SECTION D
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Partition of Eastern New Guinea

In 1884, eastern New Guinea, which had been known and largely disregarded by European powers for so long was hastily partitioned and absorbed into the British and German Empires. Since it is difficult to see New Guinea as anything of more than peripheral interest to either Great Britain or Germany at this time, one may ask why these two powers should have both become involved, at the same time, in an area they had previously avoided.

The British Protectorate was established not because Great Britain wanted it, but because most if not all of the Australasian colonial Governments sought British control over New Guinea, and were eventually able to convince the British Government to act on their behalf. They did not have control over their external affairs, although they were, for the most part, internally self-governing, and therefore they were unable, either jointly or individually, to annex or protect New Guinea.¹

Pressure for annexation from groups and governments in Australasia went back to the 1870's.² (D2) The Australasian interest in New Guinea was not so much economic, as strategic. Even by 1884, when the protectorate was eventually established, there was little, if any, Australian investment in the area. For the most part, in the seventies and eighties of the last century, Australasian politicians sought Imperial annexation of New Guinea, and other island groups in the Western Pacific, not so much because they wanted to exploit their resources, but because they were apprehensive of the intervention of potentially hostile European powers in what was regarded as an Australasian sphere of influence. (D11; D12; D14) They feared that Australia might be isolated from Great Britain in time of war, should the colony and naval base of a potentially hostile power be located close to Australia. They saw annexation in the Pacific essentially as a holding operation, designed to keep others out, rather than as a necessary and desirable preliminary to the extensive development of the resources of the islands.³

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that there was, from time to time in the seventies and eighties, intermittent interest shown in New Guinea by people who were interested in the exploitation of what were believed to be its economic resources, and a number of applications were made to the Colonial and Imperial Governments by companies and individuals anxious to acquire land in New Guinea. These applications were frowned on, and the various adventurers discouraged.⁴

The reluctance of successive Liberal and Conservative administrations in Great Britain to involve themselves in further annexations in the Western Pacific can be explained largely in terms of finance. There was no evidence that any new colony in the Western Pacific could pay its way; and in the late nineteenth century, despite the steady expansion of the Empire, there was a constant reluctance to acquire any territory—particularly in the Pacific—which might impose an additional burden on the Treasury and the British taxpayer. After the cession and annexation of Fiji in 1874, which had furthered the interests of the Australasian colonies, the British Government sought contributions from the Australasian Governments towards the cost of the Fiji administration. This request had either been parried or refused by most of the Colonial Governments. Subsequently, in 1875, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, sent a circular despatch to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies hinting very broadly that there would be no further British annexations in the Western Pacific unless the costs involved were substantially borne by those Australasian Governments pressing for Imperial intervention in the area.⁵

¹ Lord Derby to Administrator of Queensland, 11 July 1883, Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-3691, London, 1883, pp. 22-24
² E.g. the Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August 1873
³ McIlwraith's Memorandum of 10 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands, C-3863, London, 1884, pp. 25-26; Higinbotham's speech of 16 July 1883, ibid., pp. 12-16
⁴ E.g. Colonial Office to MacIver, 23 October 1883, ibid., p. 34
⁵ Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-1566, London, 1876, pp. 85-86
The ineffectual Queensland annexation of eastern New Guinea in 1883 seems to have brought the New Guinea question to a head, and focused the attention of the Colonial Office on the strong feeling that existed in Australia in favour of annexation. Although the Queensland annexation was not ratified by the Imperial Government, indications were given in the dispatch disapproving of the actions of the Queensland Government, that should the Australasian Governments unite in agreeing to pay for the administration of a protectorate in New Guinea, then the Imperial Government might act.9 (D10)

In December 1883 a Colonial Convention was held in Sydney, as part of the movement towards federation of the Australasian colonies, and it was agreed by the representatives of the various governments at the Convention that they should contribute to the costs of a British administration in New Guinea. (D14) At this time there was some Colonial Office reluctance to give any indication of how much this might cost, and it is quite possible that the financial issue was raised there originally as a red herring. However, in a despatch from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, on 9 May 1884, the figure of £15,000 was stated to be the possible and likely annual cost.7 (D15) Subsequently, a Queensland Act guaranteeing the payment of this sum was passed, (D17) and the Protectorate established.8 (D18; D19)

From an Australasian point of view, the campaign for British intervention in New Guinea is one aspect of the hesitant move towards Federation in the closing decades of the Nineteenth Century, which finally resulted in the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, and the isolation of New Zealand, which had participated in the Federal movement. The need for British intervention in New Guinea was one of the few issues on which most of the delegates to the Intercolonial Convention held prior to the establishment of the Protectorate could agree,9 and its proclamation may have actually delayed the formation of a Federation by the removal of an issue creating unity. However, this adverse effect on the Federal movement may have been counter-balanced by a general, and probably unifying, fear of Germany's presence, so close to Australia, after the establishment of the German Protectorate in New Guinea.

