similarity between the peoples of the Australian and Netherlands territories in New Guinea, and of the problems faced by the two administrations, discussions were held on practical measures of cooperation at administrative level between the TPNG and NNG (\textit{Current Notes on International Affairs} [CNIA] 24 (7) July 1953:396-397).
\end{quote}

Although there had been little contact between Australia and the Netherlands in New Guinea until the Second World War, before the July 1953 arrangements were made there had already been considerable practical cooperation between the two administrations. This had taken place on such questions as the movement of peoples across the undefined international border, at a time when the loss of scarce potential labour had become a serious issue to the Dutch now set upon the development of the territory. Under the 1953 arrangements, Port Moresby and Hollandia were given a mandate to discuss land laws, labour, and border control with a view to the development of consonant policies in the spheres of the economic, social and political advancement of the people, and to discuss district services with particular reference to the exchange of information between patrol officers in border regions. In addition, there was to be a similar exchange of information and consultation, as well as of research experience, in and between the departments of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries, Health, and Education, and also in geological data and land use surveys.

There is some evidence to suggest that there was pressure from agricultural and defence interests in Canberra for the extension of the administrative cooperation relationship. The former saw New Guinea as an extension of the Australian production unit and believed that Australia’s agricultural industries required the quarantine guarantees

\textsuperscript{1}J.K. Murray to J.R Halligan, Secretary, Department of Territories, 26 March 1949. PNG Archives, File: CA38-6-8, Hollandia: Telecommunications.
a cooperative relationship was expected to bring; for the latter, defence considerations required the Dutch to remain in West New Guinea rather than be superseded by what was seen to be an inevitably unstable Indonesia. In August 1955, therefore, cabinet instructed the ministers for Territories and External Affairs to reexamine administrative cooperation in New Guinea in order to develop proposals for its extension, paying particular attention to the question of a common language. At a subsequent meeting between Brigadier Cleland, then administrator of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and the officials of the departments of Territories and External Affairs, the importance of a common language was declared to be that the adoption of English ‘would further the Eastward and Pacific orientation of the Dutch territory.  

The language question was to continue to be considered at the administrative cooperation conferences which followed the Australia-Dutch Joint Statement on Administration Cooperation of November 1957. The purpose of the pursuit of a common language was made clear in the conclusion of the secretary for Territories following his visit to West New Guinea in 1959. In his view it appeared only logical that east and west New Guinea should be in a position where they could, if they wished, eliminate the artificial border between them; one of the greatest aids towards this would be the existence of a common language. The Dutch agreed. Meanwhile Australia made some concessions to Dutch language with its inclusion in the syllabus of the first two senior high schools which were to open in Port Moresby and Rabaul in 1960 (South Pacific Post 29 January 1960).

The language question is important for what it suggests about intentions at this stage. Earlier, the politics of administrative cooperation had been more important than their substance, the arrangements signalling support for Dutch retention of West New Guinea as much as anything else for in practice they essentially duplicated the role played by the South Pacific Commission for the exchange of information and advice in such areas as public health, social welfare and education. The

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2 Cabinet Decision No. 482 noted in the record of the meeting at the Department of External Affairs on 3 August 1955 between Cleland and officials of the Departments of External Affairs and Territories, forwarded with Hasluck's letter to Casey, 4 August 1955, PNG Archives File: AD 92-3-13: His Honour's Visit to Hollandia.

arrangements therefore represented a commitment, and a firm and valuable one according to Alfred Stirling, Australia’s ambassador at The Hague. In this way administrative cooperation between the eastern and the western halves of the island of New Guinea contributed to the then growing Dutch interest in their territory as well as reflected it, as did the subsequent Australian-Dutch Joint Statement on Administrative Cooperation in New Guinea of 1957. Motivated by a deteriorating situation in Indonesia, Australia proposed furthering administrative cooperation in New Guinea with the joint statement, which was to produce a qualitative and quantitative change in the administrative cooperation relationship. Its institutional innovations were described by the minister for External Affairs in the House of Representatives in February 1958 (CNAIA 29(2) February 1958:109-110). They were the appointment of liaison officers, the assigning of an attaché to the Netherlands embassy in Canberra to deal exclusively with New Guinea affairs, and the introduction of the more-or-less annual conference on administrative cooperation, the first of which was to take place in Canberra in October 1958.

The agenda of the Canberra conference ranged from legislative structures and administrative organizations, through agricultural issues to conditions of labour employment, native local government, public health and administration, and the exchange of planting materials of economic importance. The extent of cooperation to date was recorded, including the coordination of patrols along the border and the cooperation concerned with surveying the border: the area was being photographed preparatory to mapping, Australia working in the southern half and the Netherlands in the north.

At the close of the conference, a statement was issued which drew attention to the fact that the mandate of the conference was limited to discussion and the submission of recommendations on these subjects (CNAIA 29 (10) October 1958:654-655). The records themselves reveal that recommendations were made for the furtherance of cooperation in administrative organization, in problems met in increasing indigenous participation in the public service, in the administration of native peoples, in land laws, and in technical training matters. A resolution on indigenous participation in measures of cooperation was also adopted and it was proposed that there should be a joint committee to collect and analyse information activities in the two territories.

As far as education was concerned, the prospect of sending students from West New Guinea to secondary schools and training
institutions in Australia was to be examined. In the field of specialized training, joint training centres for indigenes for common technical, vocational and professional training were proposed, as was the reservation of places for West New Guinea officials at ASOPA (the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney), at which Dutch lecturers would also be invited to participate in instruction. It was suggested, too, that Australian New Guinea make use of the Nautical Training School established in Hollandia three years previously.

These recommendations were accepted by the conference, along with those for an annual meeting and the pooling of technical skills.

There was a persistent theme running through Australia’s presentations and its working papers for the conference, that the object of the exercise was to strive for ‘consonant’ developments. There was to be, for example, the ‘development of consonant educational policies for both administration and mission schools’, ‘consonant forestry policies’ and ‘consonant policies in relation to land laws’. Some sections of the Australian press, at least, deduced from this that as a result of the conference there was an agreement on a programme of ‘parallel development’ which was to be recommended to the governments both of the Netherlands and of Australia.

