

Kidnapping, West Papuan Resistance and the Australian Media

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Abbreviations

AAP	Australian Associated Press newsagency
ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces) until 1999, included police force.
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
ICRC	International Committee for the Red Cross
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces) after 1999 when police force was made separate.
TPN	Tentara Pembebasan Nasional (National Liberation Forces)

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Louise Williams, Australian print journalist

Nic McClellan, Australian radio and print journalist

Mark Davis, Australian documentary film maker

Ben Bohane, Australian photo-journalist

Introduction

Since 1981 guerrilla groups claiming to be a part of the umbrella separatist organisation known as the OPM, Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free West Papua Movement), have attracted international media attention by kidnapping foreigners in the Indonesian province of Papua¹, previously known as Irian Jaya. For forty years the OPM, with considerable local indigenous support², have been fighting a guerrilla war in the name of self-determination against the Indonesian military on the closest foreign land to Australia, and yet there is next to nothing published about it in the Australian press³. Although the kidnapping of local Papuan people and Indonesian⁴ military has been fairly widespread, it is rarely, if ever, covered in the Australian media. The only kidnappings reported in the Australian press are those of foreigners - Malaysian, Australian, Swiss, American, New Zealand, Filipino, French, German, British, Dutch, Belgian and Korean. These kidnappings are unusual. They only happen every few years, and they break through Indonesia's strict censorship regime by providing another, usually liberal democratic, government's statements and media. More than any other operation by the group these kidnappings have initiated the spread of information about the history of Papua, and the reasons why the OPM is fighting for independence.

There is a literary and theoretical gap in existing work regarding West Papua and the act of kidnapping for political means that this thesis begins to fill. Although the most widely publicised kidnapping in 1996 has been discussed in literature about international political kidnappings⁵, such work fails to adequately background the individuality of the OPM. The circumstances surrounding foreign abductions by OPM groups in Papua are so distinct and removed from any similar incidences elsewhere that comparisons are

¹ The western half of the island of New Guinea has had many names. The Dutch called it West New Guinea; the Indonesians have called it West Irian, then Irian Jaya 'victorious Irian' from 1973 onwards; while the Papuans themselves have called their home West Papua. In 2000 the territory was renamed Papua by the Indonesian government in an effort to appease Papuan discontent, omitting the prefix 'west' so as not to encourage secessionism. I will refer to the province by its current name Papua to avoid confusion, unless in direct quotation. See Ballard, Chris 'The Signature of Terror: Violence, Memory and Landscape at Freeport' From *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place* David, Bruno & Wilson, Meredith Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002, 24

² Start, Daniel *The Open Cage: The Ordeal of the Irian Jaya Hostages* London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, 57

³ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter 'Blood on the Cross' *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

⁴ A distinction will be made throughout between Papuans and those from the rest of Indonesia, I will refer to 'Papuans' referring to the indigenous Melanesian inhabitants and 'Indonesians' referring to non-indigenous transmigrant settlers. The term 'foreigner' will be used to describe those not of either of these groups.

⁵ For example Hagedorn Anerbach, Anne *Ransom: The Untold Story of International Kidnapping* New York: Henry Holt, 1998

difficult to attempt. Thus it is necessary to create an alternative discourse regarding the methodology and ideology of the OPM, including discussion of the concepts and historical dimensions that drive them. Papua's history as a colonial and then neo-colonial territory is paramount to this.

Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea, was part of the Netherlands East Indies until 1948 when the independent state of Indonesia was formed encompassing all of this former colonial construction except Papua, which remained under Dutch rule. Indonesia's first president and former revolutionary leader Ahmed Sukarno claimed that Papua was by right, as part of the former Netherlands East Indies, part of post-colonial Indonesia being withheld by an aggressive imperial power⁶. The Dutch began to prepare Papua for independence with neighbour Papua New Guinea as part of the decolonisation movement, believing it should not be united with Indonesia. In the early 1960s Sukarno utilised the Cold War environment by threatening to leave the non-aligned camp and join the communist, in order to force the nations involved, namely the United States and Australia, to accept Indonesian claims to the province and support the ejection of the Dutch. There was a period of UN mandate in the mid-1960s followed by an allegedly fraudulent plebiscite, the 'Act of Free Choice'⁷ in 1969, which consolidated Indonesian rule. The territory the Dutch had called West New Guinea was renamed Irian Jaya and incorporated into the Indonesian state as its 26th province⁸. Debate on the legality of this referendum continues as some members of the UN contingent involved in supervision have since criticised both their own roles and the actions of the Indonesian government at the time⁹. There was minimal Papuan involvement in the process, and a majority of Papuans have never accepted this assimilation, which they regard as illegitimate. As a result several independence and resistance organisations emerged, the most prominent of which is the OPM. The conventional concept of neo-colonialism amounts to continued economic dependence on former colonial powers, but in the context of Papua, Indonesia, itself a former colony, can be seen as engaging in settler colonialism, becoming a new (neo) colonial power¹⁰.

⁶ For more details see Penders, C. L. M. *The West New Guinea Debarcle: Dutch Decolonisation and Indonesia 1945-1962* Hindmarsh, SA: Crawford House Publishing, 2002

⁷ Known to the Papuans as the 'Act of No Choice' see *One People One Soul* Directed by Burns, Bob Australian Film Commission, 1987

⁸ *Land of the Morning Star* Directed by Worth, Mark Film Australia, 2003

⁹ Although there has never been a formal UN investigation into the legitimacy of the 'Act of Free Choice' there has been much call for it from Melanesian states like Vanuatu and Nauru, for example see the Statement by Mr Barak Tame Sope Mautamate Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of The Republic of Vanuatu to the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly 28 September 2004, New York. While the Indonesian government stands firm in its stance that the plebiscite was perfectly legal, some of those involved have discredited it. 'Four years ago the former UN undersecretary-general CV Narasimhan confessed, "It was just a whitewash. The mood at the United Nations was to get rid of this problem as quickly as possible ... Nobody gave a thought to the fact that there were a million people there who had their fundamental human rights trampled." In a parliamentary answer in December last year, the British foreign office minister Baroness Symons agreed that "there were 1,000 hand-picked representatives and that they were largely coerced into declaring for inclusion in Indonesia".' Monbiot, George 'In bed with the killers' *The Guardian* (UK) 3 May 2005

¹⁰ The latter definition will be used throughout this thesis supported by Papuan history. For conventional interpretation Young suggests that 'Neo-colonialism denotes a continuing economic hegemony that means

Indigenous discontent in Papua is primarily caused by four factors: Land loss, environmental degradation, indigenous marginalisation and state violence, all of which are directly tied to Indonesian colonisation of the province. Loss of land is caused by resource exploitation and transmigrant settlers, which both result in environmental degradation and indigenous marginalisation. To a majority of indigenous Papuans losing their land means endangering their culture, since land that has been logged, mined or settled is unrecoverable. The transmigration program, designed to elevate over-population elsewhere in Indonesia through the relocation of landless citizens, has seen the population of the province more than double since incorporation with migrants mainly from the island of Java¹¹. It has created a great deal of religious and racial tension, and solidified Papuan identity against the rest of Indonesia.

The Freeport gold and copper mine is the embodiment of Indonesian neo-colonial rule. It destroys the environment, dispossesses the indigenous landowners and introduced a brutal protection racket through which human rights abuses have flourished. In 1967, before Papua was officially incorporated into the Indonesian state, US mining company Freeport McMoran had been given a franchise to mine land occupied by the Amungme and Kamoro people, who were not compensated for their loss. Instead they were forcefully relocated to the lowland areas where they suffer from unemployment and malaria¹². Freeport is now the most valuable gold and copper mine in the world, and Indonesia's highest tax-payer¹³. It pollutes all the waterways that surround it, rendering them unfit for human consumption¹⁴ and, as an open-cut mine, completely destroys the land it strips of minerals. The mine is protected by the Indonesian military, known as the

that the post-colonial state remains in a situation of dependence on its former masters' Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, 45 and Loomba similarly urges her readers think of 'imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination is colonialism or neo-colonialism... if the inequalities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. A country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formerly independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time.' Loomba, Ania *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* London & NY: Routledge, 1998, 6-7

¹¹ 'Over three quarters of a million people have resettled in West Papua under the government's Transmigration program. The majority are from the islands of Java and Sulawesi, but any Indonesian citizen and his family are able to take part in the scheme and receive assistance for transportation and establishment. As either "spontaneous", or sponsored Transmigrasi, most have been resettled in large settlements along the Indonesia / PNG border, near the large towns of Jayapura and Merauke, or in the forestry / mining areas of Sorong and Timika.'