The desire for control over New Guinea was only one facet of late Nineteenth Century Australian demands for Imperial intervention in the Western Pacific.

Public meetings which demanded intervention in New Guinea often sought, in addition, the annexation of the New Hebrides, and not infrequently all those islands in the Pacific as yet unclaimed by any European power.10 And these demands for control of the whole Western Pacific region were not quelled by the establishment of the British Protectorate in New Guinea, particularly as it was accompanied by the establishment of a German Protectorate in the same area.11

Why was the German Protectorate established? Although, in the early eighties, there were requests from German commercial interests represented in the Western Pacific for German intervention in New Guinea,12 and despite some desire in Germany for an imperial place in the sun,13 it is unlikely that these pressures were decisive in establishing the German Protectorate in New Guinea in 1884. To explain this we must look not so much to the Pacific, as to Europe. German Government policy at this time was very much under the control of Bismarck, and although he appears to have used the presence of German commercial interests in the South Seas as an excuse for establishing the German Protectorate, his own reasons for doing so were enmeshed in the intricacies of his foreign and domestic policies.

On the domestic side, in 1884, Bismarck was faced with an intermittently hostile Reichstag. In the summer of 1884, a united radical liberal party was established, which was opposed, on the whole, to the policies of Bismarck. At the same time it was identified with the Crown Prince, and was described from time to time as the Crown Prince's Party. Bismarck feared that the Crown Prince, on eventually succeeding his father, would displace him with a leader chosen from this party. He therefore sought to divide the party from the Crown Prince by espousing a policy of colonial expansion. At this time the radical liberals were opposed to imperial aggrandizement, whereas the Crown Prince was very much in favour of it. Furthermore, with the Reichstag elections imminent, Bismarck hoped to discredit the radical liberals in the eyes of the electorate by espousing a policy of colonial expansion which would be popular with the electorate as a whole, but not with the radical liberals.14

Herbert Bismarck is also reported to have said of this period:

9Lord Derby to Administrator of Queensland, 11 July 1883, C-3691, op. cit., pp. 22-24
7Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, C-3839, London, 1884, pp. 34-35
8The New Guinea And Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Act Of 1884 (48 Vict., No. 7)
9C-3863, op. cit., pp. 63-64
10E.g. Melbourne, 16 July 1883, C-3863, op. cit., pp. 12-16; Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands In The Western Pacific Ocean, C-473, London, 1885, pp. 14-15
12C.O. 422-1, (bhr 2685, at 437 et seq.)
14Eyck, op. cit., pp. 272 et seq.
'When we entered upon a colonial policy, we had to reckon with a long reign of the Crown Prince. During this reign English influence would have been dominant. To prevent this, we had to embark on a colonial policy, because it was popular and conveniently adapted to bring us into conflict with England at any given moment.'

Intervention in New Guinea in 1884 also furthered Bismarck's policies in Europe. At this time, Bismarck was seeking a rapprochement with France, and was hoping that the French would forgive their defeats in the Franco-Prussian war to the same extent as they had forgiven the British, Waterloo. Deviously, as part of his policy of conciliation towards France, he sought to antagonize Great Britain, the rival of France in the Mediterranean and Africa. This rivalry between Great Britain and France had been, at times, bitter, since 1882, when the British occupied Egypt, which the French regarded as being in their sphere of influence. Bismarck himself had encouraged British intervention in Egypt, believing that it would make his policy of reconciliation with France the more easy.

Great Britain, for her part, could not afford to antagonize Germany too much by refusing to recognize the establishment of her protectorate in New Guinea, for fear that Germany would move closer to France, and leave Great Britain isolated in Europe. Knowing this, Bismarck could intervene in New Guinea, without fear of any violent clash with Great Britain, despite Australian wailing and lamentations. So that while British intervention in New Guinea did not take place in direct furtherance of the interests of the British Government, German involvement in the area was a direct product of Bismarck's foreign and domestic policies.

Both the British and German Governments estab-

lished protectorates in New Guinea. In the late Nineteenth Century, protectorates became increasingly popular among colonizing nations, since they involved the protecting power in a minimum of responsibility for the internal administration of the protected area, while giving it absolute control over the protected country as against other European powers. Basil Thomson, who established British protectorates over Tonga and Niue, wrote later:

'In the old days when a nation wanted a land it took it, dishonestly, it may be, but at least openly, and tried to govern it after such fashion as lay within its power. But when the scramble began, the European Powers had to invent a polite way of saying to one another, "We have taken this country, not because we mean to use it, but because we do not mean you to have it! We take it under 'our protection'." Under the old system nations recognised some responsibility towards the land they seized; they were at least responsible for its good government; under the new they recognise none except the duty of crying "Hands off!" to the others, until action is forced upon them by internal disorder.'

