CHAPTER 5

EAST OF THE BORDER: IRIAN JAYA AND THE BORDER IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLITICS*

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Over the years the Papua New Guinea government has made abundantly clear its unqualified acceptance of Indonesia's sovereignty in Irian Jaya and of the corollary that Indonesia's action against dissident elements in the province is a matter of internal policy. At the same time, there has been widespread recognition of an underlying conflict between Papua New Guinea's official policy, dictated by the political reality of the situation, and the fundamental sympathies of many Papua New Guineans for their Melanesian neighbours, sympathies which have been made explicit on occasion even by those who have occupied the highest levels of government. In an earlier paper (May 1979a) I referred to this as a tension between public attitudes and private feelings. Such tension has been exacerbated over the past decade by the generally high-handed and often arrogant position Indonesia has adopted in its dealings with Papua New Guinea. In recent years the two countries have developed administrative arrangements and diplomatic relationships designed to cope with the problems generated by the border but these have not significantly improved the situation and in 1984 a massive movement of Irianese across the border into Papua New Guinea raised the prominence of the issue to a new level in Papua New Guinea's domestic and foreign policy. Moreover, an apparent increase in activity by the OPM,1 which many observers were prepared effectively to write off in 1978-79, and the extent of planned transmigration to Irian Jaya, suggest that the new salience of

* This paper updates my earlier paper, 'Living with a lion' (May 1979a) and for the period up to 1979 draws heavily on it.
the border may be irreversible.

The object of this paper is to describe Papua New Guinea’s handling of the border issue, in a historical context, and to examine some of the domestic political forces which affect official policy.

*The colonial legacy*

Until well into the 1960s, within Papua New Guinea the concern over the West New Guinea issue was largely that of Australian colonial officials and an already slightly paranoid expatriate business and planter community.

The concern of Australian officials was for the most part a reflection of the Australian government’s attitude toward West New Guinea. Up till the end of the 1950s this attitude was dominated by Australia’s perception of the importance of the island to Australia’s security. The Australian government supported Holland in its denial of Indonesia’s territorial claims to West New Guinea, it established a number of new patrol posts in the border areas, and it entered into agreements for administrative cooperation between Dutch and Australian officials in the two territories, particularly in matters of joint concern such as health and quarantine.

The announcement in 1959 that Australia would recognize any peaceful agreement between Holland and Indonesia on the West New Guinea issue gave the first indication of a change in policy in favour of Indonesia, anticipating Australia’s acceptance of the transfer of sovereignty in 1962. Notwithstanding this, relations between Australia and Indonesia continued to deteriorate during the first half of the 1960s and Australian fears of a possible Indonesian invasion of Papua New Guinea resulted in a dramatic increase in defence spending in Papua New Guinea and a substantial outlay on airstrips, wharves and other infrastructure in the border areas.

The immediate impact of the transfer of sovereignty was an inflow

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1 OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, or Operasi Papua Merdeka - Free Papua Movement) is used here as a shorthand term to describe the various organizational and factional components of the West Papua nationalist movement - what Indonesian official sources generally refer to as *gerakan pengacau liar* (GPL), ‘wild terrorist gangs’. For a more detailed discussion see Osborne’s contribution to this volume.

2 A more detailed account of the period up to 1969 is to be found in Verrier (1976: chapter 11), from which this section has drawn. Also see Hasluck (1976: chapter 30) for an ‘inside’ view of the period.
of West Papuan nationalists into Papua New Guinea. As far as possible the Australian administration dealt with these crossings as though they were traditional movements and encouraged the border crossers to return, but a small number was granted permissive residency. With the growing resistance to Indonesian rule in West New Guinea from 1965, movement into Papua New Guinea increased sharply. There was, moreover, a number of border incidents as Indonesian patrols pursued Irianese across the border. The Australian response has been well summarized by Verrier (1976:366-367):

Along with the troubles in WNG as a whole, the Australian Government played this down and, from 1967, to avoid embarrassing Indonesia, took a tougher line on border crossing even of the traditional kind which had been tolerated in the past.

She adds

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 for political reasons. In addition there is no doubt that Irianese dissident activity directed against Indonesia had a base in the bush camps on the Australian side of the international border. One result was a number of border incidents of potentially serious proportion, and yet another was the creation of liaison arrangements between Australia and Indonesia to resolve them.

The anxieties of the expatriate population during the 1950s and early 1960s are recorded in the pages of the *South Pacific Post* (which maintained a regular coverage of events in West Irian throughout the 1960s) and the debates of the Legislative Council. They urged support for the Dutch position until it became obvious that this was a lost cause and they used the spectre of an Indonesian invasion to gain support for a Melanesian Federation and for proposals that Papua New Guinea become a seventh state of Australia. These anxieties were pungently expressed in 1962 by the president of the Highlands Farmers' and Settlers' Association, Ian Downs:

....it is not our intention to deliver the Highlands people so recently won to civilisation into the hands of the decadent, degenerate Indonesian bandits (quoted in Bettison, Hughes and van der Veur 1965:33).
Paradoxically, considering the relative levels of social and economic development in the two territories, in 1962 there was not in Papua New Guinea, as there was in West New Guinea, a conspicuous nationalist elite. Hence the reaction from within Papua New Guinea to the transfer of sovereignty in that year was almost entirely an expatriate reaction. However in January 1962 delegates to a local government council conference in Port Moresby passed a resolution against an Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea; in June 1962 John Guise told Papua New Guinea’s Legislative Council that his electorate had asked him to express concern over the fate of West New Guinea and that he supported an immediate referendum in West New Guinea, and in August (following a meeting of the South Pacific Commission) Guise was one of three Papua New Guinean signatories to a letter sent to the secretary-general of the United Nations criticizing the UN’s handling of the question.

During the second half of the 1960s the situation changed quite profoundly; indeed Verrier (1976:369) has suggested that the West New Guinea dispute was a catalyst in the emergence of Papua New Guinean nationalism in the 1960s and has commented further (ibid.:200) that

In the unprecedented flurry of activity which took place in PNG [in the 1960s] largely because of Australia’s own fears of Indonesia, those fears were firmly implanted in the minds of PNG’s first elite where they were to remain when for Australia they had gone.

In a review of Australian administration in Papua New Guinea from 1951 to 1963 former Territories minister Hasluck has written (1976:372), ‘My impression was that most of the indigenous people in our Territory who were at all aware of the events were anti-Indonesian in sentiment’. In 1965, with Irianese refugees flowing into the Sepik and Western provinces in large numbers, and Australian officials putting pressure on them to return, national members of the first House of Assembly appealed for sympathetic consideration of Irianese pleas for asylum and demanded a clear policy on the refugee issue (House of Assembly Debates [HAD] 1(6):924-925, 31 August 1965). One of the most prominent spokesmen for the Irianese was the member for Upper Sepik Open, Wegra Kenu. Kenu, from Yako village (where the Administration had recently purchased land for the resettlement of refugees), had been to school in Hollandia and had relatives on both sides of the border. Others included Paul Langro (member for West
Sepik Open, who later became deputy leader of the opposition and opposition spokesman on foreign affairs) and Guise, who had become leader of the elected members of the House. In the same year, Guise and United Party leader Mathias Toliman, attending a UN meeting in New York, spoke with the UN secretary-general and demanded that the ‘Act of Free Choice’ be a true referendum (Verrier 1976:385).

As the ‘Act of Free Choice’ approached, activity along the border intensified. By the end of 1968 about 1200 refugees were reported to have crossed and over 200 were granted pemissive residency. In November 1968, in response to repeated questioning of Administration policy on the border (principally by former missionary, Percy Chatterton), the secretary for law told the House that in view of the rapid build-up of Irianese camps on the Papua New Guinea side of the border over the past few weeks, ‘together with indications that the camps were focal points for political activity’, the Administration had informed the refugees that they must return to the Irian Jaya side of the border; near Skotiau a shelter had been destroyed ‘owing to its insanitary condition’ (HAD II(3):589-590, 20 November 1968). Five days later the member for East Sepik Regional, Michael Somare, moved ‘That this House expresses its sympathy with the plight of the West Irianese refugees in the Territory and urges the Administration to treat them with every consideration’. Somare was supported by Chatterton but official members attacked the motion as implying criticism of the Administration’s already liberal policy and it was defeated (HAD II(3):671-674, 25 November 1968).

In June there was a further debate on the Irian Jaya situation, occasioned by an official statement following border violations by Indonesian troops at Wutung and Kwari. Chatterton successfully moved an amendment to the statement, expressing dismay that the UN was ‘not prepared to insist on the holding of a genuine act of free choice’ and requesting the Australian government to transmit the motion to the UN. During the debate a number of members expressed sympathy with their Melanesian brothers but, interestingly, their ire was directed not so much at Indonesia (several specifically said they had no dispute with Indonesia) as at the UN; members were quick to point out that though the UN had thought fit to criticize the conduct of the elections in Papua New Guinea in 1968 it was conspicuously silent

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on the denial of free choice to the Irianese.

In May 1969 about five hundred students, church leaders and others staged a march through the streets of Port Moresby, following a forum at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), and a petition was presented to the Administrator protesting against the Australian government’s tacit support of Indonesia.

After the ‘Act of Free Choice’ there were numerous complaints, expressed in the House of Assembly and through letters to the _Post-Courier_, that the Australian administration was putting pressure on refugees to return to Irian Jaya.

The reaction of Papua New Guineans to the West New Guinea question in this period was a complex of at least three elements. In the first place there was a genuine sympathy for the position of these fellow Melanesian people; as no lesser person than Michael Somare said in 1969, ‘We are the same people...’ (*HAD* II(5):1346, 25 June 1969). This sympathy increased as the evidence of Indonesian repression in Irian Jaya mounted and as a growing number of Irianese took up residence in Papua New Guinea and brought stories of repression and persecution. Secondly, the way in which not only the Dutch but also the United States, Australia and in turn the United Nations capitulated to Indonesia’s display of truculence caused concern among the more thoughtful members of Papua New Guinea’s elite. This was forcefully expressed by Chatterton at the UPNG forum in 1969 (as recorded in _Nilaidat_ 2(2)): ‘If the United Nations rats in West Irian now, it may well be that in a few years time it will rat in East Irian’. It was also a recurrent theme in comments in the House of Assembly and clearly lay behind some early Papua New Guinean support for seventh statehood. Finally, expressions of support for self-determination in West New Guinea were evidence of the emerging nationalism in Papua New Guinea during the 1960s. By expressing sympathy for the Irianese - particularly when official policy was actively to discourage such expression⁴ - and by criticizing Australia for its lack of moral fortitude, Papua New Guineans were serving notice on the Australian colonial regime of their own demands for self-determination.

Even at this stage, however, Papua New Guinean sympathy for

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⁴ This was particularly evident during the June 1969 House of Assembly debate. Shortly before, Papua New Guinean MHAs visiting Australia had spoken about the coming ‘Act of Free Choice’ in Irian Jaya and had been publicly rebuked by External Territories minister Barnes (*South Pacific Post* 23 May 1969).
the plight of the Irianese was not without reservation. In 1965 Kenu (1965-66:10-12) had expressed some fears about the inflow of people from West Irian; in 1968 Somare, while expressing sympathy for them, said, ‘We must put them in different areas so that they cannot plan unrest’ (HAD II(3):671, 25 November 1968), and in 1970 the member for Maprik Open, Pita Lus, told the House, ‘We do not want these refugees to come here and make trouble’ (HAD II(12):3709, 19 November 1970). More significantly, at the UPNG forum in 1969 Albert Maori Kiki disappointed students by refusing to commit the Pangu Pati on the West Irian question, stressing the need, on security grounds, to see Indonesia as a friend, and in the House of Assembly Pangu member Tony Voutas spoke of the need to maintain a stable government in Indonesia even at the expense of ‘the human rights of the minority in West Irian’ (HAD II(5):1439, 27 June 1969).

The Irian Jaya question in Papua New Guinea 1972-1977

Although formal responsibility for Papua New Guinea’s foreign policy remained with the Australian government until Papua New Guinea’s independence in September 1975, in practice the Somare government began to have a substantial say in policy formulation from its accession to office in 1972.

On the question of Irian Jaya, as foreshadowed in the comments of Kiki and Voutas, the coalition government did not seek to change the broad policy of the Australian government - indeed there were strong suggestions in 1972, 1973 and 1974 that the Somare government was taking a much tougher line on Irianese refugees than had the colonial administration before it (see, for example, Age 21 August 1972, 23 July 1973; cable from Australian High Commissioner 6 March 1974, reproduced in Kabar Seberang 8/9, 1981:155-157). Responding to questions about his government’s decision in July 1972 to deport eight Irianese border crossers, Somare was quoted as saying that acceptance of Irianese refugees with OPM sympathies could affect relations with Indonesia (Age 21 August 1972; also see Post-Courier 17, 18 and 25 August 1972 and Sydney Morning Herald 18 August 1972); Australian External Territories minister Peacock, whose approval of the deportation was required, was reported to have commented ‘It is their country and they are entitled to determine who resides there’ (Australian Financial Review 18 August 1972).

In February 1973 Somare, on behalf of the Australian govern-
ment, signed an agreement with Indonesia which defined the location of the border. There was little debate on the subsequent authorizing legislation, the sole dissenting voice being that of Langro who was pointedly reminded by Somare 'that we have a population of only 2.5 million people while Indonesia has about 100 million people. When we see such a big population in the country bordering ours we must not create any disputes with Indonesia' (see HAD III(15):1831-1833, 1840-1844, 18, 19 June 1973). A further agreement, on administrative border arrangements, was signed in late 1973. This covered such matters as traditional land rights, traditional movement, health, quarantine and pollution, and liaison arrangements, which had been the subjects of early agreements, and an important new provision, the obligation of both parties to prevent the use of their respective territories for hostile activities against the other.

During the early 1970s border crossings continued, though on a much reduced scale, and the number of Irianese granted permissive residency increased. However, within Papua New Guinea popular interest in the Irian Jaya situation seems to have diminished as people became more preoccupied with maintaining internal harmony and with the general business of preparing for independence. In official statements, which provided the first outlines of the country's 'universalist' foreign policy, particular reference was made to the friendship and understanding which existed between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia and it was acknowledged that 'Indonesia has shown understanding in our role of granting permissive residence to Irian Jaya refugees'.

But while in official statements the Papua New Guinea government was unreserved in its expressions of friendship towards Indonesia and its acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty over Irian Jaya, in statements outside diplomatic circles the constant reference to the relative size of populations and armed forces and to 'sleeping giants' and 'lions' and the occasional acknowledgement of Melanesian brotherhood, left little doubt that Papua New Guinea's position was dictated by expediency rather than sympathy. The situation was not improved by Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975.

It was perhaps this conflict between expediency and sympathy

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5 Address by the then chief minister (Michael Somare) to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Melbourne, June 1974 (quoted in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1976:17).
that prompted Kiki, as minister for Defence, Foreign Relations and Trade, in 1973 to initiate 'secret diplomacy' designed 'to mediate between the rebels and the Indonesian Government and bring about conditions where the two could have come together for constructive consideration of the means of peaceful reintegration of the rebel groups into the Irianese community' (Post-Courier 23 February 1976. This was the first public statement on the negotiations). Over a period of years, with the blessing of the Indonesian government, Papua New Guinean ministers and senior officials talked with rebel leaders from overseas and from the bush but they were unable to bring the Indonesians and the Irianese to the conference table, largely, according to Kiki, because of divisions within the rebel movement.

In 1976 the position of Irianese refugees again came into prominence. In February the Dutch-based Revolutionary Provisional Government of West Papua (RPG) issued a release claiming that 5,000 (later the figure became 15,000) Indonesian troops were involved in an offensive near the border in which napalm had been used and 1,605 villagers killed, and that Australian officers of the Pacific Islands Regiment had cooperated in sealing the border (Post-Courier 18 February 1976). The report was promptly denied by both Kiki and Somare and by the Defence Department but Somare was clearly angered by the publicity it had received and told a press conference that the government would prosecute Papua New Guineans caught actively supporting Irian Jaya freedom fighters and deport Irianese permissive residents supporting them. 'We do not recognize rebels', he said, 'We recognize Indonesia's sovereignty' (Post-Courier 20 February 1976). In response to this, a spokesman for the Irianese community in Port Moresby issued a statement saying that 'The threats of Government action against dissidents must not go unchallenged', that the Irianese may be forced to seek Communist aid, and that they would make representations to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. However, after Kiki had accused the group of breaching the conditions of their

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6 Papua New Guinea's official concern over Indonesian intervention in East Timor was elegantly stated by Kiki in a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1976 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1976:47-48). After Somare's visit to Indonesia in January 1977, however, the government adopted a more conciliatory line, describing the Timor situation 'entirely as a domestic matter of Indonesia' (Australian Foreign Affairs Record January 1977:47) and in December 1978 it opposed a UN resolution supporting self-determination for East Timor. For an account of popular reaction, see Samana (1976).
residency and threatened deportation the community’s spokesman retracted and the subject was dropped (Post-Courier 26 February 1976).

Later in the same year the refugee issue again became a point of contention, this time as the result of an Indonesian press report. In December, shortly before a planned visit to Indonesia by Somare, Papua New Guinea’s National Broadcasting Commission relayed a report from the official Indonesian newsagency ANTARA (apparently emanating from the Indonesian embassy in Port Moresby) that talks had begun between the Papua New Guinea and Indonesian governments over the extradition of five hundred Irianese residents in Papua New Guinea. Although the report was denied by Somare, the subject was raised as a matter of public importance in the National Parliament where several speakers criticized Indonesia and the UN, recalled the invasion of East Timor, and demanded independence for Irian Jaya. The member for Maprik Open, Pita Lus, told the House ...

...the United Nations is not doing its job to recognize the West Irian cause. I think it is made up of lazy buggers! If only this country could send me to the United Nations ... I would tell the United Nations to give West Irian its freedom

and the member for Manus, Michael Pondros, said ‘If we cannot reach any agreement, we should go to war’. Nor were Indonesians likely to have taken much comfort from the assurances of Kiki that ‘The West Irianese are our neighbours and friends .... The Government has no intention of selling our brothers’ (National Parliamentary Debates (NPD) I(18):2400-2410, 9 December 1976).

Relations between the Papua New Guinea government and the Indonesian embassy in Port Moresby were still a little uneasy when in January 1977 the head of the RPG, Brigadier-General Seth Runkorem, crossed into Papua New Guinea and was flown to Port Moresby for talks with the government; the Indonesian embassy ‘expressed concern about the Government making available facilities to the rebels’ (Post-Courier 6, 10 January 1977). And relations between the Papua New Guinea government and Irianese dissidents were not improved following reports that the liberation movement would use terrorism in the Pacific to gain recognition for its cause (Post-Courier 29 April 1977. The report was subsequently denied, see Post-Courier 3 May 1977).
The events of 1977-78 and ‘normalization’, 1979

Papua New Guinea-Indonesia relations continued to deteriorate from around May 1977 when hundreds of Irianese began crossing into the Western and Sandaun (West Sepik) provinces. The movement of Irianese across the border was known to be associated with an intensification of conflict between OPM sympathizers and Indonesian military forces in the period leading up to Indonesia’s national elections (see, for example, 
_Canberra Times_ 31 May 1977). But when Kiki expressed concern at the border situation Indonesian foreign minister Malik told him, curtly, that the recent ‘tribal fighting in Irian Jaya was a domestic affair and that Indonesia would not tolerate those who attempted to exploit the tribal clashes for political purposes’ (Post-Courier 8, 13, 15 June 1977).