Whether, or to what degree, the Australian government pursued a policy of administrative cooperation with the Dutch in order to lay the foundations for the emergence of a Melanesian Federation remains debatable. Suffice it to recall that the 1957 joint statement declared that it was designed to leave the way open, if the inhabitants of the island one day so chose, for a united New Guinea. More important for this discussion is that the nature of both Dutch and Australian policies had the effect, if not always the intention, of creating both a nationalist identity in West New Guinea and a feeling for a united New Guinea, both of which were to be at the base of the border problem which developed with Indonesia’s administration of the Territory from 1962 and which, in one form or another, continues to this day. It is to this extent that in their different ways the governments of both the Netherlands and Australia were responsible, not for creating the problem - since all borders present the potential for problems - but for sharing the kind of problem which was to characterize this border from 1962 on.

Meanwhile, by the time of the second conference on administrative cooperation, which took place in Hollandia in March 1960, Australia had downgraded the significance of administrative coopera-
tion. One reason for this change of Australian policy was Paul Hasluck’s attachment to the policy of gradualism for the development of Australia’s own New Guinea territories. Otherwise a hawk on Indonesia who could be expected to support policies designed to deny her West New Guinea, and so to support the joint statement and the prospect of a Melanesian Federation, this minister for Territories was a persistent opponent of the kind of cooperation with the Dutch that interfered with his own view of an appropriate programme for the advancement of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

Australia and the Netherlands had quite different views of colonial development even from the early 1950s, for the Dutch encouraged the emergence of a local elite with the sponsorship of trade union activity, political participation and localization at all possible levels. Hasluck, by contrast, was opposed to the creation of elites and pursued a policy of ‘uniform development’ which had at its foundation the view that it would take years before consideration could be given to the political shape and size of Papua New Guinea. The 1957 joint statement, and the subsequent Dutch programme for the rapid acceleration of the political development of the people in their half of the island, threatened this gradualist view of Papua New Guinea’s development. With the Dutch announcement in 1960 of a ten year plan for the development of West New Guinea to self-government (which was in fact a decision to leave West New Guinea gracefully without conceding the Indonesian claim to the territory), therefore, Hasluck visited the Netherlands and expressed the view that, as far as the political development of New Guinea was concerned, the slower the better (The Age 27 May 1960). It was Hasluck’s object to see Australia dissociated from the Dutch resolve to move the territory rapidly towards self-government in association with Australia and related Pacific territories. From this time the Dutch replaced the Australians as prime movers in the promotion of the kind of administrative cooperation which was designed to promote the ultimate goal of a united and independent island of New Guinea.

More important than Hasluck’s influence on the thrust of administrative cooperation between the first and second conferences in 1958 and 1959, however, were accelerating international developments. International developments in the West New Guinea dispute, particularly the decision of the United States to improve relations with Indonesia, and Australia’s decision to follow suit by inviting Dr Subandrio to visit Australia, were the key determinants of the changed status
of administrative cooperation in New Guinea.

The Casey-Subandrio joint statement of 15 February 1959 which resulted from the visit of Indonesia's foreign minister to Australia stated that:

It followed from their position of respect for agreements on the rights of sovereignty that if any agreement were reached between the Netherlands and Indonesia as parties principal, arrived at by peaceful means and in accordance with internationally accepted principles, Australia would not oppose such an agreement.

Publicly this was received as a change of policy, though the government denied that it was so. The fact is that it was Spender's position in 1950 that West New Guinea was vital to the security of Australia and that Australia should be consulted on any change in its status, while Casey put on the record in 1959 Australia's willingness to recognize an agreement reached by peaceful processes between the parties. But whatever shift this represented, Australia in 1959 still recognized Dutch sovereignty, supported the principle of self-determination for the Papuans, and refused to encourage those negotiations which could only have one result. It took the worsening crisis of the next two years, and the emergence of a real prospect of the use of force by Indonesia to secure its claims, to push Australia, like America, to overcome resistance and reluctance at home and change policy still further to promote negotiations between the disputants. Meanwhile the prospect of an independent West New Guinea was kept alive, and with it the belief in the possibility of a Melanesian Federation.

**Indonesian policies: compounding the problem**

To speak of Papuan political opinion in Netherlands New Guinea is to speak of the opinion of a tiny proportion of the community which in West New Guinea at the relevant time numbered 700,000 - 800,000. Given the limited time for their execution, Dutch development programmes were to take only the few fast to the front of modernity. The elite was thus little more than a handful, mostly urban dwellers in the few enclaves which dotted the coast. They either left for Holland, returned to the village, or threw in their lot with Indonesia following the signing in August 1962 of the New York Agreement, which transferred West New Guinea to a temporary UN administration and there-
after to Indonesia pending the Act of Free Choice.

In the struggle for independence against the Dutch, West New Guinea had revolted alongside the rest of Indonesia. There were outbreaks in Hollandia in December 1945, in Merauke and Sorong in 1946, and in Biak in 1948. Thereafter there remained some pro-Indonesian sentiment among some of the elite, and in at least one political party in the territory. A proportion of the Papuan elite was prepared to work with Indonesia in the interim before the act of self-determination promised them in the New York Agreement. Yet so successful was the germination of the Dutch seed of self-determination, that even this support was conditional upon an act of ascertainment taking place, and it was to be lost in the light of Indonesian rule after 1963. It is for this reason that it can be argued that the West New Guinea problem could have been contained by Indonesia had it pursued different policies in the territory from 1962.

Indonesia began enthusiastically enough in West New Guinea, lauding the return of the territory to its rightful place in the Republic. The enthusiasm carried through the 1 May 1963 takeover from the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) but lasted little longer than a year. It was followed by the curtailment of political liberties in the territory, its closure to the outside world, and the increasing involvement of what had now become West Irian in the rhetoric of the Malaysian Confrontation campaign.

In spite of Indonesian reports of great progress in the education and welfare of the territory, Justus M. van der Kroef, writing the history of the development of resistance in Irian, concluded that the situation had already deteriorated to such an extent by late 1964 that minor clashes between Papuans and Indonesian civil and military personnel were becoming almost daily occurrences, and that by early 1965 there were reports of major disturbances (van der Kroef 1968). A catalyst was Indonesia's exodus from the United Nations at the turn of the year, and President Sukarno's subsequent announcement that a plebiscite in West Irian would not now take place after all. Allegations of Indonesian atrocities and accounts of Irianese uprisings now characterized both the reports coming out of West New Guinea and the complaints of the Free Papua Movement abroad.