North-east New Guinea and the northern Solomons remained under German protection until the Australian military occupation of 1914, while the Treaty of Versailles changed the status of the protectorate to that of a mandated territory.

In the British Protectorate, however, legal problems arose making it desirable to change the status of the territory to that of a colony. (D44) After four years of intermittent haggling, mostly over administrative details, and Australian financial backing for the new colony, British New Guinea was annexed as a British Possession on 4 September 1888. (D52; D53)

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13ibid., p. 255
14ibid., pp. 272-273
17B. Thomson, Savage Island, London, 1902, p. 42
18Law Officers' Report, 11 December 1884, in C.O. 422-1 (film 2684, at 282 et seq.).
PART 1

New Guinea Divided: The Protectorates

Australasian pressure for the annexation of all eastern New Guinea met with masterly inactivity in the Colonial Office during the period when, prior to 1884, Great Britain could probably have annexed any island group in the Western Pacific not already under European control without fear of antagonizing any other European power. By the time the British Government was ready to claim New Guinea in the real or imagined interest of the Australians, her freedom of action was substantially curtailed, and New Guinea became a pawn in the complicated manoeuvres of European diplomacy. The Australians, who had sought the annexation of all New Guinea east of the Dutch border, were left with a Protectorate over south-eastern New Guinea, while a German Protectorate was established over the north-eastern sector.

The New Guineans themselves had no say in the partition of their country, but suffer its consequences to this day.

THE ANNEXATION MOVEMENT UP TO 1883: DOCUMENTS D1 TO D6

Prior to the attempted Queensland coup in Port Moresby in 1883, when Chester raised the Union Jack and claimed Eastern New Guinea in the name of Queen Victoria, (D7) the pressure for British intervention in New Guinea was intermittent and uncoordinated.

In the seventies and early eighties, Australasian Colonial Governments occasionally passed resolutions requesting annexation; imperialists like the barrister, Labilliere, (D6) and the members of the Council of the Royal Colonial Institute, wrote from time to time to the Secretary of State for the Colonies pointing out the desirability of adding New Guinea to the British Empire; while missionaries and humanitarians sometimes sought the imposition of the Queen’s peace in New Guinea in order to protect the Papuans from gold diggers, land grabbers and labour recruiters.¹ (D3; D4.)

After the cession and annexation of Fiji in 1874, the British Government asked the Australasian Governments’ financial assistance for the administration of the new Colony. Lord Carnarvon, Disraeli’s Colonial Secretary, wrote to the Governors of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand in 1875 and reminded them that Fiji had been placed under British rule at the strong repeated insistence of their Governments, and that if further annexations in the Western Pacific at the behest of the Australasian Governments were to take place, then they must bind themselves to contribute to the costs involved. At this time, Liberal and Conservative administrations alike were reluctant to add unprofitable Pacific Islands to the British Empire. Carnarvon argued:

‘It may again hereafter be deemed a matter of great importance to a Colony or group of Colonies that the protection or sovereignty of the Crown should be extended, to a place adjacent to those Colonies, either because British subjects have settled, or are likely to settle, there, or because there is a trade with Colonial ports needing protection or development, or in order to anticipate the occupation of the country by any foreign Power.

Taking in illustration of this principle the case of Fiji, or that of New Guinea (over a portion of which Her Majesty’s Government have been invited for reasons

¹ Morrell, op. cit., pp. 238-252
which are more or less worthy of consideration, to advise that the Crown should assume jurisdiction; it must be obvious that the future of these islands is of the most direct and material importance to the Colonies of Australasia, while it would be impossible for a very large proportion of the tax payers of this country to understand what principle they should bear, whilst the Colonies immediately concerned should be exempted from, the burden of any expenditure that may be incurred in connection with such places. In the corresponding case of a Crown Colony, there would be no doubt as to the course to be pursued. If the Government of such a Colony should recommend the intervention of this country and the expenditure of money in a neighbouring territory, among the first questions to be considered would be, what amount the Colony would and ought to expend on such objects, as, in fact, has recently happened in the Malay Peninsula.\textsuperscript{2}

The financial issue remained a stumbling block, but not the only one. Although many of the Australasian Governments sought intervention in New Guinea in the seventies and early eighties, until 1883 they were reluctant to pay for the costs of an administration established in New Guinea in their interests.\textsuperscript{3}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2}Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-1566, London, 1876, pp. 85-86}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3}McIlwraith's Memorandum of 10 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, And The Convention At Sydney Of Representatives Of The Australasian Colonies, C-3863, London, 1884, pp. 25-6}

\section*{D1 Moresby Hoists the Flag, 1873}

In 1873, Captain John Moresby, having passed through the China Straits, on the eastern extremity of New Guinea, discovered three islands, which he named ‘Moresby’, ‘Hayter’, and ‘Basilisk’. He decided to place these islands at the disposal of the British Government, fearing, like many of the Australian colonists in subsequent years, that foreign annexation so close to Australia and Australian trade routes would be dangerous.