<http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/cline/papua/transmigration.htm>

¹² Press, Eyal 'Freeport-McMoRan at Home and Abroad' *The Nation* July 31 1995, 126

¹³ Elmslie, Jim *West Papua: Follow the Morning Star* Melbourne: Prowling Tiger Press, 2003, 3. Also see *New Internationalist* No. 344 April 2002 and Kingsnorth, Paul 'The Penis Gourd Revolution' *The Ecologist*, September 2003, vol. 33. no. 7, 53. On top of this, by their own account, in 1996 the government of Indonesia owned a bit less than 10% of Freeport Indonesia, a share that has a value of more than US\$400 million. Mealey, George A. *Grasberg: Mining the Richest and Most Remote Deposit of Copper and Gold in the World, in the Mountains of Irian Jaya, Indonesia* New Orleans: Freeport-McMoran, Copper and Gold, 1996, 350

¹⁴ Anonymous 'The Polluted Ajikwa River: legacy of multinational mining' *Inside Indonesia* No. 25, December 1990, 21-22

Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (ABRI) until 1999, and the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) after this, who historically have freely taken advantage of the mine's facilities to torture and detain members of the local population¹⁵. Amungme people who have died at Freeport at the hands of the military include the family of the infamous OPM leader Kelly Kwalik. It has an abysmal environmental and human rights record. Deforestation has also resulted in loss of land for the Papuan people as logging companies, many of which are owned and operated by the TNI, essentially take the land they want and move any people living on it to other areas. This has been especially true of the indigenous Asmat people who now face extinction, forced to work as loggers themselves destroying their homeland and their cultural inheritance simultaneously¹⁶. In this area, formerly owned by the Asmat people, Willem Onde kidnapped Korean logging workers. The manner in which resources are exploited in Papua has been a significant factor in generating civil unrest.

The literature recording human rights abuses perpetrated by agents of the state in Papua since 1969 is extensive¹⁷. It is frequently reported that at least 100,000 indigenous people have been killed by the armed forces since Indonesia took over from the Dutch in 1963¹⁸. Widespread social and economic discrimination, as well as disappearances, rape, torture and mass murder at the hands of the military and police have stimulated anti-Indonesian and pro-independence attitudes more than any other facet of post-colonial rule. Given the violent tendencies of the TNI in Papua there are few options for resistance available. Peaceful protest and attempts at dialogue have consistently seen members of the independence movement and their families arrested, brutalised and murdered. The most common form of peaceful protest has been raising the Morning Star flag, an emblem of West Papuan nationalism¹⁹. On Christmas Day in 1994 a large crowd of highlanders raising the flag near Freeport were fired upon by the ABRI. An Amungme villager, Naranebelan Anggaibak, was wounded and seized, then dragged behind a car by a noose around his neck to an army checkpoint some distance away. His corpse was hung from his ankles on a post outside the checkpoint as a warning to the villagers who walked past on their way to church that morning²⁰. Flag raisers are regarded as traitors by the Indonesian military and suffer the consequences associated with this.

The Papuan Presidium Council, the legal Papuan representative body created in 2001 to liaise with the central government on development in Papua, is another closed avenue of

¹⁵ See Elmslie, Jim *Irian Jaya Under the Gun: Indonesian Economic Development Verses West Papuan Nationalism* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002, chapter 8 'The Politics of Culture Clash: The Freeport Copper Mine and the Amungme People' 143-171

¹⁶ *Arrows Against the Wind*, Directed by Groome, Tracey SBS TV, 1992

¹⁷ For example see Sharp, Nonie *The Rule of the Sword: The Story of West Irian* Malmsbury, Victoria: Kibble Books, 1977; Budiardjo, Carmel & Liong, Liem Soei *West Papua: The Obliteration of a People* London: Tapol, 1983; and Amnesty International's website, <http://web.amnesty.org> especially 'Indonesia: On the Fourth Anniversary of the Abepura Raids, Impunity Remains Entrenched' 6 December 2004 and 'Indonesia: More People Killed –When Will the Military Learn the Lessons of the Past?' 6 July 1998.

¹⁸ Richards, Chris 'Military Madness' *New Internationalist* April 2002, no. 344, 18

¹⁹ Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed: West Papua's Struggle for Independence* Melbourne: Black Inc. 2002, 65

²⁰ Ballard, Chris 'The Signature of Terror: Violence, Memory and Landscape at Freeport' *Inscribed Landscapes* 2002, 16

protest. Members of the Presidium have clearly been targeted for their stances on Indonesian neo-colonialism. Leader Chief Theys Eluay was assassinated in 2001, after declaring numerous times his support for the Papuan independence movement²¹. Even members of organisations seeking to document and publicise human rights abuses are sought out and punished by the TNI. The international phone lines for Papua's major human rights organisation, ELS-HAM, are regularly cut²², and human rights activist Yosefa Alomang spent two weeks in a prison cell full of human faeces after being arrested and beaten by the military²³. It has been impossible for any organisation criticising the Indonesian authorities or espousing pro-independence rhetoric to operate in Papua without violent redress.

It could be suggested that it is in the interests of the TNI to utilise violence as it begets a violent response from the OPM, justifying the heavy military presence in Papua who siphon off a percentage of every business in the province. The actions of the OPM can therefore be seen as responsive to the behaviour of the TNI, who offer no other medium than violence. The TNI, who operate with impunity²⁴, have drawn up the rules and the playing field within Papua, and the OPM have little control over the physical battle they are waging. There are few avenues available for resistance in Papua, and none that do not risk violent military retribution. By taking resistance into the international sphere through kidnapping foreigners the OPM sidestep the military and engage the Indonesian government in an information war. Resistance and oppression are therefore entirely integrated in Papua.

The aims of this thesis are to examine the method of kidnapping used by the OPM and its use in relation to international, specifically Australian, media coverage of the group. Primarily I will explore how external political factors and communication between international media and the OPM influence the production of media coverage about kidnappings. Various cases of the abduction of foreigners attributed to groups asserting to represent the OPM and Australian media coverage of them will be analysed through print and documentary media, as well as interviews with Australian journalists who covered events in the area. This will fill the gap in literature regarding the OPM's kidnapping operations. I will argue that kidnapping has been developed to gain media attention, evolving in three phases. The first two have been ideologically driven by the Melanesian Consciousness Movement and narrative resistance to obtain the support of regional powers, and international powers. The third phase, without a coherent supportive ideology or audience, has reflected the decline of the OPM itself. In the first chapter of this thesis it will be asserted that Melanesian Consciousness and Narrative Resistance constitute the ideological foundation of OPM kidnapping operations. The second chapter

²¹ King, Peter *West Papua and Indonesia Since Suharto: Independence, Autonomy or Chaos?* Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2004, 37

²² Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed* 2002, 76

²³ Amalong is the winner of the 1999 Indonesian Yap Thiam Hien Award for human rights and the 2001 US Goldman Environmental Prize. See Leith, Denise *The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003, 14-15 and Rulianto, Agung 'Goldman Winner' *Inside Indonesia* July-September 2001, no. 67, 14

²⁴ Withers, Lucia 'To End Impunity: How Indonesia Responds to Human Rights Abuse in Papua is the Measure of Reform Elsewhere' *Inside Indonesia* July-September 2001, no. 67, 24 -25

will describe the three phases of kidnapping development, while detailing those kidnappings publicised in the Australian media. The third chapter will analyse media coverage of the kidnappings.

Chapter One

This chapter will outline the basic historical dimensions of the OPM, and examine the two ideologies that characterise the first and second phases of foreign abductions by that group. These ideologies are Melanesian Consciousness, which ties Papua with the rest of Melanesia, specifically PNG, and Narrative Resistance, a concept that underlies the significance of publicity for kidnapping.

The OPM is the principle mode of Papuan resistance to Indonesian neo-colonialism, it is both an umbrella separatist organisation and name that broadly represents independence ideology²⁵. Kidnap victim Daniel Start proposed that ‘the real OPM was less a band of rebels and more a faith and conviction within every Papuan’²⁶. As such the OPM embody neo-colonial resistance, claiming difference and abuse as the foundations for their struggle for independence, by adopting Melanesian Consciousness and West Papuan nationalism to drive their struggle. Kirksey suggests that the OPM is the glue that holds all the different factions of the independence movement together²⁷. Historically, the OPM is a guerrilla organisation that grew out of the Arfak revolt in 1965 in which former soldiers under the Dutch attempted to physically combat the Indonesian ‘invasion’²⁸. These soldiers formed a guerrilla army initially called the National Liberation Forces, TPN, that later grew and evolved into the OPM. The TPN is now thought of as the armed guerrilla units within the greater OPM structure. To avoid confusion I will refer to both as the OPM, because the Australian media only use this name. In 1969 the ‘Act of Free Choice’ officially sanctioned Indonesian rule, effectively removing the legitimacy of OPM operations under international law. This meant that unlike Fretilin in East Timor, the OPM are not considered freedom fighters, but terrorists.