Some admission of maladministration in West New Guinea came with the coup which toppled Sukarno in September 1965, Adam Malik's subsequent visit to the territory, and FUNDWI's report on the development prospects and needs of the Territory thereafter
(FUNDWI 1968). The new regime announced that Irian would have its Act of Free Choice after all. But FUNDWI's recommendations could not be implemented immediately, nor Adam Malik's pragmatic reformism have its effect in a situation in which Indonesia was now caught up with the first necessity of implementing an effective Act of Free Choice.

Sarwo Edie, Indonesia's administrator in West Irian, himself subsequently conceded that the security situation deteriorated in 1965, but stated that it was largely for economic reasons. He also conceded that there were troubles in a number of parts of the province, in Merauke, Kokonau and Fak Fak as well as Manokwari, one result of which was increasing movement across the international border into Papua New Guinea. He added that operations against troublemakers had been 'hindered somewhat by the existence of the border'. The troubles in Irian accelerated prior to the Act of Free Choice, causing Indonesia to bring in four extra battalions, raising the estimated total of troops in the territory to 9,000 (South Pacific Post 24 July 1968). By this time, however, the Australian government was less alarmed by this state of affairs than it might have been; this was because of the metamorphosis in its own policy towards West New Guinea from one of border build-up against Indonesia in 1962 to one of border cooperation with her by the time the Act of Free Choice eventually took place in 1969.

*Australia's reaction to Indonesia's accession to the administration of the Territory of West New Guinea: border development and demarcation*

With the Casey-Subandrio joint statement of 1959 Australia stepped out of the front line of the West New Guinea dispute and away from any claim to be a party-principal. Thereafter Australia's concerns concentrated increasingly on the threat of the use of force. Against the backdrop of regional instability with Indonesia's confrontation of Malaysia, there was a very real fear for Australia's own security and that of her New Guinea territory as the West New Guinea dispute deteriorated in circumstances of continuing Dutch arms buildup, Indonesian arms acquisition, and the beginning of infiltration into the territory of West New Guinea. One result was that the defences of Australia were built up rapidly from 1962, as were those of Papua New Guinea in spite of the chiefs of staff's reassessment of its strategic sig-
nificance for Australia in December 1961.

At some stage in this period the Australian government appeared to realize that the outside help which it had believed would be forthcoming in the event of Indonesian hostilities in West New Guinea would not in fact materialize. In a statement in explanation of the New York Agreement in the House of Representatives, Australia’s minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, had emphasized that Australia could not have acted alone in the West New Guinea dispute and that no other country was prepared to make a military commitment to maintain the sovereignty of the Netherlands:

If any should have contemplated a military adventure, none of the countries of the west, and particularly of those with whom Australia has the closest association, were at any relevant time willing to maintain Netherlands administration by military means (Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers III 1962-63:781-785).

In explanation of Australia’s vote on the New York Agreement in the General Assembly that September, he added that the agreement was ‘a part of history with which we must live’, and that it created for the first time:

A common land frontier... with a people of Asia. But although new arrangements may need to be made, it would be wrong... to begin this closer association with Indonesia in any sense of foreboding or recrimination (Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers VII 1962-63:759-764).

The reality, however, was to be different. The United States had by this time requested an Australian contribution to the defence first of South Vietnam and then of Thailand. The New York Agreement was also ‘a major actor in the decision of Australia, announced towards the end of 1962, to embark upon a $1.5 billion defence expansion programme’ (Stebbins 1958-62:209) which included the formation of a second battalion of Papua New Guinea’s Pacific Island Regiment. In May 1963, when he announced Australia’s further defence increases, Sir Robert Menzies pledged Australia’s determination to defend Papua and New Guinea ‘as if they were part of our mainland’: Australia would not be stampeded out of Papua New Guinea (Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates (CPD) H. of R. 38:1668-1672, 22 May 1963). His guarantee received wide publicity (see Neale
1963:145), as did the addition to it of American support. In June that year, Averell Harriman said that the USA would regard an attack on Papua New Guinea as an attack on Australia itself. Menzies repeated Australia’s guarantees on the occasion of his visit to Papua New Guinea in September 1963 (South Pacific Post 10 September 1963), following a year in which a number of notables, including the minister for Territories, the minister for the Army and the secretary of the Department of External Affairs did likewise.

Moreover, some military experts did not accept the strategic downgrading of Papua New Guinea and urged the improvement of its defences. They saw Papua New Guinea as more liable than Australia to minor infiltration and to major assault (paper presented to a seminar held by the Council on New Guinea Affairs, Sydney, December 1964, by Dr T.B. Millar). The government responded accordingly. From 1962, as part of the flurry of activity which took place in defence and development in Papua New Guinea:

The Papua New Guinea Training Depot was opened at Goldie River, near Port Moresby, in 1964 to train recruits for the PIR and to give advanced specialised training which is not provided by the PIR itself. In September 1963, the Australian Government announced a general expansion of Army strength in the territory, involving the construction of new barracks, the raising of additional administrative and service staff units, and the addition of another battalion to the PIR. The Second Battalion was raised at Wewak from two of the companies of the First Battalion on 3 March 1965. The Second Battalion took over the Vanimo outstation and the First Battalion now has an outstation at Lae. A multiracial cadet battalion has also been raised (O’Neill 1971:3).

In addition, there was a reactivation of the Manus naval base and the beginning of a Papua New Guinea navy, the improvement of air facilities at Boram near Wewak (to take F1-11s), and at Daru, Mount Hagen and Nadzab. A host of border airstrips was established or upgraded and there was widespread acquisition of land in ‘strategic areas’ for future purposes. Although options on much of this land were not in fact taken up, although, too, some of the plans and projects for the increase of Papua New Guinea’s defence did not materialize, and although there are no separate estimates for Papua New Guinea
defence expenditure, nevertheless, according to one commentator, by the end of September 1965 Australian defence spending in the border areas of Papua New Guinea amounted to 40 million pounds and there was more to come.

What happened on the border itself as a result? For Papua New Guinea the changed status of West New Guinea meant that the policy of administrative cooperation between east and west New Guinea, which to all intents and political purposes had ended by 1960, was now ended in a practical sense as well. ‘Unless it could be established’, said Hasluck, ‘that ENG and WNG were moving towards a single objective, there was no case for administrative cooperation as we had known it up to date but only a case for trying to maintain friendly relations as best we can with the people next door’ (Hasluck 1976:371). There was therefore a border freeze designed to prevent movement across it, quarantine concerns reappearing as the primary reason, and development of the remotest regions of Papua New Guinea adjacent to the international border was upgraded in importance. Development, in this way, became the other side of the defence coin, which also meant an effort to delimit the border itself. One important result was that the alarm these developments reflected on Australia’s part created a corresponding alarm among Papua New Guinea’s upcoming elite who thereby emerged into a world in which the enemy, very clearly, was Indonesia.