The ceremony performed by Moresby did not have the effect of permanently annexing these islands. Although Moresby’s claim to the islands was made on behalf of the Crown, the ratification of his acts by the Crown was necessary for British title to these islands to be perfected.\textsuperscript{1} This ratification never took place, and Moresby’s claim does not seem to have been relied on as a basis for British title to these islands when it was eventually decided to protect, and finally, to annex them.

It is likely, however, that the publication of Moresby’s \textit{Discoveries in New Guinea} in 1876 did much to stimulate interest in the area.

We had many doubts at first as to whether the great bluff which overlooks the western entrance of China Straits was indeed part of New Guinea, and not another island, we had been so often mistaken; \textit{sic} but the work of the ensuing days convinced us, and proved also that China Straits offered a wide safe channel, by which ships, as I then thought, could gain the northern shores of New Guinea, and I trusted that we had indeed found the passage I desired, and that these Straits would form the highway of a new route.

The importance of our discoveries led me to consider their bearing on Imperial and Australian interests. There lay the vast island of New Guinea, dominating the shores of northern Australia, separated at one point by only twenty miles of coral reef from British possessions, commanding the Torres Straits route, the transit of the Queensland mails, and our newly-discovered route for Australian trade to China; commanding the rich and increasing pearl-shell fisheries, with the working of which we had obtained a complete and interesting acquaintance, and also the bêch-de-mer fishery, which furnishes an important article of export to China.

I felt that the occupation of this island by a foreign maritime power would be especially since the discovery of the ‘Basilisk’s’ harbours and anchorages, would be a standing menace to Queensland.

I was also impressed by the richness and beauty of the new islands, and the number of their vegetable products . . . fine timber, the cocoa-nut, the sago-palm, sugar-cane, maize, jute, and various vegetable fibres, fruits and rich grasses, and my conclusion, after weighing all the considerations involved was, that it was my duty to take formal possession of our discoveries in the name of Her Majesty. Such a course secured a postponement of occupation by any Power till our Government could consider its own interests, and whilst the acquisition of these islands might commend itself, and my act result in annexation on the one hand, it might be negatived on the other, with easy simplicity, by a neglect to confirm it.

On April 24th, we made the best dispositions we could to give some little eclat to the ceremony of taking possession.

The trunk of a tall cocoa-nut tree, deprived of its crown, standing on the west beach of Hayter Island, was fitted with a block to be used as a flag-staff; officers, marines, and small-armed men landed under arms, and all standing uncovered, the following proclamation was read . . .

\textit{I, JOHN MORESBY, captain in the royal navy, commanding Her Majesty’s ship ‘Basilisk’, having discovered three considerable islands, from henceforth to be known as...}
Moresby, Hayter, and Basilisk Islands, off the east coast of New Guinea, together with various groups of detached islets, and deeming that the possession of these islands may hereafter prove of considerable importance, do hereby, by right of discovery, take possession of all the aforesaid islands and islets, lying within the parallels of 10° 25' and 10° 40' south latitude, and between the meridians of 150° 35' and 151° 20' east longitude, in the name and on behalf of her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, in token whereof I have hoisted and saluted the British flag on the shores of these islands

God save the Queen

H.M.S. "Basilisk", Possession Bay, Hayter Island, April 24th, 1873.

The Jack was then run up and saluted, and three hearty cheers were given. All listened to the few sentences read with attention and with pleasure, for every man present had a right to identify himself with the work done. A feu-de-joi was then fired, and I said, 'Lads, in honour of what the old "Basilisk" has done, we will splice the main brace tonight,' and so our little ceremony ended.

The few natives present had watched our proceedings with amazement. little guessing how much their own future was involved, but the firing and cheering sent them off frightened into the bush.

We named the bay in which we had anchored Possession Bay, in honour of the event. Here, at the foot of a mountain torrent, which formed a succession of deep pools, in running down its rocky channel on the side of Mount Haines, we dug a deep well for the convenience of future visitors.

Source: J. Moresby, Discoveries And Surveys in New Guinea, London, 1876, pp.206-9

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The following is an extract from the Sydney Morning Herald of 19 August 1875, criticising proposals which the New South Wales Ministry had tabled in the legislature, advocating the annexation, by the Imperial Government, of New Guinea and other islands in the Western Pacific. The Sydney Morning Herald accepted the view of Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies,\(^1\) that if there was to be British annexation in the Western Pacific, a substantial proportion of the costs involved must be borne by the Australasian Colonies, since annexation would be in their interests, rather than in those of the Imperial Government. The Herald criticised Premier Robertson of New South Wales for not realising the weight of this argument, and for failing to offer a practical solution to the problems involved.