For the last forty years nine individual OPM factions based on tribal affiliation have sought to undermine the control of Indonesian authorities by attacking military units,

²⁵ Davis asserts that the OPM ‘doesn’t really exist as an organisation. It’s village based, their landowners doing some kind of resistance over their individual patch of land. That’s the strength of the OPM, it makes them multi-tentacled, it’s also their weakness –they have no leadership or structure’ Interview with Mark Davis at SBS, St Leonards, NSW, July 5th 2005. In 2001 human rights activist John Rumbiak ‘went up to meet all the OPM to see if they were interested in a zone of peace. But he said, look all these people that are calling themselves the OPM, not necessarily in the highlands, probably more in the coastal areas, they’re like school teachers, they’re nurses, they’re all ordinary people. But (I would add) because the Presidium doesn’t reach that far, or maybe the people don’t like the Presidium, people are like “we’re OPM, we’re for independence”.’ Interview with Carmela Baranowska, Brunetti, Carlton, June 21, 2005

²⁶ Start, Daniel *The Open Cage: The Ordeal of the Irian Jaya Hostages* London: Harper Collins 1997, 57

²⁷ Kirksey, Eben ‘From Cannibal to Terrorist: State Violence, Indigenous Resistance and Representation in West Papua’ Masters Thesis submitted to Oxford University on April 22, 2002, 44

²⁸ Osborne, Robin *Indonesia’s Secret War: The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985, 35

industrial facilities²⁹, and Javanese transmigrant settlers, whom the OPM regard as neo-colonist invaders. The OPM are fully aware that they face a massive and powerful military machine and that, with their inadequate arms, it is unlikely that they will ever win a military victory. The OPM recognise that it is through awareness and support that they are most likely to achieve their goal of independence so their most important immediate objective has been to get Papua and the OPM into the press of potentially sympathetic nations³⁰. Thus they have also continued to create disturbances designed specifically to gain the attention of international media, such as kidnapping foreigners³¹. In recent years OPM leaders have become disillusioned with the international community, which supported the freedom of East Timor but has repeatedly forgotten the Papuans immediately after every newsworthy event.

The extreme isolation, limited technological capacity, and ideology of the OPM have resulted in modes of operation that cannot be seen as replicating other groups³². Other separatist groups within Indonesia are far more able, due to geography, history and development, to gain and retain media attention for their actions. The OPM operate in areas completely withdrawn from human settlement. The mountains have protected them, but also cut them off from most lines of communication. In contrast the GAM (Free Aceh Movement) in Aceh are far more accessible because they operate in a densely populated area, leaving them more open to attack, but also enabling them greater media coverage³³ and the use of modern technological equipment. The GAM rely heavily on mobile phones and the Internet to publicise military actions and their responses³⁴, which the OPM cannot

²⁹ For example in 1977 an OPM group blew up Freeport's slurry pipe, putting the mine out of action for over a week and causing it to lose US\$11 million in revenue and damages. Leith, Denise *The Politics of Power*, 2003, 226

³⁰ As OPM leader Matthias Wenda asserted in an interview in 2002, 'With the reporter coming from Australia the people of Papua want our desire for independence broadcast in radio, press and TV. We reject autonomy. We want full independence... people have helped East Timor and Aceh whereas the people of West Papua have not got any help... there have been so many victims in West Papua and America and Australia don't see it because they are wearing Indonesian glasses.' Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed: West Papua's Struggle for Independence* Melbourne: Black Inc. 2002, 11

³¹ 'The targeting of Europeans as hostages appears to have been part of a deliberate policy aimed at drawing the attention of a larger audience to the grievances of the general... area;' Ballard, Chris 'Irian Jaya' *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 9, no. 2, Fall 1997, 469

³² Isolated Latin American groups in particular appear to have had much better access to technology –as early as 1994 the Chiapias (Zapatista) Movement in Mexico used the internet. As Froehling suggests, 'The internet rapidly became an important tool for disseminating information and organising support on an international level, and it provided a forum in which events were watched by a variety of civil organisations, thereby limiting the possible range of actions for a government concerned about its international image.' Froehling, Oliver 'The Cyberspace "War of Ink and Internet" in Chiapas, Mexico' *The Geographical Review* vol. 87, no. 2, April 1997, 291

³³ While foreign journalists reporting from Aceh face the same travel restrictions as in Papua, they are able to move about more easily because the GAM are able to make themselves more accessible. In the period following the downfall of Suharto GAM leader Abdullah Syafei 'had made himself available to foreign journalists from his base in Pidie'. Martinkus, John *Indonesia's Secret War in Aceh* Sydney: Random House, 2004, 102

³⁴ One journalists have made contact with the GAM they are able to receive text messages and phone calls from them -direct communication means direct reporting. Martinkus, John *Indonesia's Secret War in Aceh*, 2004, 74

do because they have no mobile phone reception nor phone lines. In 1999 Browne suggested that 'In a province branded "red" by the Indonesian military, the OPM consider telephone and facsimile communication dangerous.'³⁵ This limited access to communications means that the OPM need to be particularly assertive when seeking media coverage, often operating in conjunction with their members in PNG, seeking not only operational support but also assistance in contacting media groups. The border between Papua and PNG is an artificial one, and the OPM have many supports on both sides. What sets the OPM apart from other indigenous separatist groups in Indonesia are the distinctly Melanesian modes of operation and ideology that have dominated the organisation. In short, their affinity with the citizens of PNG characterised by Melanesian Consciousness.

Melanesian Consciousness developed as a result of the decolonisation and civil rights period in the second half of the twentieth century that initiated new modes of thought regarding the mindset of oppressed and colonised peoples. This was called Black Consciousness in South Africa and Black Power in the United States. Steve Biko's Black Consciousness directly applied to the situation of Melanesians as it sought to 'infuse the black community with a new found pride in themselves, their efforts, their values systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook on life'³⁶. In the late 1970s and early 1980s 'Melanesian Consciousness' emerged in a theoretical form illustrated in Bernard Narokobi's *The Melanesian Way*³⁷ and practically with the establishment of the PNG political party, the Melanesian Alliance³⁸, as well as the rebellions in Papua and Kanaky/New Caledonia. While Narokobi's ideas are clearly aimed towards those Melanesians in PNG, his consciousness rejected European colonialism and Indonesian neo-colonialism, asserting that Melanesians had a distinctive history and culture that was not inferior to foreign systems, nor diminished by subjugation³⁹. Narokobi emphasises that Melanesians are not sub-human, second-class citizens, nor in any way beneath any other race or culture. Melanesian consciousness is an answer in many respects to the concept of psychological blight Gilbert says paralyses Australian Aboriginals - by believing your own inferiority based on race, you make that inferiority reality⁴⁰. Melanesian consciousness rejects this, and so empowers the colonised.

³⁵ Browne, Susan J. *Irian Jaya: 30 Years of Indonesian Control* Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999, 22

³⁶ Biko, Steve *I Write What I Like* London: Penguin, 1988, 63

³⁷ Narokobi, Bernard *The Melanesian Way* Boroko, PNG: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1980

³⁸ Father John Momis, who served a term as Deputy Prime Minister from 1985, and John Kaputin, founded the Melanesian Alliance in 1972. Its steady membership has supplied coalition governments with members since the 1980s, resulting in regular involvement in the government. The Parliamentary speaker of this party is Bernard Narokobi, and its major policy is maintaining and reinforcing Melanesian values. Narokobi has played a role in supporting opposition to Indonesian rule in Papua, reiterating Melanesian identity. In 1981 he headed an unofficial South Pacific Human Rights Tribunal which heard the former governor of Papua, Elizier Bonay, speak about atrocities there. See ABC Radio's 'Go Asia Pacific' www.goasiapacific.com/specials/png/partyprofiles_ma.htm and Dorney, Sean *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History Since 1975* Sydney: ABC Books, 2000, 206

³⁹ Narokobi, Bernard *The Melanesian Way* 1980, 110-111

⁴⁰ Gilbert, Keith *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert* Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1977

From the beginning, the OPM's conceptual reasons for protest and modes of resistance were located in a self-asserted Melanesian identity⁴¹. A great part of the argument for independence rests on the enormous cultural and racial gap that exists between Papuans and Indonesians, standing in direct contrast to the racial, cultural and religious parallels West Papuans have with similarly Melanesian Papua New Guinea⁴². This sense of affinity with the rest of Melanesia was first shown by the OPM with leader Seth Rumkorem's ideas of 'Melanesian Socialism' in the 1970s, which was rejected outright by many Christian OPM⁴³. By the 1980s prominent PNG political leader Father John Momis' Melanesian Alliance and Narokobi's Melanesian Consciousness served as political and ideological support for the OPM, justifying their struggle. Narokobi himself included the OPM in his early work through a photograph with the caption 'Jacob Prai and West Papuan freedom fighters... seeking independence from Indonesia' in a chapter called 'Our people are not yet free'⁴⁴. The concept of Melanesian consciousness was alive and well in Papua from the first of the foreigner kidnappings, as ransoms and statements directly addressed the need for PNG support on the issue of Indonesian neo-colonialism. It will be shown later that OPM kidnappers clearly had conviction in Narokobi's philosophy and capacity to speak for them right up to the early 1990s, when it became apparent that the PNG government would never openly support the OPM.