At the end of May 1977 there were reported to be over two hundred refugees at Suki in the Western Province and several hundred more at other points along the border. There were also reports (subsequently denied by intelligence sources) that a Papua New Guinean villager had been shot by an Indonesian patrol on the Papua New Guinea side of the border (Post-Courier 30 May 1977).

The government thus found itself in the uncomfortable position of having to reassure Indonesia that it was not providing a harbour for opponents of the Indonesian regime, while at the same time attempting to meet the considerable local pressures (including pressure from the representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees) to deal sympathetically with the border crossers and not to let itself be pushed around by Indonesia - and this at a time which the Post-Courier (3 June 1977) delicately referred to as ‘the sensitive pre-election phase’.

In June the secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Tony Siaguru, told reporters that the refugees had returned to Irian Jaya after being told of Papua New Guinea’s policy on border crossings (Post-Courier 2 June 1977). Irianese sympathizers, however, suspected that undue pressure had been put on the refugees and Langro, as deputy leader of the opposition, issued a statement accusing the Somare government of appeasement (Sydney Morning Herald 1 June 1977). During the ensuing elections the Somare government was frequently attacked for its handling of the Irian Jaya issue; among those who took up the issue were Langro, Pondros, Noel Levi (former Defence secretary who was a successful candidate in New Ireland, subsequently became minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade) and John Jaminan (former head of the security intelligence branch who was a
successful candidate in the East Sepik electorate of Yangoru-Saussia and became, for a while, opposition spokesman on foreign affairs).

Nor did Somare find, on his return to office in August, that the issue had gone away. During the second half of 1977 and early 1978 it became abundantly clear that what Malik had dismissed as 'tribal clashes' was in fact a series of widespread confrontations between Indonesian troops and Irianese dissidents. It was in this context that in November 1977 the minister for Defence, Louis Mona, informed Parliament that

Recently government policy has been to take a tougher line with all border crossers. People who enter Papua New Guinea illegally can now expect to be arrested and may be put in gaol or handed over to Indonesian authorities (NPD II(4):381, 10 November 1977).

During 1978 this situation became more complex and the government found itself squeezed on three sides: by the Indonesians, who sought a firm commitment against Irianese rebels; by an increasingly vocal group within the country which demanded sympathy towards Irianese freedom fighters; and by OPM leaders, who threatened militant action against Papua New Guinea if it attempted to close the border.

In April the government was embarrassed by the publication of an OPM press release naming the members of the newly appointed ministry of the de facto government of West Papua. Of the eighteen names on the list six were Papua New Guinea citizens, two were permissive residents, and two were serving gaol sentences for illegal entry but had given notice of their intentions to apply for political asylum. In a statement pending a full enquiry, the minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ebia Olewale, said that he viewed the matter with the 'utmost gravity' and threatened to cancel the entry permits of those named; 'we will oppose any minority which seeks to involve Papua New Guinea in the domestic affairs of Indonesia', he said (Post-Courier 19 April 1978). However this did not prevent the Indonesian embassy from making strong representations to the government and calling on the named rebels to declare their loyalties; moreover Indonesian first secretary Siregar was reported as accusing Papua New Guinea of having double standards and saying 'If we wanted to invade Papua New Guinea we would do it now when Papua New Guinea is weak' (Post-Courier 19, 26, 28 April 1978). The Indonesians also requested tighter
controls over journalists. Olewale reacted sharply to these pressures and was reported to have asked the Indonesian ambassador to consider reposting Siregar (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2 May 1978).

In the week following publication of the OPM cabinet list it was announced that Olewale, Mona and Defence Force Commander Diro had held talks in Port Moresby with OPM leaders Jacob Prai and Seth Rumkorem. Prai and Rumkorem were told to remove camps within the Sandaun Province or have them burnt (*Post-Courier* 28 April 1978, 1 May 1978; *Age* 29 April 1978). According to the *Post-Courier* (28 April 1978), ‘They were told PNG did not want to act against ‘other Melanesians’, but, at the same time, the Government could not afford a fall out with Indonesia’. Journalist Mark Baker described the ultimatum as ‘the strongest stand PNG has yet taken against the guerrillas’ but reported that it had been firmly rejected (Age 29 April 1978).

In May Olewale made an official visit to Indonesia. Indonesian officials succeeded in communicating their doubts about the strength of Papua New Guinea’s commitment to its obligations under the 1973 border arrangements and at the conclusion of his visit Olewale told reporters that Papua New Guinea was now mounting ‘constant patrols’ along the border (*Post-Courier* 26 May 1978; *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 May 1978).

Activity along the border further intensified in late May 1978 following the kidnapping of Indonesian officials by a rebel group south of Jayapura. At the end of the month the *Post-Courier* (31 May 1978) reported that a large-scale Indonesian military operation was in progress. Shortly after, Somare announced his government’s decision to deploy additional troops and police along the northern sector of the boundary in order to prevent rebels from crossing; according to Olewale, any rebels encountered by Papua New Guinea border patrols would be dealt with in a ‘Melanesian Way’: they would be told to go back and if they refused they would be arrested (*Post-Courier* 13 June 1978). However, although there was liaison between the two governments, Papua New Guinea firmly resisted repeated Indonesian requests for joint patrols (see *Post-Courier* 12, 13, 21 June 1978).

In the following weeks there was at least one major border incursion by an Indonesian patrol which was reported to have raided a Papua New Guinea village and destroyed gardens, bringing an official protest from the Papua New Guinea government (*Post-Courier* 22, 23 June 1978; *Age* 22, 25 July 1978). Early in July Indonesian operations escalated; villages were strafed and plastic bombs dropped in the bor-
der area. In Papua New Guinea the government expressed to the Indonesian ambassador its fears for the safety of Papua New Guinea citizens near the border but requests to Indonesia to confine bombing raids to an area not less than 8 km from the border were refused. Conscious of the possibility of an accidental clash between Indonesian and Papua New Guinea patrols, the Papua New Guinea government began withdrawing its troops from the area. Once again hundreds of Irianese villagers moved across the order into Papua New Guinea. At a meeting of the UPNG Law Faculty Papua New Guinea was described, somewhat dramatically, as ‘slowly entering a state of war with Indonesia’ (*Post-Courier* 7 July 1978). In September, however, the Indonesian hostages were released and Indonesia began to scale down its military operations.

On top of this, the arrest of Prai and Otto Ondowame in the Sandaun Province in late September pleased Indonesia but provided an additional headache for the Papua New Guinea government - especially when the persistent Siregar announced (incorrectly, as it turned out) that Indonesia would seek their extradition to stand trial for treason. The two were charged as illegal immigrants and, having been denied permissive residency in Papua New Guinea and threatened with repatriation to Indonesia (*Post-Courier* 29 January 1979), they were eventually granted asylum in Sweden in March 1979, along with three other OPM leaders.

A few weeks later, a statement by Indonesia’s Defence minister, General Jusuf gave notice of a shift in Indonesia’s policy towards Irianese dissidents; under a new ‘smiling policy’ it would not be necessary for the army to pursue rebels (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 24 November 1978; *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 December 1978). In December the new policy was outlined to Papua New Guinean ministers during an official visit to Papua New Guinea by Indonesia’s foreign minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, who praised the Papua New Guinea government for its ‘restraint and good leadership’ in cooperating with Indonesia (*Post-Courier* 12 December 1978; *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 December 1978).

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7 Circumstances surrounding the capture of Prai and Ondowame remain somewhat mysterious. Prai claims to have entered Papua New Guinea in the belief that the government wanted to talk to him. (On five previous occasions he had visited Papua New Guinea without a visa and with the government’s knowledge.) Prai believes there may have been a plot to remove him from leadership (see *Age* 1 December 1978). Levi claims they were ‘captured by Australian and Indonesian intelligence operatives’ (*Our News* 21(4) 28 February 1979).

With the scaling down of military operations and a certain amount of goodwill generated by Mochtar’s visit, at the end of 1978 relations between the two countries seemed to be taking a definite turn for the better. Shortly after Mochtar’s visit the two governments began a series of discussions preliminary to the renewal of the 1973 border agreement and in March 1979 the first round of these discussions was concluded without significant disagreement. The atmosphere of renewed cordiality even survived the publication, in February, of a document purporting to be a plan for an Indonesian takeover of Papua New Guinea (Nation Review 1 February 1979; Post-Courier 8, 12 February 1979). Papua New Guinea security experts dismissed the document as a fake and there was virtually no public discussion of it.

In June 1979, amidst what was described (Post-Courier 5 June 1979) as the tightest security operation Papua New Guinea had ever provided for a visitor (it included the use of a bullet-proof limousine lent by the Australian government), Papua New Guinea received a brief visit from President Suharto. The Indonesian president told his hosts that he appreciated the present Papua New Guinea stand, and his minister co-ordinator for political and security affairs gave Papua New Guinea a further assurance that Indonesia had no territorial ambitions (Post-Courier 7 June 1979). A technical cooperation treaty was signed during the visit and it was reported that the new border agreement would be finalized soon and ‘would ensure improved quality of life of people living along the common border and encourage development programmes in the area’ (ibid.). Opposition leader Iambakey Okuk, who had become a vocal critic of the government’s handling of the border issue in 1978, presented the Indonesian president with a submission in which (as reported in Post-Courier 6 June 1979) he urged Indonesia to consider large scale investment in Papua New Guinea and offered the interesting suggestion that massive Indonesian aid would help Papua New Guinea overcome some of its domestic problems.

Renegotiation of the border agreement continued during 1979; drafting was completed in late July and the agreement signed in Jakarta in December. Amongst the topics covered in the new agreement were preservation of customary rights across the border, cooperation in the development of the border areas, upgrading of quarantine and health controls, and improved liaison procedures for border administration; it was also agreed to establish a joint border committee. Other developments in late 1979 included an announcement that
the police communications network along the border was to be upgraded as part of the border administration programme, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries which formalized arrangements to improve communications across the border. Details of Papua New Guinea’s border development programme, foreshadowed in earlier talks, were released as part of the 1980-83 National Public Expenditure Plan (NPEP) in December; provision was made for expenditure of K4.45 million over the four years to 1983, commencing with K0.8 million for projects in West Sepik and K0.6 for projects in Western Province in 1980. There was, however, some implicit irony in the NPEP’s provision for development projects on the Papua New Guinea side of the border, in order, in part, ‘to minimise the risk of major influxes of refugees and dissident activity’ (National Planning Office 1979:III, italics added).

Towards the end of 1979, also, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported that the number of border crossers had increased in 1979 and that ‘although the actual number of people crossing ... was not high, they were becoming a burden to the PNG Government’ (Post-Courier 29 November 1979). The deportation of several Irianese, including six involved in a fight at Wabo camp in December, was widely interpreted as an indication that the government was taking a tougher stand on border crossers (for example see Post-Courier 14 December 1979), and this appeared to be confirmed in a statement by Foreign Affairs minister Olewale on his return from Indonesia in December 1979: the government ‘would continue to respect the interests of Irian Jayans with a genuine basis for seeking political asylum’ but would not accept people who acted against the security of either Indonesia or Papua New Guinea or who only sought employment or schooling (Post-Courier 21 December 1979). The following month the Black Brothers, an Irianese rock group, were ordered to leave after overstaying their visa, despite considerable popular support for them. (The group subsequently sought asylum in Holland and after five years there took up residence in Vanuatu.)

Change of government: 1980-82

Late in 1978 there had been a falling out within Papua New Guinea’s coalition government, which took Julius Chan and his People’s Progress Party (PPP) across to the opposition. Fourteen months later two other prominent members of the coalition left the government, forming a new party, the Melanesian Alliance, and in
March 1980 with their support a no-confidence motion was carried against the Somare government. Chan became prime minister as the head of a National Alliance coalition, with Okuk as his deputy.

Despite earlier criticism of the Somare government’s handling of the border issue by Okuk, the change of government did not bring any significant change in government policy or attitudes (see, for example, the report of a statement in parliament, Post-Courier 25 June 1980). If anything, there was evidence that the Chan government intended to take a harder line on border crossers. In December 1980 prime minister Chan and Foreign Affairs minister Noel Levi paid an official visit to Indonesia, where inter alia they signed a maritime boundaries agreement and, as appears to be mandatory upon visiting Papua New Guinea dignitaries, visited a small arms factory in Bandung. Chan was reported to have told the Indonesians that he was ‘not in the least concerned or suspicious that Indonesia might try to expand its territory into PNG’ and that ‘tensions which had been significant ... in the past were no longer significant, and should decrease [with development] in future’. For his part, Mr Suharto ‘was reported to have praised PNG’s action in support of the Government of Vanuatu in putting down the rebellion [in Santo] (Post-Courier 15 December 1980).

However, if things appeared to go smoothly for Chan in Indonesia they did not go so well at home. In a statement made prior to his departure, Chan was quoted as saying that his government did not recognize the OPM and that ‘if there was a step up in guerilla activities in the border region ... PNG would feel bound to consider military action after consultation with Indonesian authorities’ (Post-Courier 10 December 1980; the Post-Courier paraphrased this as ‘PNG troops would be sent to crush OPM’s guerilla activities’. Similarly see Canberra Times 6 December 1980). This statement drew a sharp reaction in Papua New Guinea: the national executive of Chan’s coalition partner, the Melanesian Alliance, strongly criticized the prime minister and ‘declared its support for the Irian Jaya freedom movement’ (Post-Courier 12 December 1980) (though, significantly, the party’s parliamentary leaders Fr John Momis and John Kaputin, were away at the time); and opposition leader Somare called on Chan and Levi, on their return, to explain their government’s attitude to the OPM (Post-Courier 15 December 1980). Responding, Chan denied that he had threatened force against Irianese, and told reporters that though he only had Indonesia’s word that it was not going to pursue an expansionist policy in the Pacific, ‘he thought he sensed a new [sic] non-aggressive stance’
(Post-Courier 16 December 1980); he also sought an early meeting with Melanesian Alliance leaders.

Late 1980-early 1981 also saw an apparent further hardening in the government’s attitude to border crossers. In December 1980 a group of over one hundred crossers was repatriated after being given food and medical treatment and the new Foreign Affairs and Trade secretary Paulius Matane took the opportunity to observe that Papua New Guinea and Indonesia were working towards the establishment of a joint border committee to coordinate development on the border in order to prevent such mass migrations (Post-Courier 22 December 1980). The following month, in giving notice of the government’s intention to close refugee camps at Yako and Wabo, Matane reiterated the view that as development got under way ‘we can reasonably expect this problem [border crossing] to disappear’; those presently in the camps would be given permissive residency or sent back to Irian Jaya, the secretary said, but future border crossers would be immediately sent back to Irian Jaya (Post-Courier 21 January 1981). The Post-Courier reported (20 January 1981): ‘It is understood the Government believes the flow of ‘genuine refugees’ across the border has significantly declined’.

Against this background, in February 1981 the first meeting of the Joint Border Committee, created under the 1979 border agreement, was held in Jakarta. The meeting, which was judged a success, discussed infrastructure development, communications, trade and cultural exchange (Post-Courier 5 February 1981).

In retrospect, relations between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia probably reached a highpoint around this time. The tense atmosphere which prevailed during most of 1977-78 appeared to have abated; the two governments had exchanged cordial official visits; a new border agreement had been successfully negotiated and administrative arrangements were in hand for more effective control of the border; Papua New Guinea’s acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty in Irian Jaya and its unwillingness to allow the OPM to operate on Papua New Guinean soil had been reconfirmed following a change of government; Indonesia had given a further reassurance that it had no expansionist ambitions, and there were hopes that a joint border development programme would gradually remove the incentive to border crossing.

This is not to say that there were not problems. For one, although the border never became a partisan issue in Papua New Guinea’s
domestic politics, it remained a subject about which successive governments were made to feel a need periodically to defend their record. For another, there was at least one further border incursion, in July 1980 when a party of Indonesian police crossed into Western Province in pursuit of 'an escaped family' (Post-Courier 7, 8 July 1980). Thirdly, there was a protracted disagreement following a decision by Air Niugini, for economic reasons, to cut out a Jakarta stop-over on its flight to Singapore and to close its Jakarta office. In retaliation, Indonesia refused Air Niugini flyover rights, causing Transport minister Okuk, in turn, to cancel plans (part of a recently signed technical cooperation agreement) to have Papua New Guineans train at Indonesia's Air Training College. Fourthly, there was a continued steady trickle of Irianese across the border into Papua New Guinea. But generally it was felt that the problems posed by the border were likely to diminish.

Towards the middle of 1981 the border issue appeared again to become more salient, and relations between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia to move into a new downward phase.

In April 1981 UPNG students, led by Student Representative Council (SRC) president Gabriel Ramoi (a West Sepik, who in 1982 was elected to the National Parliament), staged a solidarity march 'to assess the public's support for the West Papua freedom movement', and approved a gift of K2000 to support the OPM (Post-Courier 2 April 1981). The following month a Melanesian Solidarity Week was organized at UPNG. As part of this a South Pacific Human Rights Tribunal was convened to consider charges that Indonesia had violated international laws on human rights. Members of the self-appointed tribunal included acting national court judge Bernard Narokobi, East Sepik politician and sometime opposition foreign-affairs spokesman Tony Bais, National Cultural Council chairman Moi Avei, church leader Dick Avi, and the UPNG's dean of Law, Sao Gabi. Over several days the tribunal heard from Irianese witnesses accounts of executions, torture, political indoctrination and denial of free speech (see Post-Courier reports 28, 29 May and 1, 5-6 June 1981). The Indonesian embassy declined an invitation to attend the tribunal and appears to have put pressure on the Papua New Guinea government to stop the hearings. The incident clearly did cause some embarrassment to the government, and foreign minister Levi said the tribunal could jeopardize the government's acceptance of Irianese refugees; however prime minister Chan was reported as saying, 'It is allowed by PNG
authorities because it is an expression of our people’s rights to express themselves’ (Post-Courier 29 May 1981).