Border demarcation and development

In his description of the origins of Papua New Guinea’s boundaries Paul van der Veur describes the remarkable lack of activity or urgency to demarcate the western boundary on the ground. He notes that apart from the occasional exceptional incident, such as that of the Tugeri incursions into British New Guinea in the 1890s, followed Sir William McGregor’s vigorous objections which contributed to the 1895 convention redefining the southern sector of the boundary, little was done even up to 1960 (van der Veur 1966). But there was some concern about Papua New Guinea’s border with West New Guinea from the time when the status of the latter was called into question in 1949. This contributed to the first of a series of spurts of interest in the border region on the part of the Australian government and the TPNG administration over the next two decades. Efforts to control the border areas and then to develop them and secure their political allegiance
reflected developments in the western half of the island. In 1950 the urgency was only moderate and was conditional upon resources being available. Later, as Sir Paul Hasluck has recorded in his account of his years as minister for Territories:

When change of administration in WNG had seemed certain, I had directed that a chain of new patrol posts be established in the border region, so that... we could be in touch with all the people on the Australian side of the border region and, either by direct observation or by reports from the village people, be sure of knowing what was happening at any time and have landing strips and administrative centres from which we could work in any emergency, such as a cholera epidemic *sic*, unusual movements of population or the unwelcome activities of strangers (Hasluck 1976:370).

Border development therefore began in earnest in the Western and Sepik districts adjacent to the international border as a result of the settlement of the dispute in Indonesia’s favour. An unprecedented supplement to the *Western District Annual Report* in August 1962, for example, reported that progress had been made on the establishment of new patrol posts at Nomad and Maka, and that work had begun on a post in the Star Mountains. In addition, a programme of extensive patrolling was initiated in the Western District to bring all its inhabitants into close contact with the Australian administration, and efforts were made to improve its economic prospects. However by 1964-65, in part because of the World Bank Report (which advised concentration of effort where the potential was best) and the Five Year Development Plan which followed it, it was realized what little economic reward there was from efforts to bring development to the Western District.

Except as a source of labour, the potential of the Sepik District was to prove to be little better. The area was more sensitive, however, because of the proximity of the West New Guinea capital and its greater political awareness on account of its exposure to the outside world. The Japanese had occupied parts of the Sepik from the end of 1942 to May 1945, whereas the Western District had escaped the impact of war. Before that, there had been German rule, as afterwards there was Australian, and then greater contact with the Dutch and with West Papuans in circumstances in which it was mostly from the Sepik that exchanges of schoolchildren and of sports teams had been made under
the administrative cooperation programme. Perhaps as a result, even before the New York Agreement was signed there was increased patrolling of the border areas, an extension of educational opportunities, and the encouragement of the development of local government councils. And it was to be in the Sepik, at Vanimo, that the second battalion of the PIR would be based.

For the Sepik, therefore, the result of the border development programme in 1963 was, according to the district commissioner, that an ‘astounding’ amount had been achieved:

All stations on the border have been manned during the year and a big development programme is underway. Permanent housing is now going in, schools, hospitals and aid posts....agricultural extension has increased ... Timber cutting equipment is installed at Pagei, Imonda and Amanab. During the year Vanimo and Pagei LGCs have gone ahead. By the end of the year it is hoped to have low level councils established at Green River, Imonda and Amanab. All in all, the Border Development Plan is going ahead according to schedule.

Further:

As to the future, we should have something for our neighbours to think about. However ... the development of border stations is causing dissent in other parts of the District ... the border people are looked upon as ‘new natives’ who have not worked for or with the Administration as have those with years of contact ... the border has been given everything (North Sepik District Annual Report 1963-64:36-37).

‘Traditional’ movement, border trouble spots and border demarcation efforts

On account of its larger population and their relative sophistication, its less deterring topography, and the proximity of a greater proportion of the district to the largest West New Guinea metropolis, the Sepik was to be the source of greater rebel and refugee movement, and consequent Australian attention, through the 1960s. The most significant border movement took place over the years on the Hollandia/Kotabaru/Sukarnapura/Jayapura-Vanimo north coast axis, although there was another notable trouble spot in the Sepik District around
Skotiau, Waris and Jafi. In the Western District the major border movement came from the hinterland of Merauke to that of Daru in the Bensbach Census Division around Weam and Morehead near the south coast, although there was an additional particular problem at the bulge of the Fly around Ningerum, Opka and Ingemit. Both this and the second Sepik trouble spot were areas of relatively heavy population concentration and, more importantly, were areas where the Dutch, in less tense times and for agreed expedient reasons, had exercised administrative control on and across the international border.

At first the problem was largely one of accelerated traditional movement across an unmarked border. Movement of the traditional kind, to which Australia had in the past taken a necessarily lenient view, increased in the different and disturbed circumstances on both sides of the border as Indonesia’s administration in the west created new problems on the border itself. Officially, as we have seen, the greatest fear was for quarantine; in fact, just as great was the fear of incidents with Indonesians, whose patrols pursued peoples from the much more populous side of the international border into Australian territory. By the time of Indonesia’s formal assumption of administrative authority in West New Guinea, therefore, the situation was such that Australian patrols into the Trans-Fly Census Division inland of the border, for example, were without the services of interpreters and agricultural fieldworkers ‘on account of the situation on the border’\(^4\) a situation in which all those reinforcements of personnel which could be spared from less pressing posts had been sent in.

I have described details of the border incidents which took place in the Sepik District and the Western District from 1962 elsewhere (Verrier 1976); these highlighted the need for border demarcation. Concerned about the loss of labour, the Dutch administration had initiated an agreement at Ingemit in 1954 which discouraged labour recruitment across the border but, more importantly, established which villages in the border region fell under what administration. Some twelve villages were listed as falling under Australian control and another seven straddling the border as remaining Dutch. One result was that in the course of a patrol to carry out astro fixes in five border villages at the end of 1962, Opka, administered by the Dutch,

was found to be a quarter of a mile inside Australian territory and Ingembit, where the Dutch flag was flying, to be on the border.