Considering Nandy's definition of colonialism⁴⁵, I would like to argue that although the OPM are fighting within the 'psychological limits' imposed by Indonesian neo-colonialism, their ties to the rest of Melanesia, and the concept of Melanesian consciousness supplies them with an alternative mode of resistance through their racial and cultural identity. Melanesian consciousness provides a coherent basis for protest and resistance for Papuans through an identity that differentiates them from the Indonesian state, people and its agencies. This kind of empowerment can be seen as drawing from the existence and continuance of the independent state of Papua New Guinea, illustrating the capacity of Melanesians to be self-governing. By claiming Melanesian identity the OPM reject the colonisation of their minds.

The OPM add new dimensions to existing resistance theory because they are a neo-colonial resistance group operating in an allegedly post-colonial world, where class is

⁴¹ Other indigenous resistance groups evoked similar modes of self-empowerment in Latin America. Revindicaion étnica was the reclaiming of indigenous rights and autonomy in Mexico. It was the rationale advanced for action in Chiapas based on the equation of shared property with indigenous identity, which is similar in its basic concepts to Melanesian Consciousness. See Nash, June 'The Reassertion of Indigenous Identity: Mayan Responses to State Intervention in Chiapas' *Latin American Research Review* vol. 30, no. 3, 1995, 10

⁴² Narokobi asserts that 'Nothing could be more inward looking and conservative or backward looking politically than to promote colonial and imaginary lines drawn centuries ago by Europeans without regard for the people affected.' Narokobi, Bernard *The Melanesian Way* 1980, 27-28

⁴³ Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985, 54

⁴⁴ Narokobi, Bernard *Life and Leadership in Melanesia* Suva & Port Moresby: The Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific & The University of Papua New Guinea, 1983, 30

⁴⁵ Nandy, Ashis *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, 3

seen to be the key to rebellion⁴⁶. While Papuans clearly comprise a separate class of society in Indonesia, this class distinction is based on racial difference between the indigenous population and their colonisers. The OPM are unique in that their people have been colonised twice in the last century, by the Netherlands and then Indonesia and, unlike the majority of separatist rebels in the 'post-colonial world', the OPM are not solely fighting their class-based social condition, they are fighting an invading culture intent on settler colonialism. The colonisation of Papua is 'first and foremost a territorial project, whose priority is replacing natives on their land rather than extracting an economic surplus from mixing their labour with it.'⁴⁷. Key resistance theorist Scott situates his thesis for everyday resistance in a Marxist class-oriented framework, clearly applicable to many separatist groups who kidnap foreigners in places like Latin America, while the OPM can be seen as operating in a colonial context. As Gutmann suggests,

'Scott's ideas about (class) consciousness are socially constructed paradigms rooted in a reductionism that would have peasants (and subordinate classes generally) at all times and places resisting in a like fashion because they recognise and accept their structural inferiority.'⁴⁸

This does not taking into consideration the significance of racial and cultural difference between the oppressed and their rulers⁴⁹, nor the idea that the oppressed may consciously reject their oppression, as Melanesian Consciousness encourages West Papuans to do. Scott emphasises the importance of everyday covert resistance, which constitutes only a single part of insurgence in Papua. The kind of society the model is based on assumes that the oppressed are necessary to their rulers, but as Papua is a settler colonial outpost, Papuan resistance is based on the demolition of the structure of Indonesian colonialism, and the ultimate goal of their resistance movement is an independent state.

The ideology of Melanesian Consciousness that the OPM subscribe to shows a clear link to the struggles of colonised indigenous peoples elsewhere. Theresa O'Neil's theory of narrative resistance⁵⁰, initially applied to Native Americans, has some resonance in the OPM's tactic of kidnapping foreigners, as their operations result in the telling of their resistance narrative throughout the world via news media. Through kidnapping the OPM indirectly force international media outlets to tell the story of Papua as background in articles about kidnapping, explaining who the OPM are, what has happened to their people, and why they have resorted to such tactics. Kidnapping is the vehicle for textual and verbal insurgence, enabling the OPM a voice they are otherwise denied. In Indonesia the Papuans, and the OPM in particular, have a history of non-existence through non-representation. The need to break through the barrier of Indonesian silence on the issue of Papuan discontent and separatism is demonstrated through the use of foreign agents and

⁴⁶ Scott, James *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, Preface xv-xvii

⁴⁷ Wolfe, Patrick 'Structure and Event: Settler Colonialism, Time, and the Question of Genocide' from Moses, Dirk A. (ed.) *Genocide and Colonialism*, New York, 2006

⁴⁸ Gutmann, Matthew C. 'Rituals of Resistance: A Critique of the Theory of Everyday Forms of Resistance' *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1993, 78

⁴⁹ Race warrants only three mentions in his book that focuses on resistance in Malaysia, a nation divided in three by race. Scott, James *Weapons of the Weak* 1985, 134, 218, 334

⁵⁰ O'Neil, Theresa D. 'Telling about Whites, Talking about Indians: Oppression, Resistance and Contemporary American Indian Identity' *Cultural Anthropology*, no. 1, vol. 1, 1994, 94-126

institutions such as the Red Cross, the Church, the PNG government and press. As O'Neill suggests, the media are on one level telling the story of the white hostages, but on another level they are talking about the Papuans' desperate fight against their oppressor, Indonesia. Essentially the kidnapping itself is not the act of rebellion; it is the story that is told through the newswires to explain and give narrative to the kidnapping. Narrative resistance ideologically underpins both initial phases of OPM kidnappings, but more so the second when the target audience can be perceived as the world beyond Melanesia, where, with the exception of Vanuatu⁵¹, they have been unable to obtain official support.

⁵¹ 'West Papua/Vanuatu' *Dateline*, broadcast 10 August 2005

Chapter Two

This chapter will provide descriptions and some analysis of the eight OPM kidnappings of foreigners publicised in the Australian media in order to furnish my critique of the coverage they have received. It must be noted that there is more information available about some kidnapping than others⁵².

The development of politically motivated foreign kidnapping by the OPM in Papua began in November 1981 when a group of fifty-eight hostages were taken after an attack on the Holtekang logging camp just outside the capital, Jayapura. The hostages, whose number was soon reduced to twenty-two after the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) launched a counter attack, were held for more than six months. The OPM demanded a ransom of \$US2 million and an airdrop of 100 guns. Because one of the hostages, Mr Fu, was Malaysian, the Indonesian government faced international pressure for the first time to address the problem of insurgency in that province, making rescue a priority it normally may not have been⁵³. Mr Fu was freed in an ABRI raid on 15 May 1982 inside PNG territory, effectively removing Malaysian pressure but angering PNG who had already experienced several illegal border intrusions by the ABRI that year. When the PNG government intercepted documents alluding to the location of the rest of the hostages, it employed the assistance of an Australian missionary to negotiate their release. In June the OPM handed the hostages over to PNG official Laurence Sapien who flew them to a hospital in Vanimo, in PNG, where they released statements regarding their ordeal. Between five and nine hostages had died and one had married a rebel⁵⁴. Relations between PNG and Indonesia were tense during the event, especially after PNG released a statement saying 'the whole affair could have been avoided if Indonesian officials in Jayapura had promptly advised their central government about the raid, and had similarly advised PNG.'⁵⁵

By chance in August 1982 an OPM group far from the border encountered and abducted an Australian Aid geology group surveying the Mamberamo River Basin in the north-western Jayapura regency. The group included one Australian, geologist Chris Pigram, three Papuan carriers from Sarmi and an Indonesian military escort⁵⁶. The OPM faction involved were not locals of the area and no ransom was requested, but the ABRI soldier accompanying the group was killed. It is of some historic significance that the soldier was a Bogie, the traditional enemies of the north coast Papuan tribes, as Pigram believes