In June it became known that three Irianese refugees who had been involved in the Human Rights Tribunal - including former Irian Jaya governor Eliezer Bonay, who had crossed to Papua New Guinea seeking asylum in 1979 - were to be deported. Two of them, Bonay and Dean Kafiar, left for Sweden early in July but the third, John Hamadi, who had been in Papua New Guinea since 1978 and whose mother was Papua New Guinean, was taken in by UPNG students who managed to conceal him from police and DFAT officials for several weeks. (As a result of this incident Ramoi was subsequently charged and convicted of harbouring an illegal immigrant.) The government’s deportation order came under strong criticism, amongst others from Bais. Notwithstanding this criticism, in late July another three Irianese, long-time residents in Papua New Guinea, were deported, this time back to Indonesia. A statement by Levi accused the three (Bob Kubia, Fred Pieger and Willie Jebleb) of being senior members of the Melanesian Socialist Party, in whose name approaches had been made to the USSR and Cuba for assistance to the OPM, and of ‘orchestrating … recent armed clashes between OPM rebel factions’; he warned that ‘similar stern action’ would be taken against other permissive residents who breached the terms of their entry (Post-Courier 28, 30, 31 July 1981). Again the Chan government came under heavy criticism. Bais accused it of sending the three to their deaths, and the general secretary of the Melanesian Alliance, Michael Malenki, issued a statement saying that while his party respected the need to safeguard national security, ‘we call on the Foreign Affairs Department to stop being dictated to by Indonesia and come to grips with the need to be sensitive to the plight of Irian Jayans’ (Post-Courier 31 July 1981). But the protests were of no avail, and public interest in the fate of the refugees appears to have quickly faded.

In the latter part of 1981 reportage of border activities was taken up largely with accounts of clashes between rival OPM factions along the border. In late June supporters of a faction led by Elky Bemey were reported to have crossed into Sandaun Province and raided Papua New Guinea villages reputed to be sympathetic to the rival Rumkorem faction. Another raid occurred in the same area in August, in which several villagers were abducted, and there were reports that several OPM supporters had been killed in faction-fighting. More generally, there appears to have been an upsurge of OPM activity within
Papua New Guinea's foreign secretary, Paulias Matane, and Indonesia's ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Brigadier-General Imam Soepomo, leaving for an inspection visit to Suwampa village, Sundaun Province, following reports that Indonesian troops had harassed villagers (see p. 129). Photo—Post Courier
Irian Jaya during 1981 (see, for example, Canberra Times 20 October 1981; Courier-Mail (Brisbane) 27 October 1981; Bulletin 15 December 1981), and with this came an increase in military activity in the province and a new escalation of border crossings. In September the Post-Courier carried an AAP report, quoting ANTARA newsagency, that the provincial military commander in Irian Jaya, Brigadier-General Santosa had declared that OPM rebels had not responded to the ‘smiling policy’ and that ‘All troublemakers at home and their supporters abroad should be eliminated’ (Post-Courier 8, 24 September 1981; Niugini Nius 8 September 1981).

In November foreign minister Levi tabled the government’s White Paper on Foreign Policy, the product of a foreign policy review initiated by the Somare government in 1979. In it the government observed that relations between the two countries had been marked by an increasing commitment to cooperation by both governments, while noting that such commitment had ‘not always been matched by public understanding’. The document also reaffirmed that, in recognition of public opinion in Papua New Guinea, it would not become involved in joint patrols, would not allow foreign forces to enter in ‘hot pursuit’, and would not insist that ‘genuine refugees’ return to the other side (PNG Foreign Affairs Record 1(4)1982:41-43).

Apparently moved by developments in 1981, deputy prime minister Okuk responded to the White Paper with a statement in which he said that 99 per cent of educated Papua New Guineans supported the OPM, that ‘Indonesia must realize the people of Irian Jaya were Melanesians - not Indonesians’, and that Indonesia ‘should be ashamed that its own people were crossing the border to live in Papua New Guinea’ (Age 11 November 1981). The statement prompted a sharp response from Indonesia’s foreign minister Mochtar who warned Papua New Guinea not to take advantage of the ‘economic imbalance’ between Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea (Post-Courier 26 November 1981). Not to be discouraged, in March 1982 the outspoken Okuk returned to the subject of the border: Papua New Guinea, he said, faced a growing threat from Irian Jaya. The threat came from a build-up of non-Melanesians in the province, and Indonesian border developments unmatched by Papua New Guinea (Post-Courier 23 March 1982). Levi dismissed Okuk’s statement as ‘sheer nonsense’ and ‘election bluff’; ‘We have excellent relations with Indonesia’, Levi said, ‘and they will continue’ (Post-Courier 24 March 1982). (This was, in fact, a slight exaggeration: in January the Papua New Guinea gov-
ernment had refused to renew the visas of two members of the non-diplomatic staff of the Indonesian embassy, who had arrived in the country on tourist visas and who, according to the *Times of PNG* 15 January 1982, had been engaged in espionage; in retaliation the Indonesian embassy in Port Moresby had closed down its visa section.) But Okuk persisted: under the headline ‘Okuk: I won’t shut up!’ he was reported as telling the UPNG branch of the National Party:

> I believe you are fed up ... with a foreign policy which sells out our fellow Melanesians.... We complain about events in New Caledonia - yet we maintain a deafening silence about events in Irian Jaya (*Post-Courier* 2 April 1982).

The DFAT quickly dissociated the government from the views expressed by the deputy prime minister, but others thought his warning timely (see *Post-Courier* 5, 7, 12 April 1982). The discussion took a new direction, however, following the publication of an Indonesian embassy newsletter (*Indonesian Newsletter* No. 3/III/82). Under a heading ‘A matter of understanding’ the embassy presented a defence of transmigration to Irian Jaya, which concluded with a short homily whose object was not difficult to guess:

> One has to understand the nature of international politics if one would become a leader of a certain nation, otherwise such a person will create disaster instead of developing peace and harmony between neighbouring countries.

The *Post-Courier* (29 April 1982) reported the newsletter on its front page, under the headline, ‘Indonesia’s warning: shut up on Irian Jaya’ and the next day Okuk responded. In his usual forthright manner Okuk told the Indonesian embassy to stay out of the Papua New Guinea election:

> The people of this nation do not respond kindly to thinly veiled warnings from foreign governments, or their embassies (*Post-Courier* 30 April 1982).

He went on to say that some years ago the Indonesian embassy had attempted to ‘win [his] favor’ and that other leading Papua New Guineans had ‘been ‘greased’ by highly-trained Indonesian officials’; the Indonesian embassy, he said, was ‘grossly over-staffed’ - ‘One must wonder what they all do’ - and a National Party government would make it very clear that embassies are ‘for diplomatic purposes only’.
Okuk was supported by a Post-Courier editorial (3 May 1982) which spoke of 'a crude attempt by Indonesia to curb not only Mr Okuk's freedom of speech, but everyone else's, on matters Jakarta finds embarrassing' and described as 'ominous', given the history of Indonesia's relations with its neighbours, the reference to 'creating disaster'. More significantly both Matane and Levi came in behind Okuk. Matane was reported to have told the Indonesian ambassador that the newsletter had created damage the two governments now would have to repair (Post-Courier 3 May 1982). Levi described the newsletter as undiplomatic and was reported as saying that the government would now move to 'tighten up' the border agreement at the next meeting of the joint border committee; specifically

He said PNG would press for amendments to the 1979 border agreement to outlaw settlement of non-Irianese in 'clearly defined traditional zones' (Post-Courier 5 May 1982).

Close on the heels of this (and on the eve of voting for the national elections) came reports that armed Indonesian troops had crossed the border into Papua New Guinea. In October 1981 an OPM group had made a raid on a sawmill at Holtekang south of Jayapura, taking fifty-eight hostages. Indonesian military operations had apparently resulted in the release of some of these hostages but seven months later about half were still being held, according to Indonesian intelligence on the Papua New Guinea side of the border. Without prior consultation, Indonesian patrols crossed into Papua New Guinea on three separate occasions between 14 and 22 May and in one instance Papua New Guinean villagers in Sandaun Province were questioned at gunpoint. Although Papua New Guinea's leaders were by this time in the midst of campaigning for the national election, a meeting of the National Security Advisory Council was called and on 27 May an official protest was lodged with the Indonesian embassy. The same day a fourth incursion occurred. Levi expressed himself 'deeply disturbed' that Papua New Guinea's sovereignty had been 'so blatantly breached' and said the incidents had the potential to severely damage relations; Defence minister Pepena said further incursions would be 'dealt with accordingly', and though Momis criticized 'prominent leaders' for 'baiting our enemies' (Times of PNG 28 May 1982), the Melanesian Alliance called on the government to take a tougher stand on border violations (subsequently the party's deputy chairman, Narokobi, urged the
immediate cutting of diplomatic relations as a mark of protest). (See Post-Courier 24, 27 May 1982, 1 June 1982; Canberra Times 22 May 1982; Far Eastern Economic Review 4 June 1982.) A second protest note was sent and the Papua New Guinea ambassador was brought across from Jakarta and instructed to pursue diplomatic initiatives to bring forward the annual joint border committee conference scheduled for August. In the midst of this a helicopter containing the provincial military commander and thirteen troops and civilians bound for Wamena landed at a mission station on the Papua New Guinea side, allegedly having been forced down by bad weather. When, eventually, Indonesia responded to the Papua New Guinea demand for an explanation of the border violations it claimed that Indonesian troops had not been involved and that all the hostages had been recovered from Papua New Guinea by people from the Irian Jaya village of Selmus; the statement went on to accuse Papua New Guinea of failing to honour its obligations under the 1979 Border Agreement. An editorial of the Times of Papua New Guinea (11 June 1982) described the Indonesian response as ‘singularly arrogant’ and said: ‘The Indonesians ... have, in the toughest terms diplomats use, told PNG where it can stick its protest note. We believe they have told lies’. The credibility of the Indonesian response was, in fact, severely dented when, a few days after its receipt, a group of eighteen hostages was handed over to Irianese villagers who escorted them across the border into Papua New Guinea where they were intercepted by a border patrol and taken to Vanimo hospital. It appears that the release of the hostages was negotiated by DFAT officials and a Catholic brother, who had crossed into Irian Jaya with the agreement of the Indonesian government; moreover, although the Indonesians had been asked to suspend military operations in the area while negotiations were being carried out, Indonesian troops were actively patrolling and the negotiating group was ‘several times close to discovery’ (Times of PNG 16 July 1982. See also Post-Courier 11, 15 June 1982; Sydney Morning Herald 11 June 1982; Far Eastern Economic Review 18, 26 June, 2, 9 July 1982; Nangoi 1982). The hostages were subsequently repatriated (though Indonesia refused to meet the costs of repatriation). Informed public feeling in Papua New Guinea was well represented by the Post-Courier’s defence reporter (16 June 1982):

In recent days the Jakarta machine has pressed us to believe:
(1) That a group of villagers from Irian Jaya popped over the border last month to free hostages held by the Free West Papua guerillas.
(2) That all the hostages taken in the October raid on a sawmill near Jayapura had been freed, and
(3) That a helicopter flying the Jayapura military commander, Brig-Gen Santos [sic], from his headquarters to Wamena in the Highlands 240 km south-west of the Irian Jaya capital was forced by bad weather to land in PNG some 10 km south-east of his departure point.

The answers are (1): Rubbish. (2): Not true. And (3): When the Indonesians next get the chance to discuss their defence co-operation agreement with Australia, they should request navigation training for their helicopter pilots.

On a more serious note a DFAT spokesman was reported as saying that the entire incident could have been avoided if Indonesian officials had kept Papua New Guinea informed, in the spirit of the 1979 border agreement, and Papua New Guinea reaffirmed that it would not become involved in joint patrols (Post-Courier 15, 16 June 1982).

In the first week of July 1982 another three military incursions occurred. In the first incident nineteen people who had crossed in 1977, and were said not to be OPM sympathizers, were taken back across the border by an armed Indonesian patrol. Matane made strong verbal representations on this occasion and Levi forwarded a formal protest, saying that Papua New Guinea ‘would not tolerate continued violations of its territory by armed Indonesian soldiers’ and questioning Indonesia’s sincerity in complying with the 1979 border agreement. Chan stated that border patrols (which had been increased in June) must act to disarm Indonesian troops or OPM guerillas inside Papua New Guinea. Okuk called for the closure of the Indonesian embassy, and was supported in this by Bais (Post-Courier 8 July 1982; Far Eastern Economic Review 9 July 1982).

Nevertheless, during the next few weeks, as voting was finalized in Papua New Guinea’s elections and a new Somare government came to office, things quietened down along the border and tensions eased. The Indonesian government, which had reportedly favoured a Somare victory, must have been well satisfied with the outcome, especially as Okuk failed to gain reelection and the foreign affairs portfolio was
allocated not to the former opposition foreign affairs spokesman, Bais, but to Rabbie Namaliu. In August, the third meeting of the joint border committee went ahead as scheduled. Memoranda of understanding were signed covering the formal establishment of the joint border committee, arrangements for border demarcation, survey and mapping, installation and operation of a high frequency radio linkage, and traditional and customary border crossings. Officials of the two countries also met to discuss border surveying and mapping. The following month Namaliu visited Jakarta to ratify a seabed agreement. By mid September, in what seemed to be a quick about-face, the Post-Courier (14 September 1982) felt able to comment, 'Our relations with Indonesia are probably better right now than they have been for at least two years'.

Then, on 17 September, providing a sequence of developments which recalled the events of 1977-78, OPM leader Seth Rumkorem and nine of his deputies were taken into custody in Rabaul, allegedly en route to Vanuatu and Senegal, and subsequently charged as illegal immigrants.\(^8\)

1982-83: mounting tensions

But just as the optimism of late 1978 proved shortlived, so did the newfound accord of 1982.

Late in 1982 there was a minor flurry when the staff driver of the Indonesian defence attache (Colonel Ismail) was murdered by an Irianese permissive resident, Simon Alom. During the course of the trial it was claimed that the driver, Meinard Poluan, had been involved in coordinating the surveillance of Irianese residents in Papua New Guinea and that Alom had been a reluctant informer (Far Eastern Economic Review 6 January 1983; Canberra Times 28 January 1983). Then in February 1983 some concern was caused by reports that between 1,000 and 1,500 Irianese - refugees, apparently, from clashes between Indonesian troops and the OPM - were about to cross the border into Papua New Guinea (Times of PNG 11 February 1983; Sydney Morning Herald 16 February 1983).

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\(^8\) The charge was dismissed, on the grounds that Rumkorem's group had been 'invited' to disembark by Rabaul police and customs officers. After about fourteen months of unsuccessful negotiations to find a third country which would accept the refugees, Rumkorem and two of his deputies were granted temporary residence in Greece. The rest were granted permissive residency.
In April 1983 the border again captured the headlines when it was reported that Indonesia's trans-Irian Jaya highway, then in an early stage of construction, crossed into Papua New Guinea at two points near the headwaters of the Bensbach River in Western Province. (Later survey established that it crossed at a third point.) That the highway crossed into Papua New Guinea had been established by a National Mapping Bureau survey in late March-early April though later information suggested that photographs taken during a National Intelligence Organization-Defence-DFAT survey had revealed the crossings in October 1982, and that the National Security Advisory Committee had been informed of this (though Namaliu claimed not to have been advised). A peculiarity of the situation was that the highway in this section lay in largely uninhabited country between the border and the Merauke River, bypassing planned transmigration settlements to the west of the Merauke River - a fact which led an anonymous DFAT 'analyst' (as reported in Post-Courier 9 June 1983) to conjecture that the location of the road 'indicated it would serve a 'strategic military' purpose' and 'had potential for aggression rather than defence'. Foreign minister Namaliu expressed himself 'very concerned' at the incursion (Post-Courier 14 April 1983) and a formal protest was lodged calling for the closure of the offending sections of the road. Opposition leader (and former Defence Force chief) Diro referred to it as 'the first act of deliberate territorial violation' (Post-Courier 18 April 1983; later he took a more moderate stand, calling for a continuation of 'the present good relations with Indonesia', Post-Courier 19 May 1983). From Rabaul, where he was still awaiting acceptance by a third country, Rumkorem commented that he was aware of the road 'and several other major projects ... aimed at reducing rebel activity on the border' (Post-Courier 19 April 1983).

The alleged border violations were referred to a joint border technical sub-committee meeting scheduled for later in the month. Foreign Affairs secretary Matane requested that the meeting be at departmental head level, and led the Papua New Guinea delegation; the Indonesian delegation was headed by the director of the National Co-ordina-

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9 This survey had been carried out after two unsuccessful attempts to arrange a joint Indonesia-Papua New Guinea survey - the first in September 1982 when a survey had commenced but was called off twenty-odd kilometres south of the incursions due to bad weather; the second in January 1983 when a proposed survey was cancelled at Indonesia's request.
tion Agency for Surveys and Mapping. Following this meeting the area was subjected to a satellite scan which confirmed that the road had crossed the border in three places. In mid June it was reported that in Jakarta Mochtar had expressed his government’s official regret over the crossings, but it was not until the end of July that Namaliu received confirmation of this. Towards the end of the year a joint Indonesia-Papua New Guinea survey party began detailed survey, mapping and demarcation of the border, after which the offending road sections were to be closed. The exercise took place under the protective watch of Indonesian and Papua New Guinean troops; the Papua New Guinea government acknowledged (Post-Courier 7 July 1983) that ‘This can be regarded, therefore, as a joint operation with Indonesia’ - something of a departure from its earlier firm denial of joint military operations and one which drew criticism from opposition spokesman Levi (Post-Courier 20 July 1983) - but according to Namaliu (Post-Courier 13 July 1983) neither nation’s troops would cross the border at any time. (Reports in the Times of PNG 8 July 1983, 6 January 1984, on the other hand, claimed that the agreement gave rights of ‘hot pursuit’ twenty kilometres inside the border.) However in December it was announced that survey work had been halted due to heavy rain and ‘financial problems [which] forced the Indonesian group to withdraw’ (Post-Courier 27 December 1983). The offending sections of the road were eventually closed off at a formal ceremony in late August 1984; ‘We hope the road intrusion was an honest mistake’, Matane told the assembled group, ‘We hope it is the only mistake the Indonesian government will make’ (Niugini Nius 3 September 1984). In a later comment on the subject (Post-Courier 28 September 1984) Matane said, ‘The ‘mistakes‘ they made had cost us thousands of kina that should have been spent in developing Papua New Guinea and its people’.

In summary, generally cordial relations at the government-to-government level together with improved machinery for joint border administration made it possible to sort out what was in all probability a harmless, if puzzling, error by the road construction contractors employed by Indonesia, without any significant deterioration in relations between the two countries. The incident did, however, suggest also that the joint border machinery, and indeed diplomatic channels, were not functioning very effectively. Nor, it might be added, were border development programmes conspicuously successful, despite the early rhetoric, on either side of the border. In Papua New Guinea’s two border provinces there were frequent complaints of lack of
development, even before 1983 when border development programme expenditure was cut severely.