The Ingembit agreement and subsequent meetings smoothed a few ruffled feathers in Hollandia but failed to remedy the essential problem, that of an ill-defined border where there was still very little control. In 1956 there were meetings in Hollandia and in Merauke on respective border differences. However, little progress was made and the problem was shelved pending the establishment of a border demarcation commission. Hasluck records that a Technical Border Commission was established consequently in November 1958, convening after inordinate delay at Delft in November 1961 when it recommended the creation of a Dutch-Australian Border Commission (Hasluck 1976:369).

In July 1962, after a number of border incidents, Hasluck obtained cabinet approval and funds to start aerial mapping of the international border in New Guinea and to establish a priority for this work. However, progress was unsatisfactory and there remained doubt as to where the border was at the time of the Indonesian takeover (ibid.). Some of the difficulties were revealed in a patrol report of November 1962, where it was reported that weather conditions had limited their operations from five border villages to two. The prospects of armed Indonesian bands wandering across the border simply because there was no means of ascertaining its position, and of resulting incidents, were raised (The Age (editorial) 1 October 1962). In a question directed to the minister for Territories on 4 October 1962, one member of the House of Representatives asked whether the boundary between West New Guinea, East New Guinea and Papua had been surveyed and accurately defined and, if not, when the government intended to undertake this task. In reply, the minister outlined the history of demarcation. He recalled that there were two international agreements, the first made in 1895 between the Netherlands and Great Britain and the second in 1936 between Australia and the Netherlands. In 1958 agreement had been reached between the

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5 Van der Veur (1965-66:92) reports that the meeting in Hollandia produced a 'gentleman's agreement' to maintain the status quo 'temporarily' and for 'practical purposes'(the quotation marks are his).

Netherlands and Australia on the division of responsibility for photographing and mapping the border; consequently most of the border had been photographed and the remainder would be completed when weather permitted (CNIA 33(10) October 1962:86). In addition, Hasluck explained that the Australian government had approached the Indonesian government about border demarcation in December 1962, but Indonesia preferred to leave its consideration until its assumption of administration the following May.\(^7\) Van der Veur has described the result:

By early 1962, Dutch authority was still exercised in some 23 villages in the Waris enclave and some 17 villages in the Jaffi enclave.

Moreover:
The flags of the Netherlands and West Papua were the recognised symbols of authority; Malay was the *lingua franca*; and six subsidised and seven un-subsidised schools were maintained by the Catholic mission (van der Veur 1965-66:90).

It was this situation which led to the western orientation of some border villages, their resentment of Australian intrusion (which included prevention of their flourishing trade with the urban areas of West New Guinea, and their subsequent sympathy and support for Irianese refugees.

Out of this border confusion, and the conflicting loyalties and resentments to which it gave rise, another problem of a more serious nature arose. Its character was indicated in reports on the circumstances of the establishment of Pagei patrol post. This post was established for border surveillance on account of activities at Skotiau, a village within the borders of Papua New Guinea but which had been administered by authorities in the west and at the end of 1962 was reported to be completely West New Guinean in attitude.\(^8\) A West New Guinea 'camp' was found here, which was dismantled following

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\(^7\) The subject was raised in a television interview with Indonesia's ambassador, Mr Suadi, which was reported in the *Canberra Times* 7 May 1963; see also Indonesia's response in the *Canberra Times* 8 May 1963.

\(^8\) *Sepik District Patrol Report Vanimo No. 5*, 62/63, N.H. Walters to Sekotchiau through Kilmeri and Pagei CD, from 1 December to 18 December 1962.
the establishment of an administrative presence in Skotiau.\textsuperscript{9}

By December 1963 there were reports of armed Indonesian patrols pacing the border and sometimes being found many miles inside Papua New Guinea. Agreement had been reached in Jakarta in September to ‘the placement by Australia of temporary markers on Australian territory on tracks and pathways crossing the border indicating the approximate position of the border and this was to be done in advance of the completion of the survey and permanent marking of the border’.\textsuperscript{10}

However, in November an Indonesian patrol had torn out survey markers and driven back an Australian survey team at gunpoint. Barnes, as minister for Territories, stated that border marking activities had been suspended, as a result of this incident, while the situation was being clarified ‘at the diplomatic level’ in Jakarta (\textit{The Age} 21 December 1963; \textit{South Pacific Post} 24 December 1963). In January 1964, Dr Subandrio agreed that the work of marking the border should continue (\textit{New York Times} 1 January 1964) and Australia’s ambassador to Indonesia explained that the marker incident had been a mistake.\textsuperscript{11}

The incident was nevertheless serious enough to galvanize Australian and Indonesian authorities to action. Discussions followed between the Australian and Indonesian governments and, in August 1964, the Australian Department of External Affairs released a statement issued by the Indonesian foreign minister and the Australian embassy in Jakarta at the conclusion of border talks. It agreed that a joint Australia-Indonesian reconnaissance team should visit the border as soon as practical to prepare the way for the subsequent concurrent astronomical surveys by both countries; correlation of the results of these surveys would clear the way for the permanent marking of the

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.} No. 2 63/64, R.L. O’Connell to Pagei CD, from 4 June to 1 August 1963.

\textsuperscript{10} Senator Gorton, the minister representing the minister for External Affairs in the Senate, answering a question on the subsequent border marker incident on 19 March 1964 (\textit{CNIA} 35(3) March 1964:48).

\textsuperscript{11} Mr Shann stated on his return to Canberra to discuss this matter that Dr Subandrio and Sir Garfield Barwick had agreed to the placing of markers and that authorities in West New Guinea had simply not been informed that this was the case. His comments were reported in \textit{The Age} 7 March 1964, as they had been in the \textit{Indonesian Observer} 25 February 1964, which also agreed with his interpretation of the situation.
border (*CNI A 35(8) August 1964:28*). Shortly thereafter, Australia’s minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, answering a question in parliament about demarcation progress, said that it had been good and that the work, planned to proceed over a period of two or three years, would be set in train in due course (*CNI A 35(9) September 1964:38*). He also assured his questioner that there was no dispute with regard to the border and that the only matter requiring attention was its marking on the ground. Mr Hasluck could add little more in answer to a similar question a year later (*CNI A 36(9) September 1965:598*). There had been no progress in a situation in which Australian-Indonesian relations had reached their lowest ebb and in which, at the same time and for the same reason, the need for border demarcation in New Guinea was greatest.