As the Australasian Colonies did not have independent control of their external relations, they could not, either individually or collectively, annex New Guinea or other island groups in the Pacific.\(^2\) The Imperial Government was unwilling to annex on their behalf unless they paid for it. As pointed out in the Herald article, there was great unwillingness in the Australian Colonies to pay for Imperial intervention, if there was to be no say in the direction of Imperial policies in the Pacific islands.

The proposal for a legislature representative of the British Empire as a whole, is similar to the theory of Imperial Federation, which achieved intermittent consideration in later years.\(^3\) But ultimately, the specific problem of giving the Australians a say in the administration of New Guinea was not dealt with on such a grand scale as proposed by the Herald. It was not until 1887 that a complicated arrangement was made whereby Queensland, on behalf of the eastern mainland colonies, was given a share in the administration of the possession she was helping to finance.\(^4\)

... The people of these colonies are not prepared to pay taxes in the expenditure of which they have no voice. It has seemed good in the eyes of British statesmanship, which has acted of late years rather in the spirit of disintegration than in the spirit of consolidation, to place management of our own affairs entirely in our own hands, simply reserving to the Crown the right of appointing a Governor, and the right of veto on certain acts of Colonial Parliaments. This heavy burden our people bear as cheerfully as those in any other part of the Empire. If the Polynesian Islands are annexed, for many years to come they can be efficiently governed only by being made Crown Colonies. The management of such colonies can vest in no other hands than those of the British Parliament, in which we have no representation. The difficulty is how to reconcile our being subject to taxation with the necessity of leaving the administration in the hands of the Imperial authorities; although, after all, the principle and the practice were familiar during those days when we used to contribute to the support of an English regiment over which we had no effective control. That is the question, however, which ought to have been discussed carefully with Earl Carnarvon; and \(x\) is just the one point above all others

\(^1\) Contained in his despatch of 9 July 1875, C-1566, op. cit., pp. 85-86
\(^2\) This became very apparent after the attempted Queensland annexation of New Guinea in 1883
\(^4\) This arrangement is set out in the Schedules to The British New Guinea (Queensland) Act of 1887, below
which British statesmen will have to consider if they do not mean to allow the colossal Empire of Victoria to suffer gradual disintegration.

The safety and prosperity of every part of that Empire are matters affecting the welfare of the whole. It is for the sake of this safety and prosperity that New Guinea and other islands are to be occupied, and therefore it is but just and fair that the cost of it should fall upon all who reap the benefit, and not entirely upon the inhabitants of the British Isles. But if an Imperial taxation be added to the local burdens of each member of the Empire, there will have to be a representative body competent to impose that taxation, and to control its expenditure. Canada has a population of 4,000,000; Australia has 2,250,000. South Africa is being rapidly settled, and in Central Africa settlements will soon be formed, and when formed will probably grow with amazing rapidity, fostered by the vast and lucrative trade of the interior. India, with her 240,000,000 of people, is being rapidly civilized, if not Anglicized. These are interests which must before long be greater than those of the 32,000,000 in the Mother-country; and if it is desirable to have representative institutions for each branch, equally desirable must it be to have a general and equitable representation of the whole in some great British and Colonial Parliament, to form a bond of perpetual amity and good-will. The time has not yet come for such a consummation, but events are hastening it; and this question of New Guinea is one of these opportunities for educating public opinion in this direction such as no prudent and patriotic statesman should neglect.

*Source: The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August 1875

D3 The London Missionary Society and the Rule of Law in Papua

On 3 June 1878, the Directors of the London Missionary Society wrote from their office in London to Sir Michael Hicks Beach, then Disraeli's Colonial Secretary, concerning New Guinea affairs. The Directors were not so much concerned with whether or not New Guinea should be annexed, as with the welfare of the Papuan people. Their views are in contrast with those of the members of the Council of the Royal Colonial Institute, who wrote to Sir Michael Hicks Beach on 9 July 1878 advocating the out and out annexation of New Guinea. The Royal Colonial Institute argued:

'...that the annexation of Eastern Papua, unless our possession of it be forestalled by some other nation, seems inevitable, and that therefore it can now be effected with less difficulty and cost than must ultimately attend such a measure if, as in the case of Fiji, the presence of Europeans in the island give rise to complications with the natives, and claims of compensation for rights actually acquired, or attempted to be set up, which can only have existence in consequence of delay on the part of the Imperial Government in putting off the inevitable annexation.'

The London Missionary Society was concerned with the interests of the Papuans, rather than with the desirability of incorporating them in the British Empire. They sought their protection within the existing framework of the Western Pacific High Commission. In 1877 the High Commission had been set up by Order in Council, under powers derived from the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1875. The High Commissioner was the Governor of Fiji, and he, as well as the Deputy Commissioners under him, was given jurisdiction over British subjects in those islands of the Western Pacific not under the control of any European Power. By policing the activities of British subjects, it was hoped that some semblance of law and order would prevail in the Western Pacific.