In the border road incident and in other developments in 1983 the Somare government worked hard at maintaining good relations with Indonesia. It again reiterated its acceptance that what happened in Irian Jaya was Indonesia’s internal affair, notwithstanding a steady build-up in the number of border crossers (see, for example, Draft Hansard 5 May 1983); it maintained a firm line against border crossing and against support for the OPM within Papua New Guinea; and it announced increased allocations for border patrols and plans to station an infantry company at Kiunga. In September Defence minister Epel Tito was relieved of his portfolio after expressing the view, to an Australian audience, that an Indonesian invasion of Papua New Guinea was a future likelihood. And in December Somare made another state visit to Indonesia and was reported (Pacific Islands Monthly February 1984) as being impressed with Indonesian assurances of determined efforts to develop and improve the lives and conditions of Melanesians in Irian Jaya.

Once again, however, the good intentions of government were overtaken by events.

The events of 1984 - a substantive shift?

It appears that during 1983 there was an upsurge of OPM activity in Irian Jaya, in part the consequence of a new solidarity within the movement. It seems, further, that there were ambitious plans for a general uprising in early 1984, to draw international attention to the demands for West Papuan independence (see, for example, the report of an interview with James Nyaro, Niugini Nius 27 February 1984).

In late January intelligence sources in both Papua New Guinea and Australia were forewarned of a likely influx of border crossers into Papua New Guinea. Around mid February the influx began, initially mostly women and children, then men, including a number who had deserted from the army or abandoned public service or university posts. By the third week of February there were said to be about 130 border crossers. Requests by the Papua New Guinea government for information concerning the movement of people and the situation in Irian Jaya failed to elicit a credible response. Indonesian officials, initially not available for comment, told the Papua New Guinea government that they knew nothing of reported events in Jayapura, yet denied that there had been a confrontation between the OPM and the
military (*Post-Courier* 16 February 1984; *Niugini Nius* 16 February 1984); the situation in Jayapura was said to be 'normal' (*Niugini Nius* 22 February 1984). Irianese refugees told a different story. In January, according to one, some thirty OPM supporters in Jayapura had been arrested and detained. Another told of a fight in the Hamadi (Jayapura) market, in which three Melanesians had been killed. But the critical incident was an abortive attempt by West Papuan independence supporters on 13 February to raise the West Papuan flag on the provincial assembly building in Jayapura, an incident in which two West Papuans were killed. As a sequel to this, Indonesian authorities were said to have conducted a house-to-house search for OPM sympathisers and, according to refugees, 'hundreds' of Melanesian civil servants and army deserters were under military detention. Others had fled. Residents on the Papua New Guinea side of the border confirmed that Jayapura was in darkness and its government radio station silent. OPM supporters spoke of an imminent attack on Jayapura and other centres (*Post-Courier* 20 February 1984).

On 21 February it was reported that foreign minister Namaliu had cabled his Indonesian counterpart Mochtar, urgently requesting information, since contacts at senior official levels had proved unsuccessful. Namaliu expressed his disappointment at the lack of communication from Indonesia and made the pointed observation that under the border agreement the two countries had an obligation to inform each other of matters relevant to their security (*Post-Courier* 21, 22 February 1984). (It might be noted that when the crisis arose, there had not been a border liaison meeting since December 1983 - allegedly because of lack of funds - and the Vanimo-Jayapura 'hot-line' had been out of service for 'several months'). Three days later Namaliu and prime minister Somare told a press conference that they had still not received an answer from Indonesia and had sent a second telex asking for a reply within forty-eight hours. A *Post-Courier* editorial (24 February 1984) described the Indonesian non-response as 'an insult'. When a reply came, on 25 February, it confirmed that there had been clashes, but said little. Namaliu told reporters he thought the response was 'sufficient enough' (*Post-Courier* 27 February 1984).

Meanwhile two police riot squads were dispatched to Vanimo to join the 360 Defence Force personnel already patrolling the border and northwest coastline.

By the end of February there were about 250 border crossers, mostly accommodated in camps on the outskirts of Vanimo, and
FIGURE 5.1  Language groups and population density in the border area
although a number said they intended to return to continue the fight for West Papuan independence, the number of refugees rose daily. In the hope, it seems, of discouraging such movement the government pressed charges of illegal entry against all the adult males (then numbering eighty), and acting foreign minister Bais announced that the government would decide on the future of the crossers after further consultation with Indonesia. This action came under strong criticism, among others from Okuk (who had been returned to parliament in a by-election and emerged again as opposition leader), UPNG students and law faculty, the bishop of Vanimo, and officials within DFAT, Justice and the Public Solicitor’s Office. The court handed down its decision in Vanimo on 21 March, by which time the number charged had increased to 111: 84 crossers were found guilty by one magistrate - who, however, expressed sympathy with their reasons for crossing - while a second magistrate dismissed the case against the other 27. 73 of those found guilty were sentenced to six weeks gaol, but were subsequently released on their own recognizance pending appeal. Their conviction was later quashed by the National Court (Post-Courier 22 June 1984).

As the flow of Irianese across the border continued during February and March, the government found itself under pressure from a number of sources to grant asylum to the refugees and also to support West Papuan independence demands at the UN. In early March, following a parliamentary debate on the border problem, prime minister Somare told a press conference that his government was prepared ‘to act as honest brokers’; Papua New Guinea would support the Irianese, he said, but not to a situation where it would jeopardize Papua New Guinea’s own position (Post-Courier 2 March 1984).

Confronted with a growing volume of border crossers, the Papua New Guinea government requested an urgent meeting with Indonesian officials to discuss the border situation, and particularly the question of the refugees. It appears that Papua New Guinea requested a meeting of the joint border committee (though there is some confusion on this - see for example Niugini Nius 15 March 1984 and Far Eastern Economic Review 12 April 1984) but when its delegation, led by Matane, arrived for the meeting in Jayapura in mid March it found itself sitting down to a meeting of the lesser border liaison committee with an Indonesian delegation led by a local hupati (district commissioner) who was apparently uninformed on the subject of border crossings and did not have authority to make decisions. Papua New
Guinea’s frustration on this account was aggravated by an Indonesian news report which claimed that Papua New Guinea had agreed to repatriate the 300 or so refugees who had crossed since February. Namaliu denied the report, at the same time revealing that Indonesia had requested a list of names and particulars of the border crossers. (See Post-Courier 19, 20, 21 March 1984).

While DFAT officials were still interviewing these border crossers, another group of about one hundred crossed into Sandaun Province, seeking temporary refuge from fighting along the border. Matane told the Indonesian ambassador that the government was ‘very, very concerned about the situation’ (Post-Courier 27 March 1984); nothing if not consistent, ‘Mr Soepomo said he was unaware of the latest crossings...’ (ibid.).

In the midst of all this (and within hours of restoring the telephone link between Port Moresby and the border stations in Sandaun Province - which had been disconnected because accounts allegedly had not been paid), the Papua New Guinea public learned that two ‘unidentified jet fighter planes’ had flown low over Green River station, buzzing the station and, according to some reports, dropping what was thought to be a bomb or rocket (witnesses reported hearing a loud ‘explosion’ and some said they saw smoke as an object was dropped) (Niugini Nius 28 March 1984; Post-Courier 28, 29 March 1984). A complaint to the Indonesian ambassador brought an immediate denial that the planes were Indonesia’s, though the ANTARA news agency had already reported an exercise by the Indonesian air force, including mock battles and paratrooper drops, around Jayapura. Indonesia’s foreign minister Mochtar declined to comment. The ambassador’s curious response caused Matane to comment, ‘We are very disappointed and annoyed as to the way we have been treated by Indonesia so far’ (Post-Courier 29 March 1984), while Namaliu was said to be ‘Bloody angry’ (Far Eastern Economic Review 12 April 1984). The prime minister instructed Namaliu to seek an immediate meeting with Mochtar, and suggested a meeting of defence ministers and armed forces chiefs after that; an immediate meeting of foreign ministers, however, was ruled out by Mochtar’s previous overseas commitments.

The disappointment and annoyance expressed by Namaliu and Matane was manifested in a threat to expel Indonesia’s defence attache, Colonel Ismail; speaking to the press after delivering ‘a strongly worded protest note’, Matane observed that Papua New Guinea had not been advised of the air force exercises and said, ‘We
believe the defence attache is not doing his job (Post-Courier 30 March 1984). (It might be added that within Papua New Guinea it was generally believed that Ismail was in charge of Indonesia's espionage activities in the country - see, for example, Times of PNG 12 April 1984.)

A formal response to Papua New Guinea's request for information on this latest incident was received on 3 April. By this time the presence of Indonesian aircraft in the general vicinity at the time of the incursion was an established fact and the possibility of an unintentional incursion had been privately admitted (Nius Nius 30 March 1984; Far Eastern Economic Review 12 April 1984); however the Indonesian reply, which emanated from military sources, continued to insist that no incursion had occurred and suggested that the reports of a bomb or rocket firing might be explained by the fact that the aircraft had, at the provincial governor's request, produced a sonic boom, 'to raise a spirit of love for the skies in the people of the region' ['untuk masyarakat semangat cinta udara masyarakat daerah'] (Tempo 14 April 1984; see also Far Eastern Economic Review 12 April 1984 and Post-Courier 4 April 1984). Namaliu, describing the reply as 'highly unsatisfactory', delivered a second diplomatic note, asking for clarification of the Indonesian response within forty-eight hours and again raised the threat of expulsion of the military attache. (After some abstruse diplomatic shuffling - including denial of landing rights to an Indonesian military aircraft sent to collect Ismail - the military attache left Port Moresby on 12 April.)

The Indonesian ambassador was not the only one to receive a diplomatic note on 3 April. At the end of March the Australian National Times had published the contents of a 'leaked' cabinet document outlining the strategic bases of Australian foreign policy (National Times 30 March-5 April, 6-12 April 1984; Sydney Morning Herald 30 March 1984). Contained in this document was the statement that 'Australian policy should encourage PNG to take action wherever possible to suppress anti-Indonesian activity by Irian Jaya dissidents and progressively to develop the PNG official presence in the border region'. The Australian high commissioner in Port Moresby was called in and asked to provide information on the status of the leaked document; at the same time Namaliu took the opportunity to tell the Australians that Papua New Guinea would 'not accept suggestions from any foreign government or organisation which seeks to involve the country and its people in an internal dispute of another sovereign base' (Nius Nius

In the midst of these diplomatic ‘exchanges’, it was reported that OPM guerrillas had kidnapped a Swiss mission pilot, Werner Wyder, and an Irianese school superintendent and that the Swiss embassy in Jakarta had asked the Papua New Guinea government to help locate the pilot and negotiate his release. The pilot and his passengers had been ambushed when his plane landed at Yurup, a mission station across the border from Kamberatoro; two other passengers, Indonesians, had been murdered. (It was while searching for this aircraft, it transpired, that the Indonesian jets had flown over Green River.) The Swiss authorities subsequently received, through Henk Joku, a ransom demand for K1.5 million, to be delivered to OPM leader Nyaro via Papua New Guinea officials and the Catholic mission at Kamberatoro. Somare reacted promptly and sternly to this demand: ‘The government will not allow PNG soil to be used as a base for terrorism, extortion or murder by the OPM’, Somare said, and any resident of Papua New Guinea, citizen or non-citizen, ‘shown to be involved in such criminal acts’ would face criminal charges (Post-Courier 5 April 1984). He did, however, offer to mediate in the release, without conditions, of the hostages. Statements from members of the Irianese community in Papua New Guinea called on the OPM to release Wyder, offered to assist in negotiation of his release, and cast doubts both on Joku’s credentials as OPM spokesman and on the source of the ransom demand. The latter was subsequently quietly dropped but the OPM did insist that as conditions for the release of Wyder, Switzerland act as intermediary in arranging talks between the OPM and the Indonesian government, and that it present the West Papua issue to international forums (the UN General Assembly and its Committee on Decolonization, and the Non-Aligned Nations’ Conference were mentioned). On 7 April Nyaro’s men were finally persuaded to free Wyder, without conditions, and a party comprising the bishop of Vanimo, the Swiss ambassador to Australia, the Swiss honorary consul in Papua New Guinea and Henk Joku escorted the pilot from the border to Kamberatoro mission and thence to Vanimo and Port Moresby. (The Irianese captive had been released in Irian Jaya earlier.)

In the meantime, the Papua New Guinea government received a reply to its second diplomatic note. Although this second response ‘did not deal directly or in full with all matters raised in the two protest notes’, it was accepted by Namaliu who said, ‘We believe that the violation of our territorial sovereignty...has been acknowledged’ (Post-
Courier 6 April 1984). The Indonesian note also confirmed arrangements for a meeting between Namaliu and the Indonesian ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Home Affairs in mid April.

It also became clear early in April that, associated with the Wyder incident (and despite a statement by Mochtar, reported in Post-Courier 23 April 1984, that ‘very little or no fighting has taken place between troops and rebels’), there had been increased military activity on the Indonesian side of the border from around late March, particularly around Yurup-Amgotoro, and a further massive flow of people across the border was taking place. According to a Post-Courier report (9 April 1984) DFAT officials, concerned at this latest development, had instructed border officials to refuse these people food and send them back across the border. On 9 April it was reported (Post-Courier) that the number of border crossers had risen to 1,000, most of them in Sandaun Province. Three days later another report said that 3,000 Irianese were heading for the border, in Western Province; by the end of the month the number in refugee camps along the border was put at more than 4,500 (Post-Courier 1 May 1984). As further clashes occurred between the OPM and Indonesian troops, and OPM activities in the southern part of the border area intensified, the number of border crossers increased steadily: to 5,600 by 11 May, 7,400 by end May, over 9,000 by end June and around 11,000 in October. Understandably, the question of border crossers/refugees\(^{10}\) became a dominant concern of the Papua New Guinea government in 1984, both domestically and in its relations with Indonesia, and it remains such. Since this is the subject of a separate chapter (Smith and Hewison, below; see also Brunton 1984; ICJ 1984), however, it will not be considered in detail here, except insofar as it is an essential element of Papua New Guinea’s domestic political situation and foreign relations.

The scheduled ministerial talks between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were held in Jakarta in mid April. A few days before they

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\(^{10}\) The use of the terms ‘border crosser’ and ‘refugee’ has been a contentious issue. The Papua New Guinea government rightly argues that many of those who have crossed the border are ‘traditional crossers’ or people who intend to go back as soon as things quieten down; only a small proportion of those who have crossed the border are ‘genuine refugees’, that is people who might have a reasonable claim to political asylum. Accepting the logic of this I have generally used the term ‘border crossers’ in this discussion. But this is not meant to deny that, in the common usage of the term, virtually all border crossers are ‘refugees’, people seeking permanent or temporary refuge from conditions they perceive as threatening their wellbeing.
Irianese refugees at Vanimo, March 1984. Photo—*Times of Papua New Guinea*

Refugees at Blackwater camp, Sandaun Province. Photo—*Sydney Morning Herald*
The border area, near Wutung.  Photo—R. J. May
commenced the Papua New Guinea press carried reports of a statement by Indonesia’s military commander in Irian Jaya, Brigadier-General Sembiring Meliala, which accused Papua New Guinea of ‘habouring, giving sanctuary, to the OPM’. As reported (Niugini Nius 11 April 1984; see also Post-Courier 16 April 1984) Sembiring expressed the view, inaccurate as well as optimistic, that

If only the PNG government was consistent with promises made during our joint border committee talks that it would not allow OPM living there to carry arms... the problem would be solved.

He also repeated the denials of the air incursions, denied that there had been an uprising in Jayapura, and said that Indonesia had no obligation to warn Papua New Guinea of military exercises. The Papua New Guinea government appears to have made no response to this statement, though Okuk called for another formal protest note. It may, however, have influenced the stand which Namaliu took. In a statement issued to the press soon after his arrival, the Papua New Guinea foreign minister said that the immediate cause of his visit was to lodge ‘a very strong formal protest’. Apart from the specific issue of violations of Papua New Guinea’s territorial sovereignty by Indonesian military aircraft, Namaliu referred to the problems that had led to so many Irianese crossing the border since February, and complained that his government had been forced in recent months ‘to deal with the effects of problems not of our own making’.

The people and government of my country have a very real interest in ensuring that Irian Jaya is administered in an orderly and peaceful way and that development takes place in the interests of the people who live there the minister said (Niugini Nius 16 April 1984). The impact of the statement was not softened, in Indonesian eyes, by Namaliu’s offer of financial and technical development assistance, and assistance to other Indonesians ‘to understand the cultures and values of the Melanesian inhabitants in Irian Jaya’ (ibid.). In an interview with AAP correspondent Leigh Mackay, Mochtar referred to Namaliu’s statement as ‘offensive’ and ‘provocative’ and said Indonesia had ‘reacted in a very restrained manner’ (Post-Courier 23 April 1984).

The same day, in Port Moresby a statement by the acting Foreign Affairs minister, Tony Siaguru, reflected Papua New Guinea’s
stronger stand on the border situation:

There has never been any question that PNG regards Irian Jaya as an integral part of Indonesia. Since the first Somare Government, we have been careful not to interfere in the internal affairs of Indonesia. But the time has come to make it clear to the Indonesian Government that many of its policies and actions in Irian Jaya affect PNG quite directly (Post-Courier 16 April 1984).

The Jakarta talks did little to reconcile the two governments: on the subject of the Green River incursions the Indonesian government continued to deny that its aircraft had crossed the border; with regard to Defence attache Ismail, the Indonesian government insisted that the attache had been expelled, while Papua New Guinea claimed that Indonesia had been persuaded to withdraw him. On these issues, ‘We have agreed to disagree’, Namaliu reported, and he described himself as ‘satisfied ... under the circumstances’ (Post-Courier 18 April 1984). Partial agreement was reached on the repatriation of border crossers, and Namaliu was given an assurance of the safety of those who returned to Irian Jaya, but Papua New Guinea’s request for UNHCR supervision of the welfare of returnees was not accepted by Indonesia.

General reaction in Papua New Guinea to the Jakarta talks seems to have been that, though they failed to resolve some major differences, they had been fruitful and that Namaliu had succeeded in taking a commendably firmer line in presenting Papua New Guinea’s position (see, for example, Times of PNG 26 April 1984). Some, however, felt that the foreign minister had not been firm enough: former Foreign Affairs minister Noel Levi described his successor’s offer of assistance to Indonesia as ‘nothing more than buying friendship from a burglar’ and said that ‘any help to Indonesia would mean assistance in the killing of the Melanesian race in Irian Jaya’ (Post-Courier 18 April 1984); UP leader Torato urged that diplomatic relations with Indonesia be cut and that Papua New Guinea support West Papuan demands at the UN; MA spokesman Narokobi expressed the view that Papua New Guinea would be ‘justified in treating Indonesia as a hostile and unfriendly nation’ (Niugini Nius 21 April 1984); the Sandaun premier, Andrew Komboni, said that sending the border crossers back was ‘as good as killing them’ (Times of PNG 3 May 1984) and suggested that Mochtar visit the refugee camps; and in the National Parliament the
member for Wosera-Gauì proposed a bill to resurrect the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and to create reserve police and school cadets in order to prepare Papua New Guinea for an attack by Indonesia (such legislation was in fact passed in November 1984).