A report from Port Moresby carried in the *Canberra Times* on 20 April 1965 stated that refugees were now crossing into Papua New Guinea weekly and that their flight had occasioned shootings. It continued that although Australian officials had only admitted two incidents - the first of the border marker and the second of the crossing in 1964 at Vanimo of John Djakedawa and his family (who were subsequently granted permissive residence) - at least twenty-seven refugees had crossed. The report concluded that neither Pacific Island Regiment fortnightly patrols along the length of the border, nor Hasluck’s assurance that Indonesian behaviour so far had been ‘quite correct’

12, nor even Subandrio’s statement that there was no border problem and that there would be demarcation as soon as the wet season was over

13, resolved the problem. Effective border cooperation had to await the eventual overall improvement of Australian-Indonesian relations which followed the coup which toppled Sukarno.

The new regime dispatched Colonel Pranoto Asmoro, Indonesia’s director of topography, to Canberra with an entourage of four to discuss details of the plans for border demarcation (*Canberra Times* 21 May 1966). The first stage of the project, involving the place-

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12 This comment was volunteered in answer to a question in the House of Representatives on 28 September 1965. It asked whether Indonesia had the same right to use the Fly River as the Netherlands had had as a result of an agreement with Britain in 1895 (*CPD H.of R. 48:1298, 28 September 1965.*)

13 Subandrio had made this statement after talks with Shann in December 1965, and went on to state that there was no border problem between Indonesia and Australia (*Indonesian Herald* 2 December 1965).
ment of six meridian markers in the northern sector of the international border, was successfully completed shortly thereafter in 1966. The remaining eight markers for the southern sector of the border were planned in talks which took place the following year. The second stage was announced completed on 29 September 1967 (CNIA 38(9) September 1967:393-394). It was hailed as a diplomatic success and also as, ‘probably’, the first joint project successfully undertaken by Australians and Indonesians in cooperation (Pacific Islands Monthly December 1968:64). The degree of cooperation that had been achieved was again underlined on the occasion of the signature of the survey of meridians report prepared and submitted by the Indonesian director of topography and the Australian director of national mapping in February 1970 (CNIA 41(2) February 1970:68-69).

1965-1969: A ‘political’ border problem and a change of Australian policy

The border problem in the island of New Guinea began as an irritant between mostly friendly adjacent administrative powers. The problem lay in the border’s remoteness, its arbitrariness and the fact that it was not clearly demarcated. ‘Traditional’ movement across it was common and resented by the Dutch only when it was seen as a potential loss of scarce labour after it was decided to develop the territory in earnest. With the departure of the Dutch from West New Guinea in 1962 and the effective accession of Indonesia, the problem was at first essentially the same, although the response to it differed. Australia closed the border and engaged in a defence and development programme designed to resist incursion from the west and to orient the border peoples clearly eastwards.

A third stage developed around 1965 when the border problem became far more ‘political’ than to date it had been. There were at least two reasons. First, there was an acceleration of political movement across the border; movement neither of a traditional kind nor of an economically motivated kind, but rather a flight of rebels and refugees resisting Indonesian rule, some to camps operating from the Papua New Guinea side of the border. One consequence was an increase in border incidents, some of which involved Australian administrative personnel. Secondly, the border problem became political on account of the policies Australia adopted in response. Australia was thoroughly alarmed by these border developments, though the government denied the problem or downplayed it in order to avoid embar-
Exiled OPM leaders Seth Rumkorem (left) and Jacob Prai signing the 'Port Vila Declaration' of 11 July 1985.

Former OPM district commander, Yance Hembring, standing in front of the West Papua flag. Photo—Hank di Suvero
An OPM camp in the border area. Photo—*Times of Papua New Guinea*
rassing Indonesia and eventually went on to cooperate with Indonesia in a border management programme. As border movement increased in the months immediately before and after the Act of Free Choice, Australia took a tougher line on border crossing even of the traditional kind which had been tolerated in the past. Contrary to official public statements, the majority of Irianese who crossed the border in 1968 and 1969 undoubtedly did so for political reasons, just as most of them were undoubtedly sent back also for political reasons.

In 1965, at the same time as disturbances were occurring in West New Guinea, the Papua New Guinea press carried reports of the flight of refugees across the border in both the Sepik and Western districts, along with denials that a clash of PIR and Indonesian troops had been involved (South Pacific Post 25 June 1965). In 1964 Skotiau became the subject of special attention by the administration (as it had been earlier and was again later), when a patrol set out to investigate the appearance in the village of several villagers dressed in Indonesian uniforms. In the light of such incidents Minister Barnes made a statement of policy in the House of Representatives in September 1965:

Instructions to all officers of border stations through the District Commissioners for the Sepik and Western Districts are substantially as follows:- Every person crossing the border into the Territory of Papua-New Guinea (other than cases of people living astride the border who may continue their normal local movement) is to be interviewed and if he can give no reasonable grounds on which he could claim special consideration for the granting of permissive residence in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, he is to be fed, well looked after and returned across the border as expeditiously as practicable. Any with an apparent case for consideration as political refugees are to be closely questioned and reported on, and held for the time being at a nearby border station pending decision. (Senator Gorton, the Minister representing the Minister for Territories in the Senate, in reply to a question upon notice from Senator McManus, CPD S. 29:654, 28 September 1965).

In 1966, on the occasion of a visit to Papua New Guinea, Barnes added that 'factors of common humanity' would influence Australia's decision on refugees (South Pacific Post 17 January 1966), but he stated that their numbers were so far few: 128 had crossed in 1964/65 and con-
siderably fewer since then. Of these 90-95 per cent were of native groups straddling the international border; there had been only eleven applications for political asylum, of which one had up till then been granted (South Pacific Post 19 January 1966).

By this time, however, patrol reports were recording ‘bursts of migration’, sometimes of whole villages, across the border and, more seriously, the establishment of resistance camps on the Papua New Guinea side of the border. Patrol reports reveal that in the first case newcomers were sent back across the border. The solution was not as easy in the second. Large-scale and frequent patrolling had resumed in 1968 with the specific objective of border assessment, including, by this time, ascertainment of the location of refugee camps and of the presence of unauthorized Irianese.

The problem this represented is illustrated by the case of the bush camp centre at Skotiau. For long uncooperative with the administration on such matters as the establishment of a local government council in the area, its headman, Yundun, was also suspected of harbouring OPM sympathizers and supporting raiding parties into West Irian. Originally more pro-Indonesian, Yundun eventually came to welcome Irianese in his village and to speak frankly of Indonesian atrocities in the west. A patrol contacted a group of twenty in bush camps at Simi near Skotiau at the end of 1968, all of whom claimed that they were wanted men whose safety would be endangered by their return. Nevertheless, the patrol claims to have succeeded in convincing them that the administration would not tolerate their establishment of centres of opposition to Indonesia on the Australian side of the border. A patrol officer therefore reported: ‘We destroyed the campsite ... to prevent the people returning to it as soon as we left them .... and then accompanied them for about half an hour on the Skofro track’. Any

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14 Instructions as given to M. Eggleton and M.A. Richards, 16 July 1969, Western District Patrol Report Ningerum No.1, 69/70 to North Ok Tedi CD and part of South Ok Tedi CD, from 18 July to 28 July 1969.