The Western Pacific High Commission was not a success, since to maintain law and order in the Western Pacific it was necessary to control not only Britons, but other interlopers from Europe as well, together with some of the more uninhibited practices of the Pacific Islanders themselves. In addition, the Deputy Commissioners were always too few on the ground to be very effective.2

The London Missionary Society's letter of 3 June 1878 follows.

Sir,
1. On various occasions the Directors of the London Missionary Society have had the honour of representing to Lord Carnarvon the perils to which the natives of New Guinea have recently been exposed by the schemes of adventurers, who desire either to search for gold or to establish permanent settlements at various points of that great island, and they had the satisfaction of being assured by Lord Carnarvon that provision had been duly made in the Pacific Islanders Protection Act for the protection of the natives from wrong. They understood also from His Lordship that by placing the coasts of New Guinea under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Fiji,3 who had cruisers at his

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1 Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-3617, London, 1883, pp. 35-36

2 An account of the High Commission is given by D. Scarr, in *Fragments Of Empire*, Canberra, 1967

3 This is presumably a reference to the Governor of Fiji's office as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, set up by the Western Pacific Order in Council of 1877
command, the necessary executive action had been effectually secured.

2. During the past five years the Directors of this Society have been steadily prosecuting their mission on the coasts of New Guinea. They have formed three settlements, which are the residence of English missionaries, and around which, at various points, some six and twenty teachers are instructing the natives as missionaries. A few months ago, an English gentleman, Mr Goldie, who had been visiting the central station in this group, that, namely, of Port Moresby, and made an excursion of some 50 miles into the interior, discovered gold; and though the metal proved to be in small quantities, the mere fact of the discovery, when made known in Sydney, produced great excitement amongst the old gold diggers of that Colony. One or two vessels were at once announced as proceeding to Port Moresby, their berths were speedily filled up, and the vessels sailed for their destination.

3. A brief notice in one of the public telegrams a few days ago stated that those vessels had arrived at Port Moresby and had landed their passengers among the natives. The English missionaries in New Guinea entertained grave doubts respecting the probabilities of intercourse being kept up between the two parties on healthy conditions. The Directors cannot but think that for these doubts very solid reasons may be adduced. On the one hand, the diggers themselves, entering a thoroughly tropical country which has proved to be exceedingly unhealthy, are exposed to the most terrible risks of health and even life. On the other, in entire ignorance of the language, of which only a single gentleman has obtained any acquaintance, they are likely to come into most serious collision with the native tribes around that settlement. The Directors, therefore, invite your kindest attention to the danger which has arisen; and they venture to suggest that the Governor of Fiji should be requested at once to put in force the powers with which he is invested, in order that everything may be done both to secure protection to native rights and native life, and also help to our people in the sickness and privation to which they are exposing themselves. Except under proper control the greatest evils will probably arise from the lawlessness of the classes by which gold digging has been usually undertaken.

I have, &c.,

[Signed] JOSEPH MULLENS,
Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-3617, London, 1883, pp.29-30

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D4 The Colonial Office Replies to the London Missionary Society

There follows the Colonial Office reply to the London Missionary Society's letter seeking the establishment of law and order in Papua. It is dated 13 June 1878. It shows a reluctance to be hastened for the sake of the Papuans, and a reliance on the philosophy of sending a gun boat, even when the danger to law and order was an influx of miners to gold diggings located some considerable distance from the nearest harbour.¹

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd June drawing attention to the difficulties which were apprehended from the discovery of gold in the south-east part of New Guinea, and from the influx of gold diggers, who you anticipated would be proceeding in large numbers from the Australian Colonies to Port Moresby, and you suggest on behalf of the Directors of the London Missionary Society that the Governor of Fiji should be instructed to put in force the powers with which he is invested in respect of that part of New Guinea by the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1875.

2. Sir M. Hicks Beach desires me to inform you in reply that he has given his careful consideration to this subject, and that he had at first been inclined to think that the requirements of the case might be met by the extension to Port Moresby and the neighbouring coast of New Guinea of the jurisdiction of the police magistrate at Thursday Island, who has recently been appointed a Deputy Commissioner, under the provisions of the Order in Council passed on the 13th of August 1877, to carry into effect the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1875, and who already possesses jurisdiction over certain neighbouring islands in Torres Straits.

3. On further consideration, however, of all the circumstances of the case, and having regard to the distance between Thursday Island and Port Moresby, and to the fact that, even if the police magistrate at Thursday Island could be spared from his duties there to attend to any difficulties which may arise in New Guinea, he would have no force at his command to enforce his authority, Sir M. Hicks Beach has thought it preferable that a ship of war should, if possible, be stationed in the neighbourhood of the principal assemblage of diggers until it can be seen whether the rush to New Guinea is of more than temporary duration.