⁵² Ballard has said that in February 1996 'a French mining geologist working for PT Nabire Bhakti and his Irianese assistant were kidnapped in the West Paniai area by an OPM unit led by the Yogi brothers, but released... unharmed, after one night.' But I was unable to find anything about this in the Australian media or any other, so I have not included this kidnapping in my thesis. See Ballard, Chris 'Irian Jaya' *The Contemporary Pacific* Vol. 9, no. 2, Fall 1997, 471

⁵³ Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War* 1985, 90

⁵⁴ Hunter says nine, Osborne says five. Hunter, Russell 'Difficult times on PNG's border' *The Weekend Australian* June 19-20 1982, 12 and Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War* 1985, 92

⁵⁵ Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War* 1985, 92

⁵⁶ Chris Pigram, Interview at Geology Australia Building, Canberra, July 14 2005

this OPM group were from the north coast and had fled conflict in Japyapura to hide out in this remote area. The team were not prevented from alighting their helicopter, which arrived at the end of the expedition period four days after the abduction, so there was clearly no intention of holding them further in order to obtain a ransom or publicise political demands. It is possible that Pigram's Australian identity worked in the group's favour. The leader of the OPM group responsible for the geology team's abduction had been to Papua New Guinea, he had seen the kind of infrastructure that the Australian colonists had left behind, and he was impressed by the granting of independence to those on the other side of the border, 'as far as he was concerned that was the greatest thing you can do!'⁵⁷ Nothing could be gained by harming the geologist and his carriers, not only had none of their people hurt the Papuans on the western side of the border, but Australia had set the precedent for independence in the east. Once they had taken the opportunity to kill an enemy there was no further purpose in holding the team.

On 26 of March 1984 Werner Wyder, a Swiss aeroplane pilot working for the Roman Catholic Associated Mission Aviation, flew into the town of Yuruf with three passengers and a cargo of rice. Upon their arrival OPM guerrillas led by James Nyaro surrounded the plane, a Cessna 185, and the group were taken hostage. Although this delivery was not made at a regular time, it is possible that the OPM had planned the ambush, as they would have been able to assemble in the time it took the aeroplane to come into hearing range and land. The OPM guerrillas were confused because they had assumed that Wyder would be carrying a number of ABRI soldiers, as he had done previously. Some sources suggest one of the Indonesian passengers was a member of the armed forces⁵⁸, while others claim he was a construction boss⁵⁹. Given the role the Indonesian military play in the economic workings of Papua, it is quite possible that the man concerned was both a member of the armed forces and a manager of construction works taking place on the outskirts of the region. This man, who was building a school in the town, and the other Indonesian passenger, a doctor, were shot almost immediately. The OPM later released photographs depicting their bodies riddled with arrows, triumphant rebels standing over them. Wyder and the third passenger, a Melanesian teacher⁶⁰, were held hostage for thirteen days. The importance of race to the treatment of OPM hostages is illustrated by one newspaper's assertion that, 'The teacher is most likely a Melanesian. He would have been shot if he was Indonesian.'⁶¹ This speculation turned out to be correct.

⁵⁷ Chris Pigram, Interview at Geology Australia Building, Canberra, July 14 2005

⁵⁸ Pash, Chris (AAP) 'Rebels in t-shirts fight hide-and-seek jungle war' *The Canberra Times* April 9, 1984

⁵⁹ Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War*, 1985, 103

⁶⁰ Never named in media reports.

⁶¹ Pash, Chris (AAP) 'Executions reported as rebels hit Irian Jaya border post' *The Sydney Morning Herald* April 2 1984

The initial demand, like in previous kidnappings of Indonesian military personnel⁶², was monetary - A\$2.1 million⁶³. Later this OPM group requested that the Swiss government take their cause to the United Nations or act as an intermediary with the Indonesian government⁶⁴, apparently unaware that Switzerland is not a member of the UN. During his ordeal Wyder typed a letter that was smuggled into PNG and released through the press. Wyder described what had happened to him and expressed sympathy for the people of Papua and the struggle of the OPM. He was also interviewed and photographed for the benefit of the press. The hostages were released on 8 April without the ransom paid, nor the demands met.

The kidnapping of Werner Wyder and the Melanesian teacher needs to be understood in the context of the political circumstances at the time, as it closely followed and preceded the most important events that occurred in Papua in that decade. These were the 1984 rebellion and ensuing mass exodus of Papuan villagers into Papua New Guinea, and the diplomatic battle over Indonesian incursions into PNG airspace. The hostages were taken immediately after the rebellion and exodus, when the OPM really were fighting a war with the ABRI, and when the relationship between the Indonesian and PNG governments was tenuous at best. The kidnapping prompted an aerial search for the group responsible, and Indonesian aircraft flew over the border, razing a PNG town to the ground. The result of this was the expulsion of the Indonesian military attaché in PNG, and increasing hostility between the two nations. The kidnapping was an integral part of the deterioration of their relationship. In these circumstances civilian Papua New Guinean support for their disenfranchised brothers across the border grew noticeably along with the concept of Melanesian identity. This culminated at the same time with events overseas as the Kanaks in New Caledonia rebelled against their French rulers⁶⁵.

Late at night on 18 November 1990 eight people were forcibly removed from their homes at the border post of Amanab and marched out into the bush by an OPM guerrilla group led by Hans Bomai⁶⁶. Those taken included an American missionary, Steve Schaeffer; a New Zealand missionary, John Marsh; three Filipino construction workers, Amando Heraldo, Cirlo Barrion and Oscar Tirones; and two Papua New Guinea officials, Karl Gumari and another whose name was never given in the Australian press⁶⁷. In an

⁶² The most significant of which was the May 1978 abduction of 7 high ranking military officials, orchestrated by the soon to be defector Martin Tabu, which was not publicised in the Australian media. In this case the demand was initially for the release of prisoners in PNG gaols, however one of the hostages was eventually released in exchange for food and weapons. It is uncertain what happened to the remaining original six, and another three who were seized when they attempted negotiation in late September of that year. It is impossible to tell if this was the first such kidnapping because up until the mid-1980s the Indonesian government and media had not acknowledged the existence of the OPM, and few reports of resistance in Papua were released in the 1970s. Osborne, Robin *Indonesia's Secret War*, 1985, 72

⁶³ AAP 'Somare Offers to Negotiate For Pilot' *The Age* April 5, 1984

⁶⁴ The Times, Reuters, 'Another 200 flee Irian Jaya for PNG' *The Australian* April 11, 1984, 5

⁶⁵ Bell, Ian, Feith, Herb and Hatley, Ron 'The West Papuan Challenge to Indonesian Authority in Irian Jaya' *Asian Survey* no. 26, vol, 5, 1986, 556

⁶⁶ O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'PM Rules Out Hostage Deal With Rebels' *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 21, 1990, 12

⁶⁷ O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'OPM Rebels Not Ready to Give Up the Cause Just Yet' *The Sydney Morning Herald* December 3, 1990, 17

operation reverse to 1984, the hostages were moved back across the border into Papua, and the negotiations for their release were again conducted in PNG. The hostages were held for thirteen days, the same length of time as Werner Wyder, and released unharmed without ransom on 1 December.

The Amanab kidnapping was markedly different from those that preceded and succeeded it in a number of respects. It was the only time the OPM ever kidnapped people in PNG, employed the assistance of sympathetic PNG citizens⁶⁸, and brought hostages over the border, and as a result the singular occasion that the OPM's demands were directed at PNG authorities, and not Indonesian. It was also the only time they ever took foreigners residing in the area. The main ransom demand appears to have been that the PNG government recognise the legitimacy of their struggle for independence, although this was never specifically stated in Australian media reports. PNG Prime Minister Namaliu was put in an awkward position as, although a majority of Papua New Guineans fully supported West Papuan nationalism, no government can condone violent actions against innocent civilians – no matter what the cause. He refused to meet this demand asserting that Papua New Guinea regarded Papua as an 'integral part' of Indonesia⁶⁹.

Their other demand was that two members of the PNG parliament, Bernard Narokobi, Minister for Justice, and Father John Momis, Minister for Provincial Affairs, act as the key negotiators⁷⁰. Both Momis and Narokobi were members of the Melanesian Alliance party and were known for their compassionate stances on Papua, if not their support for its independence. The OPM demonstrated through their request for Narokobi and Momis, as potentially sympathetic government officials, that the kidnapping had been directed at extracting a response from the Papua New Guinea Government, that they wanted PNG to pay attention to them and their struggle, and officially declare their stance on the issue of Indonesian rule in Papua. The abduction was well planned and executed, no one was hurt but, unfortunately for the OPM, both of these men were overseas at the time and it is not clear who the negotiators ultimately were. Had they been the negotiators it is likely the event would have carried more weight and consequence for the PNG government.