15 Sepik District Patrol Report Pagei No. 7, 68/69, R.R. Fairhall, Special Purpose Border Security to Sekotchiau-Niau-Wutung Border Area from 3 December to 19 December 1968 accompanied by fifteen members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC). Instruction for the patrol from ADC T.R. Bergin to Fairhall, 25 November 1968, was to return any refugees found camped on the eastern side of the border or villagers living there. This was to be done without force; ‘nor is there to be any destroying of houses and barracks (sic) or camps in which refugees may be found'.
doubt about the camp's nature was dispelled when the district commissioner proposed a further patrol to the area in the first week of December and noted that 'reports indicate that it will be about this time that an attack will be made on Sukarnapura, and if the attack fails, as it must, we could have considerable numbers of West Irianese trying to cross back into this territory …'  

By this time the public attention that the border situation attracted had changed official statements from low-key announcements of the type still common in August (for example, that a handful of Irianese had crossed the border at Wutung and Pagei and were returned, *South Pacific Post* 21 August 1968) to the full statement of both the legal and practical situation that was made by the secretary for law in Papua New Guinea's House of Assembly in September (*HAD* II(2):359-360, 4 September 1968) and again in November (*HAD* II(3):589-590, 20 November 1968). Answering questions, Mr Watkins stated that 217 refugees had crossed to date, 27 had returned voluntarily and one had been returned (*HAD* II(2):478-479, 11 September 1968). Shortly thereafter the administrator, David Hay, elaborated further in the light of the 'small but steady trickle of illegal squatters in the past few months with the numbers building up in recent weeks' (*TPNG Press Release* No. 168A, 31 October 1968). He repeated that border crossers unable to give adequate reasons to support an application for permissive residence were told to return and were warned of the consequences of illegal entry. However, he added that the administration was aware that cases may occur where internationally recognized principles of humanity required a grant of permissive residence. The conditions of permissive residence included acceptance of settlement away from the border areas and abstention from political activity.

Hay's statement was followed by a number of reports from the border on refugee camps and conditions. There was, according to Jack McCarthy of the *South Pacific Post*, a string of camps along the Papua New Guinea side of the border at such places as Wutung, Waris, Skotiau and Korfor, some of them two years old. Their inmates were all qualified people - academics, missionaries, politicians, policemen

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16 My emphasis. Wakefield to the director of the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) 25 November 1968 recommending a follow-up patrol to that of *Sepik District Patrol Report*, Pagei No. 6, 68/69, ADC Bergin to the Sekotchiau-Niau Border area from 29 September to 6 October 1968.
or mechanics - none of whom was allowed to use his skill in Papua New Guinea. They asked the minister for Territories for land to grow food and were told that they must integrate or return; Australia could not allow minorities to develop (South Pacific Post 6 November 1968).

That the camps attracted Indonesia’s attention was made clear by the incidents at Wutung and Kwari. Of the first, Barnes stated in parliament that on 26 April 1969 a small group of armed uniformed Indonesians had entered Papua New Guinea at Wutung in search of Irianese who had crossed the border from their bush camp, and in the process shots were fired at the Australian officer-in-charge, Tony Try, two native constables and an interpreter, none of whom was armed. After a prolonged discussion with Try, during which a man held by the Indonesians was released, the intruders left. The situation had since returned to normal. A second incident took place three weeks later at Kwari in the Western District when fifteen Indonesian soldiers raided a camp nineteen kilometers inside Papua New Guinea on 18 May. A patrol set out to investigate and on 29 May district officer Arthur Marks was shot by a group of Indonesians when being paddled along the Baro River by six Irianese who dived into the water. Only three of these subsequently turned up at Kwari and two bodies were found. The official statement announcing these events went on to add that in the sixteen very difficult square miles of country south of Kwari patrols had found 254 Irianese (29 men, 48 women and 177 children) who lived in six camps scattered throughout the area (TPNG Press Release No. 532A, 5 June 1969).

One result was that Adam Malik subsequently protested that offensive action was being directed against Indonesia from Papua New Guinea 17 and indeed Australia’s own account acknowledges that this

17 In a report from Jakarta, the Sydney Morning Herald 28 May 1969 recorded Malik’s statement to the press that Indonesia would be grateful if Australia would prevent the existence in Papua New Guinea of ‘refugee camps that might be used as training camps’ as ‘a necessary part of a good neighbour policy’. Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro, Indonesia’s deputy foreign minister in charge of Pepera, had made the accusation in May. (Although Hastings concluded in the Australian 9 May 1969 that Sudjarwo had a ‘mild obsession’ about the master-minding of operations from Papua New Guinea, he also concluded there was no doubt that OPM activities were conducted from there, although their main function was to send on mail, brochures and propaganda to and from the OPM in West New Guinea, Holland and New York. It is interesting to note that Indonesia subsequently saw the liaison arrangements as cooperation to prevent the establishment of ‘training camps’ for Irianese rebels in Papua New Guinea according to ANTARA, reported in Canberra Times 2 June 1969.)
was so (Goode 1970:27). The action, however, was not at this stage from camps set up by the Australian administration to contain refugees as was perhaps implied, for the systematic organization of these was to come only as a consequence of the border incidents just described; and the same was true of border liaison arrangements. The numbers which crossed the international border in New Guinea in the months immediately preceding the Act of Free Choice, and the incidents which arose as a result, led Australia to seek to abolish border squatter camps, replace them with refugee holding camps for those with both reason and desire to stay, and to formalize border liaison arrangements with Indonesia. Before the month in which the Wutung and Kwari incidents occurred was out, border liaison arrangements had therefore been made between the governments of Australia and Indonesia. Even before these were announced in Papua New Guinea’s House of Assembly on 17 June 1969, a third border episode was added to provide reason for them. Two former members of the West New Guinea Legislative Council, Wilhelm Zonggonau and Clemens Runaweri, entered Papua New Guinea as chairman and vice chairman of the West Irianese nationalist body seeking to establish the Australian attitude to the Act of Free Choice and hoping to take their case to the UN General Assembly in New York. They were offered permisive residence, the first such for several months.