The question of border crossers and what to do with them preoccupied the Papua New Guinea government in its dealings with Indonesia throughout 1984. Namaliu and Matane, it seems, had hoped to commence repatriation soon after the April talks (though it is not clear how they intended to do this, since there is no evidence that the border crossers were willing to go back of their own accord). At the end of April Mochtar announced that 1,140 border crossers would be returned within days (Post-Courier 30 April 1984) but in mid May it was reported that Papua New Guinea was waiting for Indonesia to set a date for repatriation (Post-Courier 14 May 1984). The government perhaps had good reason for wishing the border crossers away, since by this time the situation in camps in the Western Province was being described as 'quite desperate' (Post-Courier 15 May 1984). On 28 May Niugini Nius quoted an ANTARA report that repatriation was to commence 'in the near future'; the following day, however, the same paper reported that repatriation plans had been 'shelved indefinitely' following the withdrawal of Indonesian officials from a meeting arranged in Vanimo to finalize a programme for the repatriation of about 5,000 border crossers. (According to a report in Niugini Nius 29 May 1984 the Irian Jaya governor, Isaac Hindom, who was to have led the delegation, was 'over-committed'; but Post-Courier 30 May 1984 reported that Hindom had fears for his security in Papua New Guinea.)

This was symptomatic of a state of affairs which continued throughout the year. There were, it seems, three major obstacles to agreement on repatriation arrangements. One was Papua New Guinea's insistence on a guarantee of the safety of returnees. Such an assurance had been given verbally on more than one occasion but when Papua New Guinea sought, first, a written undertaking and, subsequently, a formal commitment from both the foreign minister and the military as part of a joint repatriation agreement, it met resistance. In August Namaliu sent for the Indonesian ambassador and expressed Papua New Guinea's concern that despite commitments made by senior Indonesian ministers in April, assurances still had not been formalized; '...arrangements will not - I repeat not - be put into effect until the guarantees we seek have been finalized', said the minister (Post-Courier 21 August 1984; see also Post-Courier 7 September
1984). Some two weeks later Mochtar was reported (Niugini Nius 8 September 1984) as saying that his repeated verbal assurances should have been sufficient but that he would provide an assurance in writing, as part of a formal repatriation agreement recently negotiated at a border liaison meeting. In fact, Mochtar objected to the terms of the assurance which Papua New Guinea sought in the agreement (see Post-Courier, Niugini Nius 25 September 1984) and it was not until late October, and after the offending section had been removed, that the agreement was signed. In the event, the assurance of the safety of returnees was given in a separate (unpublished) letter. A second point of contention was Papua New Guinea’s request that the UNHCR be involved in overseeing the repatriation exercise. Indonesia denied this request, though it agreed to have Papua New Guinea officials monitor the repatriation and visit returnees in Irian Jaya. Towards the end of the year the Papua New Guinea government appears to have given up on this point (see, for example, a statement by Siaguru reported in Post-Courier 16 October 1984), though in an unexpected reversal of policy in December Indonesia was reported to have agreed to let the UNHCR supervise repatriation (Post-Courier 13 December 1984). The third obstacle to agreement on repatriation was Indonesia’s insistence that Papua New Guinea provide it with a list of names of border crossers. In early June Mochtar was quoted as saying that repatriation had been stalled by Papua New Guinea’s failure to provide such a list; ‘It would be an enormous task’, was Namaliu’s reported response, ‘There are 8000 here now and they are still coming’ (Post-Courier 4 June 1984). However a week later Mochtar told a press conference in Jakarta that the names of some sixty dissidents (including army deserters and hard-core OPM sympathizers) would suffice, and that repatriation could begin once this list was received (Post-Courier 12 June 1984). Niugini Nius (12 June 1984) expressed widespread reaction within Papua New Guinea to this demand in its headline: ‘Don’t do it, Mr Namaliu’. The same issue carried a detailed report on the killing of Irianese museum curator Arnold Ap.11 The Papua New Guinea gov-

11 Ap, along with several other Irianese nationalists, had been detained and held, apparently without formal charges, since November 1983. For accounts of his death see Niugini Nius 7 May, 11, 12, 30 June, 28 August 1984; Times of PNG 10 May, 7 June 1984; Sydney Morning Herald 14 May, 27 August 1984; Far Eastern Economic Review 7 June 1984. Ap’s wife was among refugees who crossed into Sandaun Province in February 1984.
ernment appears to have refused this request but to have offered to supply lists of names for each group repatriated as they were sent back (Post-Courier 27 June 1984).

Within Papua New Guinea opposition to repatriation was strong and vocal, not only from within the camps and from the political opposition (notably Okuk, Momis, Narokobi and the member for North Fly, Warren Dutton) but also from the Sandaun and Western provincial premiers, from students, from various church sources, from some government officials, and in newspaper editorials and numerous letters to the press. Public sentiment on the refugee issue was further aroused in August by a statement by Matane, on his return from a joint border committee meeting, that 9,000 border crossers would be escorted across the border by Defence Force personnel ‘within the next few weeks’ (Post-Courier 1 August 1984), and it was intensified following newspaper reports that about one hundred people in refugee camps had died from starvation or malnutrition-related causes (Post-Courier 13, 14, 16 August 1984; Times of PNG 16, 30 August 1984). Although many of those who died were old or very young and in poor condition when they crossed into Papua New Guinea, there was nevertheless a strong feeling that tragedy could have been avoided, and questions were raised about the extent of the government’s resolve with regard to refugees and about why offers of assistance from the UNHCR and from churches had not been taken up. (See Smith and Hewison, below.) Government backbencher and member for Aitape-Lumi, and former student leader, Gabriel Ramoi accused the government of employing a policy of deliberate starvation to encourage people to go back across the border (Niugini Nius 20 August 1984). In the National Parliament the government came under strong criticism and there were calls for the resignation of the ministers for Provincial Affairs (John Nilkare, who accepted responsibility for the government’s failure to cope with the situation) and Health (Niugini Nius 17, 23 August 1984). If any demonstration were needed of the fact that conditions within Irian Jaya were of direct concern to Papua New Guinea, this surely provided it.

In a press release issued on 19 August Namaliu said that while Papua New Guinea regretted the deaths and suffering, ‘We should not forget that ultimately conditions in the camps on the border were brought about as a result of circumstances in Irian Jaya which have caused more than 9,000 people to flee their homes to Papua New Guinea’. He went on to say that Papua New Guinea, believing that the
border crossers, as Indonesian citizens, were primarily an Indonesian responsibility, had repeatedly asked the Indonesian government to help feed them, but apart from an amount of K22,800 received in April it had received no assistance - 'In fact, most of our requests have gone unanswered' (Post-Courier 20 August 1984). (A further K18,000 was received from Indonesia subsequently.) Nilkare, on the other hand, laid part of the blame on the OPM, who, he said, had told the refugees not to return until Irian Jaya had independence from Indonesia; 'They are killing their own women and children for the sake of politics', he said (Niugini Nius 17 August 1984).

In late August, following a border liaison meeting in Port Moresby, it appeared that repatriation was about to commence; Indonesian sources even mentioned a date, 17 September, though this apparently came as a surprise to Namaliu (Post-Courier 29 August 1984). 'Public awareness' patrols were carried out in the border areas in the hopes of persuading border crossers to return and arrangements were in hand for an Indonesian 'verification team' to visit the camps to speak with prospective returnees. But in October repatriation still had not commenced. OPM sources, meanwhile, had let it be known that they intended to disrupt the repatriation exercise and would take retaliatory action if it proceeded; specific threats were made against the Ok Tedi mining project and against individual Papua New Guinean politicians and bureaucrats (see, for example, Post-Courier 12 September 1984; Niugini Nius 19 September 1984).

In October letters concerning repatriation arrangements were exchanged and at the end of the month Mochtar visited Papua New Guinea to sign a new basic border agreement (see below). During Mochtar's visit it was announced that repatriation would commence the following week. However, when in early November the Indonesian verification team visited the Blackwater camp outside Vanimo (against the advice of Papua New Guinea officials, who had warned of likely violence) it was confronted by stone-throwing Irianese refugees and had to withdraw. Five of the seven Indonesian team members had to be treated in Vanimo hospital and amid heated complaints of inadequate security on Papua New Guinea's part (including a demonstration outside the Papua New Guinea embassy in Jakarta) the verification team returned to Jayapura.

Shortly after this, Namaliu presented a statement to the National Parliament in which he announced that 'A flexible program for the return of border-crossers to Indonesia has been devised ... The repat-
RATION program will ... take place in stages, over an extended period of time' (Post-Courier 21 November 1984). Apparently as the first act under this 'flexible program', on 23 December a group of 102 refugees from Blackwater camp was taken by Indonesian government boat to Jayapura, where they were given a welcome feast before being returned to their home district of Arso. The group was accompanied by a Papua New Guinean observer but there was no UNHCR involvement. By this time Namaliu had left the Foreign Affairs ministry (shifting to Primary Industry, ostensibly to be able to spend more time with his family), and had been replaced by John Giheno. In announcing the repatriation Giheno said that of the 11,000 who had crossed by October 1984 about 2,000 had returned in small groups and many more were expected to follow (Post-Courier 27 December 1984). An even more optimistic outlook was attributed to a Foreign Affairs official:

A Foreign Affairs official said yesterday it was hoped the 11,000 crossers in camps in Western and West Sepik Provinces would return voluntarily .... making an official repatriation unnecessary. 'We wanted to allow the situation to solve itself ...,' he said (Post-Courier 4 January 1985).

The estimate of 2,000 has been largely discounted by informed sources, and the expectations of Giheno and his department have so far proved wildly optimistic. In mid May 1985, on the eve of a border liaison committee meeting, a second group was repatriated from Blackwater camp, on this occasion with the involvement of the UNHCR as well as the Papua New Guinea government and refugee camp representatives. Initially 79 people agreed to go back but in the event 28 had second thoughts, leaving 51 to be repatriated (Post-Courier 15 May 1985; Far Eastern Economic Review 30 May 1985). Two months later it was reported that in Sandaun Province there were 300 to 400 recently arrived border crossers at Old Skotiau, another 100 at Yabsiei, and over 200 at Wasengla (Post-Courier 12, 16 July 1985; Wantok 20 July 1985). The same month an event long anticipated by some Australian observers of the border situation occurred when five refugees arrived, via Papua New Guinea, on Australia's Boigu Island, and sought asylum. Australian authorities who hoped to shift this problem back to Papua New Guinea were quickly disabused: 'If the reports are right, then it is a matter between Australia and Indonesia', an official [of DFAT] said' (Post-Courier 8 July 1985).
While repatriation of border crossers became the major issue in both domestic politics and foreign relations concerning the border during 1984, it was not the only problem. ‘Incidents’ continued to occur and border administration posed continuing problems. Together with what Papua New Guinea saw as a somewhat intransigent attitude to repatriation on Indonesia’s part, these contributed to a toughening of the position taken by Papua New Guinea which culminated in a complaint about the border situation at a UN General Assembly meeting in October.

In late April 1984, shortly after the Jakarta talks and with refugees pouring across the border, it was reported (Niugini Nius 27 April 1984) that about 150 Indonesian soldiers had crossed the border near Imonda while pursuing Nyaro, and in Western Province four Indonesians, who confessed to being in pursuit of border crossers near Weam, were taken into custody before being sent back across the border. About three weeks later Papua New Guinea officials learnt from an Indonesian press report that a three-day military exercise was under way to the south of Jayapura. Despite undertakings given in April, the Papua New Guinea government had not been advised of this and the Indonesian charge d’affaires claimed he was unaware of it. On 21 May it was reported (Niugini Nius) that two Indonesian helicopters had strayed 3 km into Papua New Guinea territory near the Bewani patrol post. The same day, Namaliu delivered a major statement on the border situation to the National Parliament; the statement summarized developments since February and elaborated the government’s approach to the question of repatriation, but the foreign minister also took the opportunity to express the government’s deep concern that it had not been informed of Indonesia’s military activities near the border and that Indonesia had not been responsive to its requests for border liaison meetings. Namaliu also reiterated the view that while Papua New Guinea did not want to interfere in Indonesia’s internal affairs, ‘... the border crossings are not simply internal affairs of Indonesia. They have had - and continue to have - direct effects on Papua New Guinea’ (Times of PNG 24 May 1984).

About the same time as Namaliu’s statement to parliament, it was announced that, in an effort to reduce border crossings and to prepare for the repatriation of crossers, police and military patrolling of the border was being stepped up and permanent bases were to be established at Vanimo and Amanab (Niugini Nius 17 May 1984). The following month several Irianese, described as ‘leading members of the
OPM’, were arrested in a police mobile squad raid on a camp inside the
Papua New Guinea border, near Kamberatoro; six were subsequently
charged under the Criminal Code with operating an illegal paramilit-
ary force.

Within days of this, however, relations between Indonesia and
Papua New Guinea headed towards a new nadir after it was estab-
lished that fifty-three Indonesian soldiers had crossed into Papua New
Guinea and had destroyed crops and garden huts in Suwampa village
near Wutung. Yet again the Indonesian ambassador was called to
DFAT and given a ‘strongly-worded note’; the Papua New Guinea
government claimed compensation for the damage and told the
ambassador that unless a satisfactory explanation was provided soon,
‘the Papua New Guinea Government will feel compelled to begin con-
sidering raising the violations at forthcoming regional and interna-
tional meetings’ (Post-Courier 29 June 1984). Yet again, however,
Indonesian authorities refused to admit that an incursion had occurred
(indeed, shortly before this the secretary to the governor of Irian Jaya
repeated the claim that ‘There have never been any clashes between
the Indonesian defence forces and the OPM rebels. There have been
no clashes, never’, Times of PNG 31 May 1984). Notwithstanding the
fact that witnesses had reported that all but three of the party were
non-Melanesians, Moctar suggested that perhaps the offenders were
OPM guerillas in Indonesian army uniforms; but he was said to be tak-
ing the Papua New Guinea claim seriously and seeking advice from
military sources in Irian Jaya. Although the Indonesian ambassador
accompanied secretary Matane on an inspection visit to Suwampa -
where empty Indonesian army ration packs had been left behind and
names carved on trees - Indonesian armed forces commander General
Murdani formally denied the incursion, attributing it to a ‘third party’
and adding that Indonesian army uniforms could be ‘easily purchased
anywhere’ (Niugini Nius 26, 29, 30 June, 3, 5, 7 July 1984; Post-
Courier 29 June, 2, 5 July, 3 August 1984; Times of PNG 5 July 1984).

Indonesia’s formal response was received by Namaliu on the eve
of his departure for Jakarta to attend a ministerial meeting of ASEAN
(within which Papua New Guinea has special observer status), and in
a speech to that meeting Namaliu took the opportunity to inform
ASEAN ministers of his government’s ‘deep concern at recent events
While in Jakarta Namaliu also had talks with senior Indonesian minis-
ters and with Murdani who gave him an assurance (not, however, the
first such assurance) that in future Papua New Guinea would be informed in advance of any Indonesian military exercises in the border area (Post-Courier 13 July 1984). Papua New Guinea, it was reported, again rejected the idea of joint border patrols.

On the last day of June the border incursion was jostled out of the headlines by the news that in Sandaun Province the headmaster of a community school near Amanab had been kidnapped by OPM guerillas. Reports suggested that kidnappers were demanding a halt to the proposed repatriation of refugees and the withdrawal of special police patrols along the border. Following an emergency meeting of the National Security Council, acting foreign minister Bais issued a statement calling for the release of the teacher and saying there would be no negotiations and no bargaining (Niugini Nius 30 June, 2, 3 July 1984; Post-Courier 3, 4 July 1984). The teacher was released after a few days and an apology subsequently was received from Nyaro, who said that the kidnapping had been intended to avenge police action along the border (Niugini Nius 19 September 1984). However the incident resulted in the closure of schools in the border area for about ten weeks and appears to have been the main reason for a special military operation in the Amanab-Green River-Imonda area which resulted in the apprehension of twelve suspected OPM guerillas. (In another sequel, the officer in charge of Amanab patrol post, who had played a major role in securing the release of the kidnapped teacher, was charged with harbouring an illegal immigrant - allegedly the nine-year-old daughter of James Nyaro.)

During July 1984: a group of Indonesian officials, led by the director of Indonesia’s Center for Strategic and International Studies, visited Port Moresby for a seminar on Indonesia-Papua New Guinea relations; the annual joint border meeting was held in Surabaya, and the formal process of drafting a new basic border agreement (the 1979 agreement being due to expire in 1984) commenced. These three events provided further occasions for the expression of Papua New Guinea’s firmer stand on border issues. In an address to the joint seminar Namaliu told delegates that events in Irian Jaya directly affected Papua New Guinea and that Papua New Guinea had ‘an immediate interest in the way in which Irian Jaya is governed and developed’ (reported in Post-Courier 24 July 1984), and that Indonesia was not doing enough to understand the Melanesian cultures of the Irian Jaya people. Matane, on his return from Surabaya (where discussion had been primarily concerned with repatriation of border crossers),
expressed his obvious frustration with Indonesian denials of the latest border violation in the suggestion that in future any soldiers found on the Papua New Guinea side of the border who did not look like Melanesians should be shot in the leg, so that Papua New Guinea could provide the required evidence (*Niugini Nius* 30 July 1984). And with reference to the new border agreement it was made known that Papua New Guinea would press for the inclusion of provision for compensation for damages arising from border incursions (*Times of PNG* 19 July 1984).

Nevertheless during August prime minister Somare appears to have gone to some trouble to dissuade Vanuatu’s prime minister, Walter Lini (whose Vanuaaku Pati had voted in late July to recognize the OPM), and Solomons prime minister Solomon Mamaloni from raising the West Papua issue at a Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting (CHOGRM) and a forthcoming South Pacific Forum meeting (*Niugini Nius* 9, 13 August 1984; *Post-Courier* 13, 27 August 1984). Somare was alleged to have had a ‘sharp exchange’ with Lini, telling him that so long as Vanuatu was not prepared to accept Irianese refugees there was no point discussing the matter.