The zenith of international media coverage of OPM operations began on 8 January 1996 when a group of European, Papuan and Indonesian scientists were kidnapped by members of the OPM in the Lorentz Mountain ranges in South Papua and held for 129 days⁷¹. The group included four British and four Indonesian scientists Daniel Start, Bill Oats, Anne McIvor, Annette Van der Kolk, Navy Panekenan, Adinda Saraswati, 'Tessy' Mathies Yosias Lasembu and Jualita Tanasale as well as a Dutch couple working for Unesco Mark van Der Wal and Martha Klein, Papuan academics Markus Warip and 'Bram' Abraham Wanggai, and Frank Momberg, a German who was released soon after

⁶⁸ Kidnap victim Steve Shaeffer wrote 'we found out the men and boys who were guarding us were not OPM guerrillas. While the OPM had planned and taken part in the abduction, the Human Rights Border Commission –made up of PNG citizens who were OPM sympathisers –was looking after us.' From 'Captured at Amanab!' *Christian Missions in Many Lands* Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1991, 12

⁶⁹ AAP 'Jungle talks to free OPM hostages' *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 22, 1990, 11

⁷⁰ O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'Cabinet Looks at Special Border Authority Plan' *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 28, 1990, 13

⁷¹ Rufford, Nick & Chittenden, Maurice 'Escape from the jungle' *The Australian* May 20, 1996, 12

the group was taken. Held for four months by two different OPM groups from the Nguda and the Amungme tribes led by the infamous outlaw Kelly Kwalik, this kidnapping was not only the most covered, but also the longest, almost as if Kwalik was dragging the show on to get as much spotlight as possible. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) led the negotiations, flying a helicopter to meet with Kwalik's group and the hostages after the church declined an offer to act as an intermediary. The interests of the negotiators in this kidnapping eventually outweighed the lives of those involved as the ICRC, desiring a greater presence in Indonesia, was prepared to sacrifice peaceful negotiations for governmental favour in Jakarta.

The man the group had initially chosen to negotiate was Bishop Munninghoff, the author of an extremely controversial report regarding human rights abuses taking place at the Freeport mine at the hands of the ABRI. Munninghoff, who had been Kwalik's teacher, along with prominent human rights activist John Rumbiak, felt that the kidnapping undermined the report and eliminated any possibility that it may drive an international investigation into military activities in the area. Rumbiak says he told Amungme leader Tom Beanal, 'you have got to send some people out there to talk with Kelly... You explain some things to him that his hostage taking is damaging everything.'⁷² People were sent, but to no avail. This operation was Kwalik's 'baby', but it did not have the support of other pro-independence groups in Papua.

Through negotiations with the ICRC the price of release had eventually been set as the presence of state and media representatives from the Netherlands and Britain, at a ceremony in Geselema on 8 May⁷³. The purpose of these demands was clearly to increase the capacity of the resistance narrative by telling the story of the Papuans and the OPM directly to the world through the news media, as well as through government officials. It is likely that Kwalik hoped that these representatives would then be encouraged to persuade their governments to support West Papuan independence. However the ICRC not only failed to meet this demand, they tried to trick the OPM by dressing their staff up as journalists armed with video cameras⁷⁴. Although there were ICRC representatives from Britain and the Netherlands present⁷⁵, there were no state or media representatives. Kwalik, allegedly humiliated and angry, refused to release the hostages as agreed, instead declaring war on Indonesia and demanding independence for Papua. He had not been aware that this was the last opportunity for release negotiation before the ABRI elite forces, Kopassus, were brought in⁷⁶. On 9 May eight people in the town of Geselema, where the ICRC had negotiated, were machine gunned down by unidentified mercenaries in a white helicopter bearing the ICRC symbol, identical to the one the negotiators used. In the ensuing confusion the hostages were taken into the forest where two of the Indonesian hostages were killed. The others then fled into the arms of a Kopassus unit that happened to be in the right place at the right time, and were airlifted out of the

⁷² John Rumbiak, interview with Jim Elmslie***

⁷³ Elmslie, Jim *Irian Jaya Under the Gun* 2002, 201

⁷⁴ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter 'Blood on the Cross' *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

⁷⁵ Rufford, Nick & Chittenden, Maurice 'Escape from the jungle' *The Australian* May 20, 1996, 12

⁷⁶ Elmslie, Jim *Irian Jaya Under the Gun* 2002, 201

region. Kwalik alleges that the men who murdered the Indonesian hostages were family members of those killed in Geselema⁷⁷.

On 16 January 2001 a group of twelve workers, one of Korean nationality, from the Korean logging company Korindo were kidnapped by an OPM group led by Willem Onde. The next day four more Korindo employees, including two Koreans, sent to negotiate the hostages' release were also taken captive. The hostage group now numbered sixteen with three Korean nationals. Onde's demands swung between US\$1 million ransom, a halt to logging in the area and the withdrawal of police from the timber-cutting area for the release of the remaining three hostages⁷⁸ to a meeting with the then Indonesian President Wahid and that the Indonesian government drop its request that the OPM disarm. The negotiators included PT Korindo vice-president Chung Mulia Wijaya and Onde's sister Nor Bertha. On 28 January, after twelve days, thirteen hostages were released; three were kept to ensure that Onde would get to meet the president. Lee Jong Myung, Kuon O Deok and Emerikue Kamelius were eventually released on 1 February after the *Jakarta Post* reported that Wahid was now willing to meet with Onde provided he freed the remaining two Koreans and Indonesian. The idea of a guerrilla leader being allowed to meet with Indonesia's president was absurd given that country's history, but Wahid was widely reported as having agreed. After the hostages were released there were no indications that the President intended to keep his word. The details of the kidnapping were sketchy, with reports that Major General Mahidin Simbolan said Onde was a good friend of Kopassus and had already met the president at the Papuan conference in 2000⁷⁹, the later of which is highly unlikely. No ransom was ever given. Onde was killed shortly later and, as many Papuan rebels have been, found shot with his hands bound behind his back and dumped in a river⁸⁰.

Military infiltration could explain the bizarre and murky circumstances surrounding the 2001 Korean logger kidnapping. After East Timor seceded in 1999 thousands of Indonesian military personnel became superfluous and were sent to conflicts in Aceh and Papua where an increasingly large military presence⁸¹ had little to do but put down OPM uprisings and run protection rackets. The Indonesian Armed Force, TNI, cannot afford to eliminate the OPM because they need to create conflict to justify their presence and the extraordinary number of soldiers stationed in Papua, who protect lucrative financial stakes for officers with shady business operations⁸². Because of their great factional divisions the OPM have been infiltrated and influenced indirectly by the TNI intelligently allocating finances to decimate the OPM: 'money is being spent to buy off those involved in independence activities rather than to pay outsiders to attack them'⁸³. This is especially

⁷⁷ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter 'Blood on the Cross' *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

⁷⁸ 'Last three hostages freed by leader of Free Papua Movement' *The Jakarta Post* February 8, 2001

⁷⁹ 'Wahid agrees to meet Irian Jaya rebel leader holding hostages' *Agence France Presse*, January 30 2001

⁸⁰ 'Irian rebel leader confirmed dead' *The Jakarta Post* September 17, 2001, 2

⁸¹ 'The total nationwide manpower of the TNI is around 250, 000 troops of whom roughly 5% are deployed in Papua –five times the average per capita deployment and comparable to the "deployment intensity" in Aceh.' King, Peter *West Papua and Indonesia Since Suharto*, 2004, 117

⁸² 'Military Madness' *New Internationalist* No. 344 April 2002, 19

⁸³ Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed*. 2002, 33

true for coastal and northern border groups who lacked the intense personal and tribal connections of the highlanders. Many OPM commanders have since discredited the group that kidnapped the Korean loggers, as well as their leader, Onde, as it is widely believed that this kidnapping was orchestrated by the TNI in order to justify military presence in the area. Onde was known for his closeness to the TNI unit in Merauke⁸⁴. Kidnapping in this sense 'reinforces the necessity of companies working there to seek the protection of the Indonesian military, by paying them, by hiring them directly'⁸⁵. Through this infiltration and influence the TNI achieve further rewards by dividing and disuniting the OPM, creating mistrust amongst their ranks, and enforcing the image of the OPM as a savage, barbaric group of criminals instead of people who are fighting for a legitimate cause like self-determination.