4. Sir M. Hicks Beach has, therefore, been in communication with the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty upon the subject, and I am to inform you that orders have been sent by telegraph to the Commodore on the Australian Station to despatch a vessel of war to Port Moresby, with directions to the commanding officer to communicate with the magistrate at Thursday Island and to assist in maintaining order so far as he may be able.

5. I am to add that the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific (the Governor of Fiji) is expected to arrive in this country in August or September next, and that Sir M. Hicks Beach proposes to take the opportunity of consulting with him as to the necessity of appointing a Deputy Commissioner to reside in New Guinea, and generally as to the measures which may be necessary for the government of British subjects who may proceed to New Guinea.

I have, &c.,

[Signed] R.H. MEADE

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-3617, London, 1883, pp.36-37

¹ A brief account of this 'rush' is given by G. Souter, New Guinea, The Last Unknown, Sydney, 1963, pp. 44-45
D5 The Allgemeine Zeitung Urges German Annexation of New Guinea

The following is a translation of part of an article published in the German newspaper Allgemeine Zeitung on 27 November 1882. This translation subsequently appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and caused much alarm in Australia, where it was feared by many that German annexation of New Guinea would take place before the British Government could be convinced that it should intervene in the area. The Royal Colonial Institute, which at this time was advocating annexation of New Guinea, drew the attention of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, to this article. The Colonial Office view was that the newspaper article would have little or no influence on the Government. The Secretary of the Institute was informed that Lord Derby

'... has no reason for supposing that the German Government contemplate any scheme of colonization in the direction indicated by the Allgemeine Zeitung of the 27th November.'

In addition, he was told that Great Britain was also opposed to the annexation of New Guinea.

Not surprisingly, when the German Protectorate was established in 1884 the Allgemeine Zeitung article was dug up and flung at the British Government, together with much other abuse from Australia. Nevertheless, it is most unlikely that the article had any influence on Bismarck. His decision to establish a Protectorate in New Guinea appears to have been influenced almost exclusively by domestic and European considerations.

If we fix our eyes upon this large island according to its physical geography and possible developing characteristics only from the standpoint of the colonial politician and cultivator, it appears to us, from what we thus far know of it, not in the least as a contemptible object of possession. And in case the German Government make attempts, as many wish, to acquire the island, we might perhaps, in the interest of our nation, congratulate ourselves on the acquisition. According to our opinion it might be possible to create out of the island a German Java, a great trade and plantation colony, which would form a stately foundation-stone for a German colonial kingdom of the future. People will perhaps reply: The climate of New Guinea is a tropical one, unhealthy for Europeans. We thereupon answer: Not so unhealthy as Java. And this report of the tropical climate is, according to our opinion, through false inferences from the former experiences of the history of colonization, a much worse one than it ought to be.

Pioneers of civilization, in the midst of mangrove woods and swarms of mosquitoes during the tropical rain and during the tropical heat of the sun, without sufficient comfort, face all possible hardships. European soldiers, who must camp in the open air; European sailors, who after the monotonous ship life, allow themselves to be beguiled through the splendid tropical fruits into all sorts of mistakes in diet, feel the tropical climate certainly unhealthy. But would it remain deadly if European cultivated people could be sufficiently considerate about their health? Besides, do not the numerous Germans, who in foreign service—we are thinking particularly of Holland—work as cultivators in the tropics, face just the same dangers? From the German or European colonists in New Guinea one ought to require just as little strained physical work as is the case in other tropical colonies. For that one would require tropical people. The natives of New Guinea offer in this respect no better prospects, but also scarcely much worse, than those of Java or Sumatra, and of Cuba have offered each in its time. Where they are rightly handled they appear, as a rule, to be very friendly to Europeans, and much is their diligence praised already in their press, and a stage of civilization. From different races, at least with reference to this, something might be expected if these, so to say, were placed under European guardianship. That the natives are not advanced to the formation of a State might, perhaps, rather make their civilization easy than difficult. Effectual resistance to an occupation by the Europeans at least would not be much to be feared from them. But naturally, in case of need, Chinese labourers could just as easily be procured as for Queensland.

Finally, so far as the places are concerned which are fit for the founding of trade factories, there are on the coast more than enough of them. All parts of the island possess good harbours, and the Fly River offers an excellent natural road also into the innermost heart of the land.

That other nations would not despise the colonization of New Guinea if they were not too powerfully engaged elsewhere, is well known. Captain Moresby even affirms, in the appendix to his book about the island, that it is for the English nation a ‘duty’ to annex and colonize New Guinea. Perhaps we might, with quite the same right, affirm it is the duty of the German nation to take in hand the colonization of New Guinea. The claims to possession of the Dutch on the west half of the island inspire us with no very great consideration, and we deem it therefore quite superfluous to enter further into them in this place.