By the end of September, obviously irritated by Indonesia’s procrastination on the repatriation issue - in the face of a continuing steady flow of border crossers - and stung by the criticisms, domestic and foreign, generated by the deteriorating conditions in refugee camps along the border, Namaliu had resolved to air Papua New Guinea’s grievances at the UN. In a speech to the General Assembly on 1 October Namaliu referred to recent developments along the border and told delegates that Papua New Guinea had not been satisfied with most of the replies it had received from Indonesia about border violations. The Indonesian ambassador in Washington replied that his country was ‘painfully surprised’ at these accusations, that he thought ‘misunderstandings’ had been resolved, and that Indonesia ‘had shown great restraint’ (reported in *Times of PNG* 4 October 1984; *Niugini Nius* 5 October 1984). Apparently provoked by Namaliu’s UN speech, at a press conference in Jakarta in mid October foreign minister Mochtar was quoted as saying that Indonesia had ‘run out of patience’ and was ready to respond to charges made by Papua New Guinea concerning the border; Namaliu replied that although Mochtar’s statement ‘sounded quite tough’ he was pleased that it showed the Indonesian government realized just how serious and concerned Papua New Guinea was about the border situation (*Post-Courier* 18 October 1984).
1984). Mochtar in turn countered with a complaint that Papua New Guinea had not prevented OPM rebels from taking sanctuary on its side of the border, and cast doubts on his planned visit to Moresby for the signing of the revised border agreement (*Niugini Nius* 22 October 1984).

The visit did go ahead, and a new border agreement was signed on 29 October. The agreement (which is summarized by Prescott in chapter 1 and is reproduced as an appendix to this volume) contained new provisions concerning exchange of information on major constructions within 5 km of the border, and compensation for damages caused by ‘acts and related activities’ within the border area.

At a press conference after the signing, Mochtar said that he was satisfied that Papua New Guinea was doing all it could to prevent the OPM using its territory, though there was still room for improvement. Mochtar also invited the Papua New Guinea government to establish a consulate in Jayapura to serve as a conduit for information on conditions in the province (*Post-Courier* 30 October 1984).

Days before the ministerial meeting in Port Moresby the local press revealed that, unknown to the government or DFAT, deputy opposition leader Momis had had talks with Nyaro on the Papua New Guinea side of the border near Kamberatoro (*Niugini Nius* 25, 26 October 1984). Mochtar made reference to this meeting, and warned that meetings with rebels on the Papua New Guinea side of the border would not be tolerated; ‘if nothing is done about it’, Mochtar is reported to have said, ‘we are quite entitled, I think, to consider it an unfriendly act’ (*Post-Courier, Niugini Nius* 30 October 1984). The initial reaction to the news of Momis’s meeting, expressed by Somare (*Post-Courier* 26 October 1984), was tolerant (‘If Fr Momis has talked to these people, well that’s something entirely up to him ...’), but Momis’s action was later strongly condemned by Namaliu, who described the contact as ‘not only embarrassing to the government, but potentially a real source for actions which could seriously undermine national security’ (quoted in *Post-Courier* 8 November 1984).

Shortly after this, Defence Force personnel were called out to assist police along the border following unconfirmed reports of OPM-Indonesian military clashes spilling across the border near Wutung. In the event, there was no sighting of either OPM or Indonesian troops, though in the following weeks a further 660 refugees crossed into the Sandaun Province (*Post-Courier* 9, 13, 28 November 1984).

The next significant incident on the border occurred in April 1985,
when a helicopter containing a Papua New Guinea Post and Telegraphs maintenance crew landed, by mistake, at an OPM camp in the border area near Bewani. The group was taken into custody by about forty OPM guerillas, but released after promising not to reveal the location of the camp. (One man, from Central Province, narrowly escaped being killed because he was taken for an Indonesian.) On hearing of the incident, more than four weeks later, the government mounted a special operation involving about 200 Defence Force personnel and police, but by the time the force moved on the camp (twenty-five days elapsed between the government learning of the incident and troops entering the camp), the OPM had disappeared (Post-Courier 14, 15, 22 May 1985). The incident was noted by Mochtar, who was prompted to make the curious comment (as reported in Sydney Morning Herald and Canberra Times 25 May 1985) that since the OPM had failed to gain independence for Irian Jaya it may now ‘try to stir rebellion in Papua New Guinea to establish an independent Papuan State’. Less than a month later another, more successful, operation was conducted near Wutung, Sandaun Province, in which six suspected OPM members were arrested and weapons and explosives captured. Several Papua New Guinean villagers were also charged with harbouring illegal immigrants (Post-Courier 27, 28 May 1985).

Public opinion on the Irian Jaya issue

This account of Indonesia-Papua New Guinean relations relative to the border and the situation of the Melanesians in Irian Jaya has so far been principally in terms of the relations between governments, though passing reference has been made to broader public awareness and attitudes, and to relations between the Papua New Guinea government, OPM leaders and the Irianese community in Papua New Guinea. Following the expression of popular sentiment towards the ‘Act of Free Choice’ in 1969 Irian Jaya was not a subject of great concern in Papua New Guinea for several years, Papua New Guineans being generally preoccupied with the domestic circumstances of the immediate pre-independence and post-independence periods. As noted above, the Papua New Guinea government under Michael Somare (1972-77) broadly accepted the policies of the colonial government in relation to the border and border crossers, although, following the elaboration of a universalist foreign policy, there was a suggestion that the new government was less conciliatory towards expressions of
Irianese nationalism than the colonial government had been (see p. 91).

In 1976 Somare and Kiki stated clearly that their government was not prepared to countenance support for the OPM within Papua New Guinea (see p. 93). I have suggested, however, that this position was determined more by realpolitik and expediency than by the feelings of the mass of Papua New Guineans, among whom there was a widespread, if generally poorly informed, sympathy for their ‘Melanesian brothers’. Some influential commentators, indeed, have spoken with concern of what they regard as ‘Indophobia’ among educated Papua New Guineans, an attitude which they frequently attribute to outside influences (for example, Hastings 1979 and in Sydney Morning Herald 2 May 1983; Whitlam 1980:5; Mochtar quoted in Post-Courier 24 April 1984). There has also been a suggestion that if only Papua New Guineans understood Indonesia’s position on Irian Jaya (and East Timor), their reservations about Indonesia’s presence and policies there might be suspended. It should be clear from the historical survey presented here that I believe such a viewpoint not only reveals a patronizing attitude towards those Papua New Guineans who have helped formulate opinions and policies in their country, but vastly oversimplifies a complex set of attitudes which has been shaped more than anything else by Papua New Guinea’s own nationalist experience and political ideology, by shared language and kinship among border communities, and by the history of diplomatic and administrative dealings over the border.

Developments in Irian Jaya and along the border in 1977-78 increased the salience of the border issue in Papua New Guinea and revealed a growing popular sympathy for the Melanesian population in Irian Jaya. At the same time, in the intensified activity along the border in 1977-78 relations between the Papua New Guinea government and the OPM - and consequently between the government and the Irianese community in Papua New Guinea - appeared to deteriorate markedly. This latter development was in part the inevitable consequence of the government’s tougher attitudes towards border crossings and towards visible support for the OPM within Papua New Guinea; but it also reflected the difficulties of dealing with a movement sharply divided within itself and of coming to terms with a leadership which, from about 1977, threatened to resort to terrorism against Papua New Guinea in pursuing its demands (see, for example, Post-Courier 29 April 1977, 2, 3 May 1977, 27 September 1977, 10 November 1977, 23
October 1978; *Age* 13 June 1978). After the capture of Prai and Ondowame in 1978, and the decision not to grant them asylum in Papua New Guinea, several members of the government received threats of violence and at a cabinet meeting in Wewak, usually a very casual affair, ministers were heavily guarded by police with armalite rifles. The removal of two Irianese refugees in an OPM raid on the refugee camp at Yako in April 1979 brought a very strong reaction from Somare, who said the incident could lead to a hardening of the government’s attitude towards the separatists, and indeed shortly after it was reported that the government was preparing legislation to stop citizens actively supporting the OPM (*Canberra Times* 4 April 1979; *Post-Courier* 25 May 1979; *Sydney Morning Herald* 25 May 1979). (Such a proposal, it seems, had been discussed in June 1978, but Justice secretary, Buri Kidu, had advised that any attempt to restrict the movement of Papua New Guinean citizens would be unconstitutional. See *Post-Courier* 31 January, 5 February 1979.)

Since 1979, and especially since 1984, popular concern over the situation on the border has undoubtedly increased, while relations between the Papua New Guinea government and the OPM and its supporters appear to have deteriorated still further. It might be useful, therefore, to look more closely at the various elements of what earlier I referred to as ‘the Irian Jaya lobby’ (May 1979a:98) and to offer some comments, in summary, on attitudes towards the OPM.

*The Irianese community in Papua New Guinea*

There appears to be some uncertainty about the number of Irian-born residents in Papua New Guinea. A figure given to me by official sources in 1983 put the total of naturalized citizens and permissive residents from Irian Jaya at 567, but the usual estimate of Irian-born residents is about 2,000 to 3,000 (with guesses as high as 10,000). Of these, 217 have been granted Papua New Guinea citizenship.12 Some of these people migrated from West New Guinea before 1962; the rest are

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12 Between September 1975 and June 1977, 157 Irianese were granted citizenship. In November 1978 it was reported (*Post-Courier* 13 November 1978) that the government was imposing a freeze on citizenship to Irianese, and there has been no evidence of a thaw despite a subsequent announcement of a freeze in March 1984. In March 1980 members of the Irianese community approached the then foreign minister, Levi, seeking clarification of the status of citizenship applications, some of which had been outstanding since 1976, but received no response.
either refugees with the status of permissive residence (or citizenship) or people who slipped across the border in the 1960s or early 1970s and took up residence in villages or towns in Papua New Guinea. The number in the latter category (particularly in the Sandaun and East Sepik provinces) is possibly quite large.

For most of the 1960s and early 1970s the Papua New Guinea government, while discouraging boarder crossing in general,\(^{13}\) seems to have granted permissive residence fairly readily to those who could plausibly claim that they would suffer persecution if they were returned to Indonesia. Those granted permissive residence, however, were required to accept two conditions: that they would settle wherever they and their families were directed (in practice, where jobs were available away from the border), and that they would ‘never directly or indirectly get involved in political activities which caused [them] seeking for asylum in Papua New Guinea’ (Verrier 1976: Appendix F). The first of these conditions had the effect of distributing the Irianese community fairly widely throughout the country and mostly in towns (particularly in Manus - where in the 1960s and early 1970s large numbers of permissive residents were accommodated temporarily - and Port Moresby). The second condition, I suggested in 1979, had not been very strictly enforced:

The circumstances of gaining permissive residency virtually ensure that the Irianese community will be antipathetic, if not actively hostile, towards Indonesia and even without engaging in formal political activity some Irianese are likely to find sympathetic voices among their Papua New Guinean neighbours (one prominent Papua New Guinean spokesman for Irian Jaya has joint business interests with Irianese). Many Irianese now hold senior positions in government, private enterprise and the church and there is no doubt that some have used their positions to publicize the grievances of the Irianese people. Moreover, since 1962 the Irianese community has provided an effective underground channel for OPM propaganda... (May 1979a:99-100).

In the 1970s a South Pacific News Service, the mouthpiece for the Provisional Revolutionary Government of West Papua New Guinea,

\(^{13}\) For a summary of policy and procedures on border crossing see May 1979a:98-99.
operated from Port Moresby with agencies in Sydney and London, and, as noted above, the de facto West Papuan cabinet announced in 1977 included the names of Irianese residents in Papua New Guinea, though some of these disclaimed any involvement.

In 1976 and again in 1978, however, the government threatened to take action against Irianese residents giving visible support to the OPM, and early in 1979 an Irian-born permanent resident, Nicolaas Messet, was deported for his part in assisting Jacob Prai and Otto Ondowame to seek asylum in Papua New Guinea. Further deportations followed later in 1979 (see above page 100) and in 1980 it withdrew the travel documents of a permissive resident Rex Rumakiek, when it was reported that Rumakiek had been invited to establish an OPM office in Vanuatu. The Chan government’s concern with internal security in relation to the border was also evidenced in 1980 by the arrest of an Irian-born naturalized citizen who had in his possession ‘prohibited literature’, including ‘diagrams of how to make bombs and how to destroy a railway’ (Post-Courier 11 December 1980). Even more melodramatic was the ‘exposure’, in March 1981, of an OPM plot to obtain Soviet arms and smuggle them into Irian Jaya through Papua New Guinea. This ‘plot’ came to light when a letter, signed by the ‘chairman of the OPM Central Committee’ and addressed to a ‘Mr George, c/o Poste Restante, Turkey’, was returned, unclaimed, to its sender in Madang. A DFAT spokesman told the press that the government had ‘substantial documentary evidence’ of the OPM’s Papua New Guinea connection and was treating the matter with the ‘utmost seriousness’. He was probably not reassured by a statement by self-described OPM spokesman Henk Joku, who said that approaches by the OPM to the USSR and Cuba (but not involving Papua New Guinea) had been made public five years previously (see Post-Courier 19, 20, 23 March 1981; 31 July 1981). The repatriation to Indonesia of another three long-time residents four months later was apparently related to this episode (see page 104). In the meantime another three had been deported following their participation in the Human Rights Tribunal organized at UPNG (ibid.) and the government had stopped issuing from Port Moresby visas to residents of Irian Jaya, claiming that the system had been ‘abused by some people’ (Post-Courier 21 January 1981).

Although there was in the 1970s an Irianese community organization in Papua New Guinea 14 the government’s dealings with the local community were complicated by divisions within the community,
which in part reflected the ideological and regional factionalism which characterized the nationalist movement within Irian Jaya and elsewhere overseas (see Osborne’s chapter above and also May 1980). These divisions were evidenced in 1978 when a faction calling itself the South Pacific Group opposed an officially sanctioned visit by Netherlands-based Irianese emigre Nicolaas Jouwe (see Post-Courier 12, 24, 25, 30 January 1978), and they became more apparent when in mid July 1981 twenty-three ‘West Irian refugees’ were charged after attempting to abduct Henk Joku from his office in Port Moresby (Post-Courier 17, 20 July 1981). Joku, born in Sentani, but a naturalized Papua New Guinea citizen, had been an outspoken, if perhaps erratic, member of a relatively militant element of the Irianese community in Port Moresby which was identified with Elky Bemey and later James Nyaro and which in 1984 was accused of threatening Irianese residents not directly supporting the OPM (Times of PNG 9 August, 6 September 1984). Other members of this group included Ruben Victor Kambuaya, Melky Salosa, Matthew Mayer, and the three deported in July 1981. A self-confessed member of the Melanesian Socialist Party, which advocated armed resistance to Indonesia and had threatened terrorist action in Papua New Guinea, Joku appears to have been involved in the abortive attempt to obtain arms from the USSR and had he not been a Papua New Guinean citizen would probably have been deported.

In 1982 the Irianese community came under close surveillance following threats against some leading politicians (see Post-Courier 28, 29 July 1982; the unlikely collection included Levi, Somare, Bais and East Sepik premier Dambui) and after an Irianese man had forced his way into DFAT offices in Port Moresby wielding an axe. The following year there was another report of alleged attempts to smuggle arms into Irian Jaya from Australia via Papua New Guinea (Niugini Nius 10 August 1983). But generally the community maintained a fairly low profile.

Circumstances changed somewhat, however, following the influx of border crossers beginning early 1984 and as negotiations proceeded with Indonesia over repatriation. As early as February a group of Irianese residing in Papua New Guinea circulated amongst foreign

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14 According to the Post-Courier 24 February 1976 a community organization had been established earlier for proposed round table talks with the Indonesia and Papua New Guinea governments and represented about 200 people.
embassies and Papua New Guinean officials in Port Moresby an urgent appeal for the raising of the ‘West Papua issue’ with the UN Committee on Decolonization and for a round table conference between the Indonesian government and the provisional government of West Papua to implement West Papuan independence (Post-Courier 27 February 1984). The request for Papua New Guinea to represent West Papuan demands in New York was repeated by Henk Joku and in interviews with OPM leaders reported by Papua New Guinean journalists Alfred Sasaki (Niugini Nius 29 February 1984) and Neville Togarewa (Times of PNG 8, 15 March 1984) and was taken up by a number of Papua New Guineans, though it was firmly rejected by the foreign minister and by Papua New Guinea’s ambassador at the UN. In mid March 1984 the chairman of the Citizenship Committee reacted by announcing a temporary freeze on citizenship applications from Irianese (though, as noted above, a freeze appears to have been in effect already since 1978); some Irianese permissive and naturalized citizens, he said, had supported the OPM and were ‘a real headache to the community in which they live’. The chairman went on to announce that steps were being taken to amend parts of the Citizenship Act to enforce stricter criteria in assessing applications and to revoke, if necessary, citizenship or permissive residency status granted previously (Post-Courier 16 March 1984).

The situation deteriorated further with the kidnap of Werner Wyder and the conveying, through Henk Joku, of a demand for ransom (see p.119). Although the Irianese community as a whole seems to have been embarrassed by this incident - some calling on the OPM to release Wyder and some expressing doubts that the OPM was in fact involved - it almost certainly had an adverse effect on sympathy for the OPM and indirectly for the Irianese community generally (see Times of PNG 5 April 1984); the Police Association, for example, urged the government to increase its surveillance of OPM sympathizers and to strengthen its internal security organization, warning that otherwise the country was laying itself open ‘to becoming the Pacific Lebanon’ (Niugini Nius 8 April 1984), and Somare was quoted as saying, ‘If these people persist in these activities, they will be expelled from our country’ (Post-Courier 11 April 1984). The subsequent abduction of a West Sepik headmaster, during the midst of negotiations over repatriation of border crossers, though disclaimed on behalf of the OPM by Joku, further alienated some sympathizers, the usually supportive Bais, for example, accusing the OPM of ‘illegal and irresponsible conduct’ and
warning, 'So far we have been very good to them [the OPM]' (Post-Courier 4 July 1984).

About this time, also, the more militant element of Papua New Guinea’s Irianese community carried its campaign to Australia. In June Henk Joku attended a conference in Canberra of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples; three months later an Australian former mercenary soldier with contacts in Papua New Guinea was arrested in Sydney for allegedly attempting to supply arms to OPM guerillas (Niugini Nius 27 September 1984; Times of PNG 4 October 1984; Sydney Morning Herald 4 June 1985; Post-Courier 4 June 1985). In the same month that Joku visited Canberra, Matthew Mayer, a permissive resident, visited Australia and subsequently (on the eve of the Australian foreign minister’s departure for Indonesia) sought political asylum there. Mayer claimed that he had been harassed by ‘thugs’ hired by both Indonesian and Papua New Guinea intelligence agencies. A report by Irian-born journalist Franzalbert Joku (Times of PNG 9 August 1984) suggested that Mayer had been sent to Australia by the OPM to try to organize military and financial support for the movement. It was further claimed (ibid., also 16 August 1984) that Iambakey Okuk had been involved in arranging Mayer’s travel and in advising him to apply for refugee status in Australia. Mayer was subsequently refused residence in Australia - and refused re-entry to Papua New Guinea.

Again, in September-October 1984, as plans for the repatriation of border crossers appeared to be reaching finality, the government received threats from OPM sources that if the planned repatriation went ahead the movement would disrupt the exercise and would sabotage the Ok Tedi mine (Post-Courier 12 September 1984, Niugini Nius 19, 23, 25 October 1984). There were also renewed threats of violence against several Papua New Guinean politicians and officials and, from within the refugee camps, warnings not to proceed with proposed visits by Indonesian verification teams and suggestions that retaliation against abuses of camp inmates by government officials (see Niugini Nius 22, 26, 29 September 1984) might be carried out by OPM guerillas from the other side of the border. Again the foreign minister issued counter-threats (Niugini Nius 25 October 1984).