On 25 May 2001, only four months after the Korean logger kidnapping, two Belgians, Johan Elia van dem Eynde and Phillippe R. D. Simon, referred to by different sources as documentary film makers⁸⁶, second-hand bookshop owners and public relations consultants⁸⁷, were abducted by an OPM group led by Titus Murip. As he had done five years earlier to trick Australian journalist Ben Bohane, Murip pretended to be Kelly Kwalik until Kwalik released a statement denying that he had any involvement in the incident⁸⁸. The Belgians were held for over two months while the demands for their release ranged from the freedom of West Papua to president Wahid holding an international conference on the Papua issue. This kidnapping was deemed 'genuine OPM operated' by the negotiators Brother Theo van den Broek and Rev. Benny Giay⁸⁹. The Belgians had indeed walked straight into OPM territory and, given the deep-seated suspicion many Papuans in that area hold regarding those claiming to be journalists, it was unsurprising that they were taken hostage⁹⁰. Murip, who had been directly involved in the 1996 kidnapping, initially believed that the Belgians were spies for Kopassus. 'At first their captors thought they were spies working for Indonesia... After discovering their mistake, the guerrillas decided to use the capture of the tourists to highlight the separatists' struggle to the world.'⁹¹ After the demands for their release were put out, the

⁸⁴ 'Irian rebel leader confirmed dead' *The Jakarta Post* September 17, 2001, 2

⁸⁵ Interview with John Martinkus The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

⁸⁶ Apparently they were working for Belgian television channel Arte, see Papuan rebels free kidnapped Belgian journalists *Japan Economic Newswire*, August 16, 2001 and 'No foreign intervention to free Irian hostages' *The Jakarta Post* August 2, 2001

⁸⁷ 'Freed Belgian hostages recount 71-day ordeal in Indonesian jungle' The Associated Press, August 18, 2001

⁸⁸ 'Church mediators plan second meeting with abductors of Belgians' Agence France Presse July 15, 2001, 'Mediators delay preliminary talks with Irianese rebels' *The Jakarta Post* July 3, 2001

⁸⁹ Source wishes to remain anonymous.

⁹⁰ Martinkus asserts that following the 1996 kidnapping in Mapenduma the TNI and Indonesian Special Forces, Kopassus, used their helicopter radios to broadcast to the people in the jungle saying that foreign journalists wanted to talk to them. It turned out to be an ambush and many of the people who gathered to talk to these foreign journalists were shot from an ICRC helicopter, including Titus Murip who was shot in the thigh. 'After the helicopter attack, they would be suspicious of and hostile to any white person purporting to be a journalist.' Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed* 2002, 47-48

⁹¹ Also 'The rebels demanded the foreign media write about the plight of the 2 million tribesmen who live a nearly Stone Age existence in dense jungles and rugged mountains, hunting crocodiles and wild boar and

Belgians were treated amicably but with a number of threats to their lives. They were released without ransom on 1 August.

Initially asserting recognition within the ideology of Melanesian Consciousness, the OPM sought regional support through ethnic unity. Kidnapping as a tactic of narrative resistance for the OPM can be seen as having developed over the course of time, exploring the avenues of communication available through residents of Papua New Guinea and its government, as well as establishing certain traits, such as making the hostages type letters in English and Indonesian to issue to the media, releasing them unharmed once the press have covered the event, and demanding ransoms so outrageous they are bound to be publicised but not met. This demonstrates several lessons: that the Indonesian media could not be relied upon to publicise the existence and aims of the OPM; that in order to have the causes of the kidnappings heard they must be presented to the press in their language; that the OPM cannot alienate those it requires support from, such as human rights NGOs and liberal governments, by harming hostages; and that if ransoms were met then the story ends and the media lose interest. The decline in foreign kidnapping in the 21st century can be seen as a reflection of the decline of the OPM itself. The creation of the Presidium in 2000⁹² as a serious alternative independence movement has undermined the OPM's monopoly. Many of its members have joined this legitimate, state-sanctioned body, to initiate change from within. The publicity implications of the OPM's style of kidnapping will be explored in the next chapter, specifically questioning how successful the OPM have been in transmitting narrative resistance through kidnapping.

speaking any of at least 200 local languages.' From Cooney, Daniel 'Freed Belgian hostages recount 71-day ordeal in Indonesian jungle' *The Associated Press* August 18, 2001

⁹² In the aftermath of Suharto's demise a space for dialogue between the Indonesian state and her rebellious outer regions became possible. Under the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid the province was renamed Papua and in February 2000 a landmark political assembly, Mumbes, *Musyawahar Besar* -Grand Consultation, elected a Papuan Council Presidium. Those elected included many known independence supporters, as well as Papuan politicians with dubious personal histories under Suharto's regime. The Presidium, which in its second assembly declared Papua to have been independent since 1961 and thus illegally occupied by Indonesia since then, was led by Theys Eluay and Tom Beanal, the former of whom was assassinated within a year. Since Eluay's death and the election of the right-wing Megawati Sukarnoputri to Indonesia's presidency the Presidium has lost momentum and support. Despite this, the Presidium, which includes several high-ranking OPM leaders, has taken over much of the role played by the OPM but discouraging the use of violence as a means for resistance. The manner in which the OPM operates, fighting the TNI on their rather violent and inhumane level, has little appeal for the most significant groups who support independence –namely human rights NGOs and the Church. These groups have increasingly thrown their lot in with the Presidium. For more information see King, Peter *West Papua and Indonesia Since Suharto: Independence, Autonomy or Chaos?* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004, chapter one 'Morning Star Rising?'

Chapter Three

This chapter will analyse Australian media coverage of OPM kidnappings of foreigners taking into consideration the obstacles in communication between the OPM and media groups. It will show how the OPM have designed methods of abduction to meet the needs of the media. There will be a focus on the 1996 Mapenduma hostage crisis simply because this received far more coverage than any other.

Journalists reporting on kidnapping in Papua face no easy task, as Davis asserts, ‘the most silent place on earth is Papua’⁹³. They confront censorship and travel restrictions imposed by the Indonesian authorities⁹⁴; language gaps; geographic obstructions such as mountains, which serve to protect the OPM but also to isolate them and make them nearly inaccessible to modern forms of communication; and, the most important hurdle, the interests of the Australian public as dictated by editors and media moguls. The Australian journalists I interviewed repeatedly asserted that their editors don’t take the OPM and others like them seriously, even when stories are published: ‘you send a story to an editor – he wants the guy with a penis gourd with a gun. He doesn’t want a guy in a suit talking.’⁹⁵ This results in sensationalist portrayals of the OPM, undermining the substance of their resistance and ultimately ensuring declining coverage as the group persist with the same tactic. All these difficulties threaten the success of the OPM in using kidnapping as a vehicle for narrative resistance.

In the first phase the kidnappings the OPM were responsible for in the border area involved the PNG authorities and media, influencing coverage internationally. Australian coverage of the Holtekang abduction placed the kidnapping in the framework of PNG and Indonesian border relations, largely because these relations were significant to Australia, and also because the PNG government had released statements regarding the affair in this context themselves. As Hunter said in his article, ‘The saga of the hostages is just another chapter in the often-difficult history of border relations between PNG and its powerful neighbour’.⁹⁶ The issue at hand was not that the OPM were kidnapping people, so much as the fact that the ABRI were ignoring PNG’s sovereignty while they were looking for them.

Hunter reiterates the importance of a shared Melanesian culture in PNG’s attitudes towards border control, ‘it would be politically difficult for any PNG government to conduct joint operations [with Indonesia] against what so many Papuans regard as their

⁹³ Mark Davis Interview at SBS, St Leonards NSW, July 5th 2005

⁹⁴ ‘It is commonplace for journalists requesting visas to travel to Papua to have their request denied with little or no reason given. To travel there “undercover” as a tourist is to risk arrest, and this has, in fact, become increasingly common. On arrival the journalist is heavily monitored, he is kept track of and the atmosphere of intimidation and subtle threat from the Indonesian authorities makes West Papua a very unpleasant place to work.’ Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed: West Papua’s Struggle for Independence* Melbourne: Black Inc. 2002 p. 3

⁹⁵ Interview with John Martinkus The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

⁹⁶ Hunter, Russell ‘Difficult times on PNG’s border’ *The Weekend Australian* June 19-20 1982, 12

Melanesian brothers.’⁹⁷ Thus for the PNG government it was much easier to shoulder blame for OPM activities onto the Indonesian authorities. There are no negative statements made about the OPM and, despite being central to the issue, they are not central to its coverage. This framework was fairly consistent throughout the 1980s⁹⁸.