Although only in a limited way, Australia had at last responded to the overtures made by Indonesia for cooperation in New Guinea. Indonesia had expressed an interest in Australian assistance for the development of West New Guinea before the closure of the territory to the outside world, and before the development of those foreign policies which precluded it. It was to do so again when relations between Australia and Indonesia began to improve in 1968. In spite of appreciation of the destabilizing effect of an ever-widening gap between east and west New Guinea - Papua New Guinea’s annual grant at this stage was more than $100 million while West New Guinea’s was only $10 million - border liaison was to be the way Australia’s change of course was to be charted by the new foreign minister, Gordon Freeth.

Freeth’s approach was indicated by his response to the Wutung incident, which occurred while he was in Jakarta. On his return to Canberra Freeth stated that no formal protest was made about it and none would be made (in contrast, Barnes simultaneously spoke of the ‘strong representations’ made on the matter). ‘There was a friendly
discussion of the incident’, Freeth said ((Department of External Affairs Press Release No. 51, 30 April 1969), and there had already been talks on the border problem in which it was agreed that it was a matter for local administrations to handle (Department of External Affairs Press Release No. 49, 28 April 1969). The Sydney Morning Herald (28 April 1969) commented that the minister for External Affairs’s statement at his press conference in Jakarta in April was the most direct support of Indonesia’s position to date. But Freeth had made his attitude quite clear from the outset, both towards Indonesia and towards the forthcoming Act of Free Choice.

In his first speech in his new position, Freeth recognized the right of Indonesia to carry out the act of self-determination for West New Guinea by the process of musjawarah rather than by one man one vote18, a decision which had been the subject of considerable critical debate. He explained that it was essential to live in harmony with Indonesia and that whatever happened in West New Guinea was bound to affect Papua New Guinea. Ian Hicks, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald on 19 February 1969, interpreted the government’s attitude to be that while one-man-one-vote was desirable it was not worth jeopardizing the good relations between Australia and Indonesia built up since Sukarno’s fall, and there was little to be gained from having an independent but economically unsound West New Guinea subject to bitter emnity from Indonesia. Freeth went on, in parliament and outside it, to resist the suggestion that there was any undue coercion in pursuit of the Act, to point out that Indonesia was doing the best job it could in the circumstances, and that it was not, anyway, Australia’s business to judge.

Perhaps in response to criticism of his cavalier position, in the middle of May Freeth addressed the National Press Club in Canberra on the subject of regional stability. He explained that the object of regional stability, and therefore that of Australian diplomacy, was to prevent, where this could be done, incidents or potential sources of conflict becoming worked up to crisis proportions. It was this that guided Australian policy towards Indonesia, particularly through its confron-

18 He was speaking to the first national convention of Young Liberals and was reported in The Age 19 February 1969. The report concluded that many observers interpreted his comments as an apology for the Indonesian position which flouts the one man one vote principle which ‘Australia has defended vigorously elsewhere - and particularly in Rhodesia in recent years’.
tation of Malaysia, and this continued to be Australia’s approach, just as it was now Indonesia’s:

Recent border intrusions in New Guinea fit this pattern, not as being in any sense comparable to the issues we faced during confrontation, but in the sense of carrying the seed of dissension. If we are too heavy handed, these seeds could quite easily grow to critical size (Department of External Affairs Press Release No. 60, 17 May 1969).

In an adjournment debate at the end of May Freeth sought to bring certain members ‘back to a sense of reality’ on the West New Guinea question (CPD H.of R. 63:2554-5, 30 May 1969) and in the process himself flew furthest in the face of the facts. He stated unequivocally his belief that Indonesia was genuinely trying to carry out its obligations under the New York Agreement and that criticism was unwarranted until the results of those efforts could be seen. He stated that there was no evidence of the repression in West New Guinea to which some members drew attention and asked, ‘Is Indonesia being charged with the administration of that area under this agreement not to maintain law and order?’ He added that there was ‘not a shred of evidence’ to support the suggestion that Indonesia would hinder the development of West New Guinea, since it had already spent considerable sums there. Just what did the members expect the government to do in any case? ‘I suggest that in the interests of maintaining good relations with a large neighbour, we should at least give the Indonesians the benefit of the doubt and await events as they turn out’. Freeth’s position was unpalatable to a large cross-section of Australia’s public, politicians on both sides of the House, churches, and the local Commission of Jurists, and brought a hornet’s nest about his ears. Common to much of the criticism - and its importance here - was recognition of the overriding need to cultivate good relations with the new Indonesia, but not at any price. For who knows what expectations were thereby laid down in Indonesia of Australia’s reaction to the border incidents that were to continue in New Guinea over the years, or to comparable uncomfortable problems elsewhere?

In full and indignant flight as the Australian press was prior to

19 Standish (1969) concluded that only the ‘Indonesian lobby’ and a few prestigious academics and influential columnists supported Freeth and the leader of the opposition’s earlier echo on West New Guinea.
Pepera, West Irian’s Act of Free Choice, interest quickly fell off even as the Act was underway. Other issues began to dominate the headlines. In Papua New Guinea and in the Post-Courier, these were Bougainville and the Gazelle, copper and confrontation. The extra police contingents which confronted the Mataungan Association in Rabaul were those which had earlier been sent to Wutung and Yako. In Australia, also, these issues took over from Pepera, along with the five power talks on defence and the forthcoming federal election. In the course of the campaign for the latter, at the end of the year the Sydney Morning Herald was to declare that the new government would have no choice but to strengthen Australia’s defence, strengthen its regional military involvement and improve relations with its neighbours in circumstances in which, it believed, Australia would stand alone as never before, as Britain and America were leaving Asia, China was emerging as a Southeast Asian power in its own right, and the Russians were coming (into the Indian Ocean) ‘athwart our trade routes’. Thus even this most trenchant critic of Freeth was aware of the pressures which operated on his Indonesia and New Guinea policies. These pressures, which were changing the face of Southeast Asia, centred on the decisions of the UK to withdraw its forces from east of Suez, and of the US, under the Nixon Doctrine, to play in future only an offshore role in the region’s defence. There was thus every international encouragement for the stabilization of Indonesia in order that she might play her rightful role in the new indigenous balance, and every incentive for Australia to improve its relations with Indonesia in these new circumstances. The results would be reflected on the border in New Guinea.