Early in 1985 AAP correspondent Craig Skehan reported (Post-Courier 14 February 1985) that OPM members were moving freely in and out of border camps, and a proposed visit to border camps by Australian foreign minister Bill Hayden was called off after armed
guerillas had been seen in the area. (According to Joku, reported in Post-Courier 25 February 1984, the guerillas - eight of whom were later arrested as illegal immigrants - had hoped to deliver letters to Hayden for the UN secretary-general and the ALP; the latter was requested to give substantial financial assistance and military equipment to the OPM.) Shortly after this it was revealed that the Swiss consulate had received a demand for K50,000, representing the cost of looking after Wyder while he was in OPM custody. The ‘account’ was signed by Melky Salosa, and according to Joku was not authorized by the OPM (Post-Courier 3 May 1985). Salosa, a permissive resident in Papua New Guinea, had left Port Moresby early in 1984, allegedly to take weapons collected in Port Moresby to Nyaro (Times of PNG 4 October 1984); he was subsequently involved in the kidnapping of Wyder and of the West Sepik schoolteacher. In a strongly worded editorial, the Post-Courier (2 May 1985) urged the government to act immediately: ‘These are desperate people and there is no knowing how far they are prepared to go’. Less than three weeks later Salosa was arrested near the border and brought to Port Moresby for charging (Post-Courier 20, 22, 27 May 1985).

The net effect of all this has been that at the same time as a massive exodus of refugees has given rise to a widespread popular sympathy for the Irianese people, the actions of what appears to be a small section of the Irian-born population in Papua New Guinea has prompted the government to keep a closer watch over the resident Irianese community and to take a harder line against both permissive residents engaging in political activity and refugees seeking political asylum. It is still nevertheless true that Irian-born citizens and permissive residents exercise an important influence, through the media and the church especially, on popular perceptions of the border issue and that this influence will increasingly test sensitivities on both sides.

*The border villages and the Sepik connection*  

Although the border passes through areas which are for the most part only sparsely populated, it is none the less an arbitrary boundary which ignores traditional rights to land and hunting and gathering, and

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15 The attitude of border villagers to the border problem is discussed in greater detail by Hettihy, below. A recent population survey of the border census divisions of Western Province (Pula and Jackson 1984) also contains useful information.
divides groups of people who are bound by ties of language, kin and relations of exchange [Figure 5.1]. Successive border agreements between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea have recognized this in provisions which safeguard the rights of border villagers to cross for traditional purposes (principally sago making).

Hence when Irianese began to cross into Papua New Guinea after 1962 they were generally well-received, especially since many border villagers saw themselves as standing to gain from associated border development plans. It was no coincidence that the most prominent early spokesmen for the Irianese (apart from Guise) were Kenu and Langro and the expatriate member for the Madang-Sepik special electorate - all from electorates adjoining the border. There was, also, in the West and East Sepik provinces in the 1970s a millenarian-style movement whose supporters sold ‘freedom fighters” stripes and epaulettes to villagers for amounts ranging from K2 to K20 (though the reasons for acquiring the insignia were not clear). Moreover in 1974 Papua New Guinea’s minister for Defence, Foreign Relations and Trade, Kiki, informed the Australian high commissioner that reports indicated that the OPM had extended its influence quite widely among villages on the Papua New Guinea side of the border ‘and to a depth in the area behind Wanimbo not previously suspected’ (Kabar Seberang 8/9, 1981:155).

With the increased level of activity along the border in 1977-78, and frustrated expectations of development in the border areas, it seemed possible that this sympathy might diminish. However Defence Force commander Diro was quoted as saying in April 1978 that support for the West Papuan nationalists among Papua New Guineans near the border was so strong that no military campaign by Papua New Guinea against the guerrillas could succeed (Sharp 1978:105, quoting the ABC) and reports of operations in July 1978 tended to confirm this (for example, Sydney Morning Herald 13 July 1978). In December 1978, following the arrest of Prai and Ondowame, a letter appeared in the Post-Courier (20 December 1978), signed by ‘The Bush People, Bewani’, which asked the government to return Prai and Ondowame to the West Sepik. There is no doubt that over a number of years there has been support for the OPM in some border villages, and in 1981 villages along the northern sector of the border were involved in OPM faction in-fighting. But many observers were surprised by a statement of the Sandaun deputy premier in 1983, that young men from Wutung, Amanab, Yabsiei and Telefomin were deserting their villages to join
the OPM (*Post-Courier* 20 July 1983). The events of 1984-85 brought the situation of the Melanesians in Irian Jaya more immediately to the attention of villages in the border area, which showed a remarkable willingness to accommodate large numbers of border crossers and generally strong opposition to proposals for repatriation. In a letter to the *Post-Courier* (12 April 1984), for example, the Sandaun premier, Andrew Komboni, argued that the ‘family aspects’ of the border situation had been evaded by Australian, Indonesian and Papua New Guinean governments:

> ...the traditional ties among the border villages in the northern sector have not changed since the white men declared an invisible border line...a good number of the current refugees... have run this way with the natural inclination to seek family refuge. It must be shocking, and many families around Vanimo have expressed as inhuman, to see blood relatives being jailed or being held at camps...I am proud of my people of the border villages that they have not taken too drastic rebellious action against the Papua New Guinea government.

The extent of support for OPM guerrillas, on the other hand, is difficult to judge, though the opinion of the *Post-Courier*’s defence correspondent was that

> ...it is becoming more and more apparent that our village people on the border are, voluntarily or through fear, aiding and abetting the continued sanctuary of OPM rebels (Ian Glanville, *Post-Courier* 22 May 1985).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, among the most consistent critics of successive governments’ handling of the border situation - specifically with regard to border crossers/refugees - there has been a disproportionate number of politicians and others from the Sepik (West and East) and Western provinces. Of the Sepik politicians, the former East Sepik district commissioner and member for Wewak, Tony Bais, has been particularly outspoken: when early in 1979 difficulty was being experienced in finding a third-country home for Prai and Ondowame, Bais (then a government backbencher) said over the NBC that his village would provide them with a home; in 1981 he was a member of the South Pacific Human Rights Tribunal; and though since 1982 he has been occasionally acting foreign affairs minister he
has continued to speak out against Indonesian border violations and in support of granting refugee status to border crossers. He has been supported in this by fellow Sepiks Lus, Jaminan, and, since 1982, the member for Aitape-Lumi, Gabriel Ramoi, who as a student leader had organized the first Melanesian Solidarity Week and had been arrested for harbouring an Irianese permissive resident whom the government was seeking to deport (see p.104). It was Ramoi who in August 1984 accused the government of trying to starve refugees back across the border; several months earlier he had expressed the view (Post-Courier 2 March 1984) that Papua New Guinea had a better claim to Irian Jaya than Indonesia did. Another Sepik, the Melanesian Alliance deputy chairman Narokobi has also been a longstanding champion of Irianese interests (see below). Among Western Province politicians, the member for North Fly, Warren Dutton, emerged as a strong advocate of refugee status for border crossers in 1984. In May he told parliament that Papua New Guinea should be prepared to accept border crossers as refugees, and in August, when repatriation seemed imminent, Dutton defended a group of about 6,000 refugees in camps at Atkamba and Kungim saying that they were not illegal crossers, that the government appeared to be starving the people in the camps in order to encourage them to go back, and that the proposed repatriation of border crossers was ‘inhumane, illegal and impossible’ (Post-Courier 2, 13 August 1984; Niugini Nius 2 August 1984). Subsequently Dutton announced that villagers in the Kiunga area of the Western Province had offered to accommodate border crossers on 30,000 ha of their traditional land (an area which was under consideration for a major rubber development scheme) (Post-Courier 19 September 1984, 7 November 1984, 8 March 1985). Dutton’s resettlement proposals have been supported by the Western Provincial member and minister for Physical Planning and Housing, Kala Swokin.

Writing in 1979, I suggested that the existence of local sympathies in the border areas might raise problems for the national government as powers were progressively transferred to provincial governments. In fact, however, though provincial politicians were occasional critics of government policy (see, for example, Post-Courier 13 January 1981, 21 September 1981, 23 June 1982, 26 May 1983) there was little conflict between the national and provincial governments over border administration or related issues until 1984. In that year, with thousands of refugees pouring across their borders, it was inevitable that the provincial governments would become involved in the politics of the situ-
ation, and involved they became, primarily as opponents of the national government’s handling of border crossers. As early as March 1984 the Western (Fly River) Province’s premier called on the prime minister to ‘support UN moves to enable the people of Irian Jaya to determine their own future’ (Post-Courier 15 March 1984). Later in the year the premier was removed from an official function in Port Moresby after he had interjected during a speech, accusing the national government and its official guest, Gough Whitlam, of being ‘afraid of Indonesia’ (Niugini Nius 8 August 1984). The following month the Sandaun provincial government, also, passed a resolution deploiring violence on its border and calling on the prime minister to ask the UN to re-examine its 1966 decision [sic] on West Papuan independence. The Sandaun premier, Komboni\(^{16}\), continued to oppose repatriation of refugees throughout 1984, establishing a provincial refugee co-ordinating committee, placing the repatriation issue before a generally sympathetic Premiers’ Council meeting in May, and announcing in October that provincial leaders had expressed the desire to resettle the 4,000 or so refugees in the province. Support for resettlement also came from the Western Provincial government (Post-Courier 10, 14 August 1984).

Whether such sympathetic attitudes can be maintained in the border areas if anything like the present number of border crossers remains there, is another question. Already in April and May 1984 there were isolated reports (one from the Bewani area) of complaints from border villages, who felt that the refugees were being treated better than the local villagers, and feared that their presence might attract military action from the other side of the border (for example, Niugini Nius 21 April, 30 May, 5 November 1984; more recently, see Wantok 20 July 1985). Moreover, despite outside assistance, the massive increase of population in a generally fairly inhospitable environment\(^{17}\), and apparently increasing demands by OPM guerrillas, must place strains on traditional food supplies which cannot be maintained for any length of time.

\(^{16}\) In 1985 Komboni lost office, and was succeeded as premier by former national politician Paul Langro.

\(^{17}\) In the Komokpin area of Western Province, where it was first reported that large numbers of refugees had died from starvation, it was estimated that over 2,000 refugees were camped in an area which normally supported about 150 people.
The church

The church exercises a strong influence over public opinion in Papua New Guinea. Apart from the influence exerted through pastors, priests and missionaries, the nation’s weekly Tokpisin newspaper, Wantok, and the major weekly Times of Papua New Guinea are published under the direction of a board comprising representatives of the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and United churches (and their editorial staff has included Irian-born journalists who have contributed to an extensive and sympathetic coverage of the Irianese position). On the Irian Jaya issue the church’s general concern over human rights has perhaps been reinforced by sympathy for a predominantly Christian population in a predominantly Muslim state. Also, as the major outside presence in the generally remote areas along the border, church and mission workers are often in closer touch with the situation than government officials - as became conspicuously apparent in 1984. Although church bodies had been relatively quiet on Irian Jaya between 1969 and 1977, the events of 1977-78 prompted several strong statements on the subject. In June 1977 the National Catholic Council called on the Indonesian government ‘to refrain from acts of savagery against Melanesians in Irian Jaya’ (Post-Courier 1 June 1977). In October 1978 the Melanesian Council of Churches (MCC) - which represents the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and United churches and the Salvation Army - established a Committee on Melanesian Refugees (under the chairmanship of an Irian-born Papua New Guinea citizen) to protect the rights of Irianese refugees and to raise public awareness; one of its first acts was to criticize the government’s handling of refugees in the West Sepik. Early in 1979 the MCC told the government that to deport Prai and Ondowame would be unchristian (Wantok 17 February 1979). And again in mid 1981 the MCC attacked the government over its decision to deport Bonay, Kafiar and Hamadi (see p. 104).

It was, therefore, perhaps predictable that when in early 1984 the government reacted to the influx of border crossers by charging them with illegal entry, the bishop of Vanimo, John Etheridge, should be critical. In a letter to the Post-Courier (12 March 1984) and Niugini Nius (9 March 1984) Etheridge wrote:

It is very sad to see a group of refugees, people who had fled from their own country because of fear, standing outside the court house here at Vanimo, waiting for the govern-
ment to decide their fate....I trust and pray that the credibility of this country be restored with the resumption of the very basic rights that are expected of all countries, let alone a country that professes to be a just and Christian one.

During the following months the Catholic church bore much of the brunt of providing for the maintenance of refugees along the border in the northern sector, and the bishop of Vanimo was heavily involved in the relief programme and consistently outspoken in his opposition to repatriation of border crossers against their will. Later in the year, as the influx of border crossers shifted south, the bishop of Kiunga, Gerard Deschamps, took a similarly strong stand. The two bishops have been supported during 1984-85 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference and by other denominational and inter-denominational bodies in Papua New Guinea, including the Evangelic Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, the Evangelical Church of Papua, and the MCC - all of which have also contributed materially to the maintenance of the refugee camps. Support has also come from Australian church bodies, a group of which visited refugee camps in July 1984.

Since 1977-78, however, there have been suggestions within government circles that mission stations along the border have sometimes known more about what is happening along the border than they should, and in 1982 a Catholic priest was charged over an incident in which he was alleged to have incited a group of Irianese due to be repatriated to Jayapura to flee into the bush (see Post-Courier 19, 28 July 1982). In April 1984 following the negotiated release of the Swiss pilot Wyder, it became known that the final negotiations with OPM leader Nyaro took place well within the Sandaun Province, at a church-run vocational training centre, and that the negotiators had been flown there in a mission plane. Although Etheridge insisted that he had been in constant contact with the NIO and that no Papua New Guinea citizens had crossed into Indonesia, the government was reported as being angry about the incident (Niugini Nius 11, 21 April 1984; Times of PNG 26 April 1984) and subsequently, in the National Parliament, two government members - Carl Stack, the member for West Sepik Provincial, and John Giheno, who later became Foreign Affairs minister - accused Bishop Etheridge of influencing Irianese to cross the border and called for the deportation of the bishop. Sensibly the government chose not to become involved in a confrontation with the church, but the incident illustrated a degree of tension which has existed in relations between the government and the church on matters concerning
the border.

**Students and intellectuals**

In 1969, the then recently established Politics Club at UPNG became the first predominantly Papua New Guinean organization (apart from the House of Assembly) to take up the Irian Jaya cause. Participant commentator Davis (1970:295) compared Papua New Guinean student involvement over Irian Jaya at this time to Australian student involvement over Vietnam, though the former proved to be relatively short-lived. Indonesia's invasion of East Timor provided the occasion for a further anti-Indonesian demonstration by students who presented petitions to the Indonesian embassy and the Papua New Guinea government which referred also to Irianese demands for freedom. (For an account of the student protest see Samana 1976.) During 1977 and 1978 students again identified with their Melanesian brothers in criticizing the government's handling of the issue: in July 1978 there was another march on the Indonesian embassy and in November students offered assistance to Prai and Ondowame. And during Suharto's visit in 1979 800 students marched to the airport to protest against Indonesian rule in Irian Jaya.

The high point of student protest, however, was in 1981 when, under the leadership of Gabriel Ramoi, UPNG students staged a Melanesian Solidarity Week, whose activities included a 'solidarity march', allocation by the Students' Representative Council (SRC) of K2000 to assist the OPM, and the organization of the South Pacific Human Rights Tribunal after which a petition was presented to the Indonesian embassy. Subsequently Ramoi and other UPNG students protested the deportation of Irianese permissive residents involved in the forum (concealing one of them from the police for several weeks), and later still another three deportations (see p.104).

Between 1981 and 1984 student interest in the border issue subsided, but in 1984 students - from the University of Technology, Goroka Teachers College and high schools, as well as UPNG - were quick to respond to developments on the border, urging the government to show its concern for the refugees and to support a West Papuan petition before the UN. In April, Indonesian foreign minister Mochtar managed to further antagonize students when he suggested that fears of Indonesia were being whipped up by 'a certain segment of Australians, young people and progressives from universities'; the statement drew firmly worded responses from the UPNG's vice chan-
cellor and from the vice president of its SRC (*Post-Courier* 23, 24, 26 April 1984). Later in the year, as the issue of repatriation became a focus of discussion, UPNG students marched to the Indonesian embassy to present a petition calling for UNHCR involvement in the exercise, and the Sandaun Students’ Society and the Fly River Students’ Association expressed support for a call to take the government to court if it denied refugee status to border crossers (*Post-Courier* 6, 9 August, 20 September 1984).

In addition to the activities of student bodies, several student leaders of earlier years (apart from Ramoi, whose views have already been noted) have continued to espouse the cause of the Melanesians in Irian Jaya after their student careers.

John Kasaiapwalova, former student and village leader, poet, playwright and businessman, wrote in an article in the *Post-Courier* (28 July 1978): ‘as a nation we are but dancing fools for Indonesian foreign policy’, but he went on to suggest that ‘we three brothers’ (Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Irian Jaya) sit down together to argue our differences. Shortly after, and almost prophetically in view of the arrest of Jacob Prai, Kasaiapwalova presented a new play, ‘My Brother, My Enemy’, the subject of which is the capture and incarceration of an OPM leader who has crossed into Papua New Guinea. Although the play is essentially a satire against the Papua New Guinea government, the Indonesian ambassador felt moved to walk out of the first performance.

Another former UPNG SRC president, Utula Samana, who as a student had taken an active part in the 1976 demonstration over East Timor, was arrested (but in the event not charged) when in December 1978 he attempted to hand a petition to Mochtar; he was at the time he was arrested a member of the official welcoming party in Lae. Samana subsequently became premier of Morobe Province and as such in 1984 he spoke out against repatriation of border crossers and in support of moves to refer the question of self-determination for Irian Jaya to the UN (see, for example, *Niugini Nius* 30 April, 14 August 1984, and interview with Samana in *Asian Bureau Australia Newsletter* No. 77 December 1984).