Source: New Zealand Parliamentary Papers, Session II, 1884, Confederation and Annexation, New Guinea, p.5

D6 An Imperial Federationist Seeks Annexation

On 26 March 1874, Francis Labilliere, a London barrister who had been born in Australia, wrote to Lord Carnarvon, Disraeli’s Colonial Secretary, advocating the annexation of New Guinea on strategic and
commercial grounds. He made much of Moresby’s favourable comments on his discoveries in New Guinea, and argued:

‘Only three things can happen to New Guinea; it may be left as it is, or be annexed by a foreign Power, or by Great Britain. The first appears out of the question, I submit. The second would be the most undesirable for us; and that, therefore, the third remains our only alternative, whether we regard it as the least of evils or consider the territory a splendid prize, which, should England now let slip, she will have much reason hereafter to regret.’

In the following letter, dated 11 December 1882, written to Lord Kimberley, then Colonial Secretary in Gladstone’s second Ministry, he returned to the charge.

Labilliere was born in Melbourne in 1840, but left Australia for England in 1859, and was called to the Bar in 1863. He became an advocate of British expansion in the Pacific, and of Imperial Federation; he was appointed Secretary of the Imperial Federation League in 1884. He died in 1895, the year following the publication of his Federal Britain, Or Unity And Federation Of The Empire.²

My Lord,

On March 26th, 1874, I had the honour of addressing the Right Honourable the Earl of Carnarvon,³ then Secretary of State for the Colonies, upon the importance to British interests of the Island of New Guinea, especially in view of the possibility of any foreign power becoming possessed of the territory—an event which I submitted must necessitate an increased expenditure upon defences both by the Imperial Government and the Governments of the Australian Colonies.

The Earl of Carnarvon deemed the question of so much consequence that his Lordship at once submitted it to the Governors of the Australian Colonies and to other eminent authorities, all of whom recognised its importance, and several of them recommended that Eastern New Guinea should be included within Her Majesty’s Dominions. I think I am also quite correct in saying that the correspondence which was laid before both Houses of Parliament in July 1876⁴ shows that this step would have been taken if the question of expense could have been adjusted between the Imperial Government and the Governments of the Australian Colonies.

I venture to submit that the principal reasons which in 1874 I was able to bring forward in favour of the extension of British authority to New Guinea have gained strength in the interval which has elapsed, and that they have been brought into greater prominence by recent events. I need only refer to the policy now being advocated by the French press, and notably within the last few days by one of its most leading organs, the ‘Journal des Débats’ of France, appropriating available territories in various parts of the globe for the extension of her colonisation. This policy is also being carried out to a considerable extent by the French Government extending in several directions its protectorate—the first step usually taken by France when she intends to annex a territory. On the Congo, in Madagascar, at Tonkin she has begun actively to pursue this policy. In the Pacific she has within the last few months extended her protectorate to the Island of Raiatea, in spite of an understanding with Great Britain not to advance in that direction; and she is reported to have designs upon the New Hebrides, which would, if carried out, bring her nearer to New Guinea.⁵

As recently as November 27th a leading German paper, the ‘Allgemeine Zeitung,’ strongly advocated the annexation by Germany of Eastern New Guinea. The Germans being good colonists would be much more desirable neighbours than the French, who in their abortive attempts at colonisation, only succeed in excluding races capable of colonising from territories which they would soon develop. But it would be detrimental to British interests, both Imperial and Colonial, were Germany, France, or any other power to possess such a large territory as Eastern New Guinea within 80 miles of our Australian Dominions, and commanding one side of such a great ocean highway for the commerce of England as Torres Straits are becoming.

The value to British commerce of the Island of Borneo has recently been conspicuously recognised by a royal charter having been conferred upon a company which has acquired a considerable territory in the island.⁶ I venture to think that, important as Borneo undoubtedly is to British interests, New Guinea is likely to prove of equal value as a field of commercial enterprise, and for strategic and defensive reasons of far greater consequence to us—perhaps all the more so, if allowed to pass into the hands of a foreign power.

I beg to submit that the occupation by the Imperial Government of one or two points on the coast of New Guinea at a small cost would be sufficient for the purpose of annexation till more substantially effected by the private enterprise of our people, which probably would soon follow, or that a British protectorate might be sufficiently proclaimed and maintained so as to exclude any other nation from occupying any part of the territory.

I have, &c.

SIGNED FRANCIS P. LABILLIERE

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-3617, London, 1883, p.118

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¹C-1566, op. cit., pp. 1-4
³C-1566, op. cit., pp. 1-4
⁴C-1566, op. cit.
⁵On French policy in the Pacific, see Morrell, op cit., pp. 187 et seq.
⁶K. G. Tregonning, Under Chartered Company Rule, Singapore, 1958