Perhaps most consistently vocal among the intellectuals, however, has been lawyer, writer, philosopher, unsuccessful political candidate, and Melanesian Alliance vice chairman Bernard Narokobi. As early as 1975 Narokobi warned against ‘Indonesian imperialism’ and in 1978 he frequently attacked the government for not supporting
Irianese freedom fighters. In 1979, when the government was experiencing difficulty in finding a home for Prai and Ondowame, Narokobi criticized the Melanesian states which had refused them, saying ‘When we reject a fellow Melanesian, we actually reject the the fundamental bases of our society - and our Constitution’. He went on to describe Indonesian presence on Melanesian soil as ‘immoral and unnatural’ and ventured the opinion: ‘The Melanesian struggle for liberation is legitimate and honorable.... They will, of course, win in the end’ (Post-Courier 21 March 1981). The same year Narokobi presented a petition on the subject to visiting US ambassador Andrew Young; Young was reported, in a government newsletter (Papua New Guinea Newsletter 47, week ending 4 May 1979), to have said that he ‘would bring the matter to groups which are sympathetic to the West Irian cause to bring it up at the United Nations for discussion’. In 1981 Narokobi was one of the principal forces behind the South Pacific Human Rights Tribunal. As a political candidate in 1982 (he stood against Somare), Narokobi appeared to have moved to a less militant stand, though in June of that year he urged the cutting of diplomatic ties with Indonesia in protest against recent border incursions. During 1984 Narokobi was a frequent critic of Indonesian actions and of the government’s attitude to border crossers. In October 1984 as a member of a non-government ‘Centre for Concern’ he announced a proposal for the resettlement of Irianese refugees ‘traditionally’ with people who have land in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; there were, he said, already 600 people in Maprik (East Sepik) willing to adopt refugees (Niugini Nius 25 October 1984). And in 1985 it was reported (Post-Courier 24 April, 24 May 1985) that an application had been filed with the Supreme Court, by Narokobi on behalf of the border crossers, seeking a ruling on the rights and freedom of those who had crossed and were facing repatriation.

*Parliamentary opposition*

Between 1969 and 1976 Irian Jaya was not a prominent issue in domestic politics. Apart from questions by Langro, Chatterton and Pondros, the subject was seldom raised in parliament and when it was there was no systematic difference of opinion between government and opposition. As noted above, however, the government’s handling of the border situation became a significant issue during the national elections of 1977 and a recurring subject for question and debate in the
second parliament.

Although Langro (who had been deputy leader of the opposition) was a casualty of the 1977 election his concern over government policy on Irian Jaya was taken up by several new members on both sides of the House - notably Levi, Jaminan and Bais - as well as by Guise, Pondere, Okuk and Papua Besena member James Mopio. Under the new, confrontationist style of politics employed by Okuk when he became leader of the opposition in 1978, opposition members were quick to make political capital out of the Irian Jaya issue, accusing the government of being weak in its dealings with Indonesia and wrong in its decision to deport Prai and his colleagues (see, for example, Draft Hansard 7, 17 August 1978). But there was no evidence that opposition members had a significantly different policy to offer. Moreover Okuk’s own position seemed to fluctuate: up till October 1978 he appeared mostly as a champion of Irianese refugees (for example, see Post-Courier 9 June, 7 July, 20 October 1978) but at the end of that month he returned from Indonesia with glowing reports of Indonesia’s administration of Irian Jaya and East Timor (Post-Courier 1 November 1978); by early 1979 he was again attacking the government over its decision to deport Prai and Ondowame but in June advocated large-scale Indonesian investment in and aid to Papua New Guinea (see p.99).

As noted above, the change of government in 1980, following a vote of no-confidence, did not bring any noticeable change in policy, except perhaps that the new government, and particularly its foreign minister Levi, appeared to be taking a stronger stand against border crossers and against support for the OPM. Indeed although members of the previous government were occasionally critical of the Chan government’s handling of the border situation, the strongest challenges to government policy came not from the opposition but from within the governing coalition itself. As deputy prime minister, Okuk launched a strong attack on Indonesia in late 1981, which caused Mochtar to observe that Okuk’s statement differed from the views of the prime minister (Post-Courier 26 November 1981), and in 1982 the minister for Foreign Affairs, Levi, and his department felt it necessary, initially, to counter a series of anti-Indonesian comments by Okuk which produced the ‘Indonesian Newsletter affair’ (see pp.105-107) and culminated in Okuk’s call for the closure of the Indonesian embassy. The Melanesian Alliance, also, though a member of the coalition, declared support for the OPM in 1980, criticized the government’s action in deporting Irianese permissive residents in 1981, and in 1982 called for
a tougher stand on border incursions.

In 1982 as in 1977, activity along the border intensified coincidentally with Papua New Guinea’s national elections, yet Irian Jaya failed to emerge as an election issue and with the return of a Pangu government existing policies were broadly maintained. What did change in 1984-85, however, was the scale of the problem. The difficulties posed by a massive influx of border crossers, the repetition of border violations by Indonesia, and the difficulties, both at administrative and at diplomatic levels, of communicating with Indonesia provided ample scope for criticism from the political opposition, and it was not slow in coming. While he was in the house as opposition leader 18, Okuk made his presence felt, criticizing the government’s actions with regard to border crossers, urging it to support Irianese self-determination at the UN, and revealing his fundamental concern in arguing that if Papua New Guinea could not help resolve Irianese demands for independence (or at least for political asylum) the OPM and its supporters would turn to the USSR and thus threaten the security of the region with communist intervention (see, for example, Post-Courier 13 April, 16 May and 12 October 1984; also see Times of PNG 20 September 1984, 2 December 1983). Interestingly, former foreign minister Levi, now in opposition, also came out strongly against Indonesia’s actions in Irian Jaya. In a remarkable letter to the Times of Papua New Guinea (23 February 1984) Levi expressed his opposition to Papua New Guinea’s seeking full membership of ASEAN, on the grounds that such a move ‘will endorse Indonesia’s claim over West New Guinea’; ‘Papua New Guinea to me is not complete without the western half of the island’, the former foreign minister wrote, ‘The only grounds upon which I would accept full ASEAN membership for PNG is for ASEAN to accept the fact that West New Guinea is not part of Indonesia, but part of Papua New Guinea’. Levi threatened to boycott the forthcoming parliamentary session in May, and was supported in this by Okuk. Newspaper editorials, however, noted with a certain cynicism that although Okuk and Levi were strong critics of government policy in 1984

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18 Okuk lost his seat in 1982 but was returned to the parliament in a by-election in July 1983 and took over as leader of the opposition from former Defence Force commander, Dirk. In December 1984 Okuk lost his seat as the result of a challenge to his residential qualifications as a candidate in the by-election, but he stood again in a new by-election in May 1985 and was re-elected.
...there was no discernible difference in policy when they were in power and there is no reason to believe it would be different now *(Post-Courier* 18 April 1984. Similarly see *Niugini Nius* 18 April 1984 and *Times of PNG* 23 April 1984).

Momis and the Melanesian Alliance, on the other hand, maintained a consistent line in and out of office, opposing repatriation and urging the government to resettle refugees. When Momis visited the border area in October 1984 and held discussions with Nyaro (p. 132), it appears that one of the main purposes was to consider options in the event of a successful challenge to the Somare government (*Niugini Nius* 25 October 1984). On his return he told a press conference that Papua New Guinea would be ‘committing an act of genocide’ if it sent the refugees back (*Niugini Nius* 10 October 1984). In the latter part of 1984 and early 1985, opposition to repatriation and support for Papua New Guinea’s raising of the question of West Papuan independence at the UN came also from former prime minister Chan, from United Party leader Torato, from National Party and deputy opposition leader Tago, and from Diro.

Looking at the discussion which has taken place during 1984-85 and at what the Papua New Guinea government has actually done, however, it would seem that whatever differences of approach to the problems of the border might exist between government and opposition in parliament, they are essentially differences of degree, and perhaps, more than anything else, have to do with whether a group is in office or not. In the final analysis policy positions appear to have been determined by the circumstances of the time - the crises, the frustrations, the pressures of international diplomacy - rather than by differences of ideology or disposition. The possible exception to this is the Melanesian Alliance, whose leading members inside and outside parliament have consistently demonstrated a deeper concern for their Melanesian neighbours than other political groups. But even if the Melanesian Alliance were allowed to dictate policy it seems highly unlikely that there would be any significant shift in the Papua New Guinea government’s well-established policy of unquestioningly rec-

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19 A no-confidence vote had been foreshadowed for the November sitting of parliament, with Momis as a possible alternative prime minister. In the event, the motion, which nominated Okuk as alternative prime minister, was defeated in March 1985, and the Melanesian Alliance joined Pangu in a new governing coalition.
ognizing Indonesia’s sovereignty in Irian Jaya, discouraging OPM movement across the border, and, while assisting a small number of refugees to find political asylum in third countries and granting permissive residency to some, generally seeking to push border crossers back into Irian Jaya.

*The army*

Towards the end of 1977 much publicity was given to the fact that Defence Force commander-in-chief, Ted Diro, was summoned to a cabinet meeting and reprimanded for having had contact with rebel leaders. It was even reported that there were demands from within cabinet to remove Diro from the position of commander-in-chief but that these demands were overruled when it became clear that the Defence Force stood firmly behind Diro (*Post-Courier* 30 September, 6, 10, 12, 14 October 1977. This incident seems to have provided the basis for later stories of an ‘army coup plot’ in 1977; see for example *Sydney Morning Herald*, Age 23 August 1983). Then in December 1978 a senior officer of the Defence Force, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Poang, was forced to resign because of his alleged involvement in negotiations between the OPM and an arms dealer from Senegal for the purchase of weapons (*Sydney Morning Herald* 19 December 1978). In both cases personal antagonisms seem to have played some part in the government’s handling of the situation but the incidents did raise questions about the extent of accord between the government and the army and lent weight to a commonly held view that there is a good deal of antipathy towards Indonesia among army officers.

On the basis of casual discussion with Defence Force personnel in Port Moresby and Wewak over a number of years I suspect there is some truth in this view. And perhaps one should not be surprised to find such an attitude among soldiers given that, in a leaked Defence Department document in 1984, Papua New Guinea’s other close neighbour, Australia, nominated Indonesia as its most likely military threat. There is no evidence, however, that antipathy to Indonesia within the Defence Force has influenced government policy or the deployment of troops along the border. Moreover, when Diro, having resigned from the Defence Force in July 1981, contested the 1982 elections and subsequently became leader of the opposition in the National Parliament during a period of border tension in 1982-83 he displayed no signs of being a ‘hawk’ (though he was reported (*Canberra Times* 7
July 1982) as saying that Indonesia probably had plans for the takeover of Papua New Guinea ‘one day’). In 1983 the newly appointed Defence Force commander, Brigadier-General Ken Noga, supported Indonesian suggestions that a military attache be appointed to the Papua New Guinean embassy in Jakarta, saying that, ‘Internationally, the military seem to talk to other military a lot more regularly and easily’ (Canberra Times 22 September 1983).

These six categories - the Irianese community, border villagers, the church, students and intellectuals, parliamentry opposition, and the army - obviously do not represent an unbiased sample of ‘public opinion’. However, an examination of letters to the press (including the Tokpisin Wantok), casual discussion with people in some quite remote villages of East Sepik, and the fact that offers to resettle refugees have come from as far afield as the East Sepik, Gulf, Morobe and North Solomons provinces, suggests that the general concerns expressed by these groups are felt, in varying degrees, by a large segment of the population throughout the country. An extreme viewpoint is represented by people who fear that an Indonesian invasion of Papua New Guinea is a future possibility. This view persists despite Indonesian assurances that it has no expansionist ambitions (though it is perhaps nourished by repeated statements that Indonesia has acted with ‘restraint’). I do not think that such a fear is widespread, but it has been expressed by people ranging from the former Defence minister, Tito, and one of his predecessors, Gai Duwabane (who told the Post-Courier (14 March 1984) that Indonesia might try to capitalize on a volcanic eruption in Rabaul to invade Papua New Guinea), to groups of villagers such as the highlanders reported in Niugini Nius (10 April 1984) as preparing themselves for a third world war. Among those who foresee the possibility of invasion, responses vary from the belligerent - mostly demands that Papua New Guinea take an unspecified ‘stronger stand’ against border violations - through the practical - particularly, seeking stronger and more explicit defence links with Australia - to the conciliatory. Much more common, however, is a broadly articulated sympathy with the situation of the Melanesian population of Irian Jaya, a belief - founded on newspaper reports and word of mouth - that the Melanesians of Irian Jaya have been badly treated by the Indonesian government, and a feeling that the Melanesians of Irian Jaya do not belong in an autocratic Asian nation. These sentiments find expression in a variety of forms, from demands that the Papua New Guinea government support demands for West Papuan
independence at the UN, through offers to assist Indonesia to understand its Melanesian cultures, to offers to accommodate refugees. It is important to recognize that most of those who press such views see themselves not so much ‘anti-Indonesian’ as ‘pro-Melanesian’.

Not all expressions of popular opinion in Papua New Guinea have been unreservedly sympathetic to the Irianese. Between 1979 and 1981 there were several complaints about the Wabo camp in Gulf Province and suggestions that the camp be closed and some refugees deported (Post-Courier 10, 14 September 1979, 26 November 1980, 23 January 1981). In 1981 there were complaints from Manus about politically active Irian-born residents (Post-Courier 21 April 1981). At the time of the 1984 kidnappings there were calls for tough action against those who broke Papua New Guinea laws. In 1984-85 there were complaints from some border villagers that border crossers were raiding gardens, and stealing canoes and that those in refugee camps were receiving better treatment than local villagers (page 145). Other instances of negative attitudes have been cited above. But on the whole these have been vastly outweighed by a general sympathy and concern.

The developments of 1984-85 not only raised awareness locally but brought greater international attention to the border situation. Among a number of international organizations which in 1984 expressed their concern over the situation in Irian Jaya and the fate of the border crossers (apart from the UNHCR and TAPOL - the British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia - whose concerns are longstanding and well known), were the Anti-Slavery Society (UK), Survival International (UK), the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (Denmark), the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, the Refugee Council of Australia and the Australian branch of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). An ICJ team, which visited the refugee camps in September 1984, produced draft and final reports which were well publicized in Papua New Guinea, at one stage prompting an irritated response from Somare: ‘The ICJ does not run this country’ (Niugini Nius 5 October 1984).

In summary: there appears to be within Papua New Guinea a widespread general awareness of the grievances and the demands expressed by Irianese nationalists, and a good deal of sympathy towards their motives and to the idea of accommodating refugees. Developments along the border during 1984-85 undoubtedly raised this awareness and, overall, probably increased sympathetic feelings.
As such, ‘public opinion’ probably had a significant influence on government policies relating to the border - particularly with respect to repatriation and joint patrols. On the other hand, few people seem to believe that an independent West Papua is a likely prospect, and attitudes to Papua New Guinea’s relations with Indonesia are generally pragmatic. Popular opinion, in other words, has been questioning the policies of the Indonesian government in Irian Jaya, and occasionally the policies of the Papua New Guinea government towards Indonesia and towards border crossers, but it scarcely seems to merit the label ‘Indophobia’, and still less to be seen as the product of outside manipulation.

Conclusion

In 1977-78 - less than three years after Papua New Guinea had gained independence - events on the Indonesia-Papua New Guinea border raised the border, and the situation of the Melanesian population of Irian Jaya, to a level of major public concern within Papua New Guinea.\(^{20}\) Towards the end of 1978, with the easing tensions, brought about by military de-escalation on the Indonesian side and the announcement of a new ‘smiling policy’ for Irian Jaya, the capture of OPM leaders Prai and Ondowame, and threats by the Papua New Guinea that it would take stern action against overt supporters of the OPM within Papua New Guinea, the salience of the border issue diminished. Cordial relations with Indonesia were restored. Writing in 1979 I ventured the opinion that public concern over the border would not be sustained (May 1979a:106), while Rex Mortimer in the same volume wrote of the ‘smiling policy’ as marking, perhaps, the beginnings of ‘a more fruitful phase’ in Indonesia-Papua New Guinea relations (Mortimer 1979).

In the event, the ‘border problem’ did not go away. Between 1979 and 1983, in various manifestations - territorial violations by Indonesian troops, influxes of Irianese refugees to Papua New Guinea, a road incursion, and expressions of support within Papua New Guinea for

\(^{20}\) A crude indicator of public concern over border related issues is the number of times Irian Jaya or Indonesia-Papua New Guinea relations occur in the Post-Courier as a news item or in letters to the editor. Annual figures to 1978 are as follows: 1972, 26; 1973, 40; 1974, 8; 1975, 11; 1976, 50; 1977, 71 (of which 61 were after 1 May); 1978, 220. (Source: Post-Courier indexes, IASER, Port Moresby).
Irianese separatism - it kept recurring in short cycles of incident, minor confrontation and renewed cordiality. Despite two changes of government in Papua New Guinea in this period, however, successive governments remained unwavering in their acceptance of Indonesia's sovereignty in Irian Jaya, their commitment to maintaining friendly relations with Indonesia, and their refusal to countenance the use of Papua New Guinea as a base for OPM activity. Nor, despite frequent criticisms from the parliamentary opposition of the government's handling of border-related issues, has there been any evidence that any opposition group has had anything significantly different to offer on the issue.

At the same time, although reliable information about conditions in Irian Jaya is difficult - even for the Papua New Guinea government - to obtain, it became clear that, despite predictions to the contrary, support within Irian Jaya for the OPM was not disappearing but was quite probably on the increase.

The developments of 1984, which brought some 11,000 Irianese across the border into Papua New Guinea, again raised public concern, this time dramatically and perhaps irreversibly. They also generated new levels of tension in the relations between the two governments - to the point that Papua New Guinea felt moved to express its concern at international forums - and in the attitudes of the Papua New Guinea government towards some Irian-born residents in Papua New Guinea. Moreover, even if they did not actually threaten the stability of the government in Papua New Guinea, events along the border in 1984-85 certainly intruded into Papua New Guinea's domestic politics to the extent that one minister lost his portfolio for an indiscreet remark and two others faced calls for their resignation following revelations about the situation in border camps. This was reflected, in 1984, in repeated statements to the effect that, while Papua New Guinea recognized Indonesian sovereignty in Irian Jaya, the growing volume of border crossers and problems of security in the border area made it clear that Papua New Guinea did have some direct interest in what was happening in the Indonesian province.

Questions concerning the fate of border crossers/refugees and concerning border security remained dominant issues throughout 1984

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21 The numbers of Post-Courier entries between 1979 and 1983 were: 1979, 98; 1980, 56; 1981, 102; 1982, 99; 1983, 68. During 1984, items on Irian Jaya or Indonesia averaged something more than one per day.
and the first half of 1985 and the generally poor record of attempts to resolve problems through diplomatic channels and through the machinery established to deal with border administration and liaison cast serious doubts on their effectiveness.

As of mid 1985 Papua New Guinea still has a problem of major proportions, in the form of a continuing flow of border crossers, while a sharpened public awareness of and sympathy with the situation of the Melanesian population seems likely to ensure that no government can afford either to ignore the problem or to employ repressive measures in an attempt to solve it.

Projected inflows of transmigrant settlers, combined with a continuation of the repressive policies which have to date characterized Indonesia's administration in Irian Jaya, seem likely to ensure that West Papuan nationalism will remain a problem for the Indonesian government, and to the extent that border crossing appears to offer a way out for disaffected Irianese the situation in Irian Jaya will also continue to present problems for Papua New Guinea, both in its international relations and in its domestic politics.