The consequences of the Holtekang kidnapping for the OPM were complex. Osborne asserts that ‘The affair was a public relations disaster for the OPM which was seen by many outsiders as having maltreated innocent civilians. It was also an embarrassment for Indonesia which, unable to locate the guerrillas, had insisted they were sheltering in Papua New Guinea.’⁹⁹ But at that time the OPM had little way of knowing the opinion of the outside world, nor was it important, because on the island of New Guinea they were seen as the victors. They had eluded the might of the ABRI and could have done so indefinitely. The fact that the hostages had testified in the press about their ordeal only gave the OPM more credibility as a guerrilla group to be reckoned with, sowing the seeds for further publicity stunts.

Media coverage of the 1984 Australian geology team kidnapping had two facets of significance. Firstly, coverage was based on military reports that had been released prior to Pigram leaving Papua. The media portrayed the OPM as brutal savages arbitrarily committing acts of senseless violence, highly exaggerating the actual events¹⁰⁰. It was reported that the local Papuan carriers were beaten up and tortured, a misunderstanding that can be traced to translation and interpretation issues as the ABRI would have construed Pigram’s story with their own political agenda¹⁰¹, because they were only just beginning to recognise the existence of the OPM.¹⁰² There would have been no sympathy for the OPM from the military after the killing of the soldier. Once Pigram himself had left the province he put the matter straight:

‘As soon as I got to Jakarta the Embassy put out a factual statement and that shut that down as far as I know, it stopped any reports of it... I think there were some small reports in newspapers and there was that ABC report, but as soon as they were contacted and advised that there was nothing to it

⁹⁷ Hunter, Russell ‘Difficult times on PNG’s border’ *The Weekend Australian* June 19-20 1982, 12

⁹⁸ With the exception of the Australian geology team, who were taken far from the border.

⁹⁹ Osborne, Robin ‘OPM and the Quest for West Papuan Unity’ from May, R. J. (ed) *Between Two Nations: The Indonesia-Papua New Guinea Border and West Papua Nationalism* Bathurst, NSW: Robert Brown & Associates, 1986, 58

¹⁰⁰ AAP ‘Rebels Kill Indon Man’ *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* August 20, 1982, 1

¹⁰¹ In the case of Pigram’s kidnapping, the story regarding the events was passed on verbally to the military and then on to the Indonesian press before being translated back into English for publication in Australia. The huge gap between reality of the kidnapping and the violent sensationalist coverage can be traced back to two words that sound nearly the same, *diperiksa* and *disiksa*. The former means to be searched by someone and the latter means to be tortured someone.

¹⁰² Prior to the 1980s the OPM were known only as GPL *Gerombolan Pengacau Liar* – ‘Wild Terrorist Gangs’ as the Indonesian authorities sought to deny their existence. Kirksey, Eben ‘From Cannibal to Terrorist: State Violence, Indigenous Resistance and Representation in West Papua’ Masters Thesis, University of Oxford, April 2002

essentially, it disappeared. As soon as I told them no one was tortured they weren't interested.'¹⁰³

Secondly, without the violent sensationalist swing the ABRI had put on the event, it is unlikely that the media would have picked up the story at all. A window opened for the OPM in terms of tactics and publicising their cause. The publicising of the Australian geology team's kidnapping in the PNG press, and on ABC radio, would have impressed OPM groups, who have access to both of these media. Combined with the media coverage of the 1981 Holtekang kidnapping it may even have influenced the manner in which the following kidnapping of a Swiss pilot was planned and directed.

In the 1984 kidnapping of Swiss pilot Werner Wyder, the Australian press did not rely on correspondents based in Jakarta for coverage. It is asserted in rather brief media reports, 'Indonesian officials have refused to give further details'¹⁰⁴. Without access to either the area or official Indonesian reports Australian journalists in Jakarta would have had little chance to write more comprehensively about Wyder's kidnapping until after his release. In an unprecedented push of pure media savvy the OPM released photographs of the rebels and their hostages, including the dead Indonesians, and a letter from the pilot written in English (the language of publication in Papua New Guinea) to the PNG press, while PNG journalist Alfred Sasako was allowed access to interview the pilot¹⁰⁵. The media in Papua New Guinea faced no restrictions on coverage, unlike their Indonesian counterparts, and so were able to add more substance to the story presented in Australia. Negotiations between two Swiss ambassadors and the OPM were widely publicised and held on PNG soil. There was no part played by the Indonesian authorities in this process other than military aircraft unsuccessfully searching the border area for signs of the group responsible. Thus the earlier problem of violently sensational military portrayals of the OPM was avoided as the OPM directly supplied information to the PNG media, who passed it on through international newswires.

AAP journalist Chris Pash, based in Port Moresby, reported Wyder's kidnapping fairly extensively because of the integral part the kidnapping played in the escalation of hostilities between Indonesia and PNG, and because the OPM made the operation accessible. Pash was able to use the letter from Wyder¹⁰⁶ as well as Sasako's interview, and a large photograph of Wyder and OPM leader James Nyaro was published in *The Age* the day after his release.¹⁰⁷ In his letter Wyder did not portray the ABRI favourably. 'The pilot describes alleged action by Indonesian troops, including raping 14 year-old girls and bombing villages' and he is quoted as saying, 'They [the OPM] see Indonesia as an enemy that occupies their homeland. They will fight for independence from

¹⁰³ Chris Pigram, Interview at Geology Australia Building, Canberra, July 14 2005

¹⁰⁴ 'Rebels hold hostages' *The Australian* April 4, 1984, 5

¹⁰⁵ AAP 'Irian Jaya Fighting as Envoy Flies In' *The Canberra Times* April 7, 1984

¹⁰⁶ Pash, Chris 'Executions reported as rebels hit Irian Jaya border post' *The Sydney Morning Herald* April 2, 1984

¹⁰⁷ Pash, Chris 'Indon's push rebels to border' *The Age* April 9, 1984

colonialism without compromise.¹⁰⁸ This ultimately saw a more sympathetic portrayal of the OPM in the Australian press - they had comprehensible motives and, as the pictures revealed, smiling faces.

Most reports frame the kidnapping within the context of deteriorating relations between Indonesia and PNG, as the Australian media were understandably concerned about the relationship between our nearest neighbours. This did not diminish the power of the narrative resistance it produced; it is unlikely that Wyder's kidnapping would have received such coverage without the escalation of hostilities between the two states and the extent of the refugee crisis. The kidnapping added to the drama of border relations coverage. While Melanesian Consciousness drove the kidnapping it did not actually further any tangible political support in PNG, it is more likely to have done the reverse. However, this would not necessarily have been the case in Australia where the OPM received substantially less coverage of other operations. While May believes that Wyder's kidnapping 'almost certainly had an adverse effect on sympathy for the OPM and indirectly for the Irianese community generally'¹⁰⁹, awareness of the OPM's existence in Australia is so minimal it is unlikely to have considerably altered opinion. Instead it asserted the OPM's resistance narrative to a malleable audience, as Wyder's words were used to describe human rights abuses and oppression.

The kidnapping of missionaries and construction workers from New Zealand, the USA, and the Philippines at Amanab in PNG in 1990 saw the OPM again utilise avenues of communication available on the eastern side of the border. Although no photographs or letters were released, a tape-recorded message from one of the hostages obtained half way through the ordeal by a local government official confirmed that 'all six are alive and said they had not been ill-treated'¹¹⁰, validating earlier OPM assurances to Prime Minister Namaliu guaranteeing the hostages' safety¹¹¹. By specifically aiming their demands at the PNG government the OPM again induced attention in their neighbouring state's domestic policies. *Herald* correspondent O'Callaghan speculated that the kidnapping was prompted by 'moves by PNG to take a harder line against rebels crossing the border'¹¹² and in turn questioned why 8,000 West Papuan refugees from the 1984 exodus were still residing in camps along the border¹¹³. While the PNG government responded similarly to six years earlier, they were now hardened by the improvement of relations between PNG and Indonesia. Kidnapping had been portrayed as a symptom of a

¹⁰⁸ Pash, Chris 'Executions reported as rebels hit Irian Jaya border post' *The Sydney Morning Herald* April 2, 1984

¹⁰⁹ May, R. J. 'East of the Border: Irian Jaya and the Border in Papua New Guinea's Domestic and Foreign Politics' from May, R. J. (ed) *Between Two Nations: The Indonesia-Papua New Guinea Border and West Papua Nationalism* Bathurst, NSW: Robert Brown & Associates, 1986, 139

¹¹⁰ O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'Hope for talks with rebels on hostages' *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 24, 1990, 20

¹¹¹ AAP 'Dad has faith in kidnap rebels' *The Herald Sun* November 21, 1990, 17

¹¹² O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'OPM rebels kidnap 7 from border patrol post' *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 20, 1990, 13

¹¹³ O'Callaghan, Mary Louise 'OPM rebels not ready to give up the cause just yet' *The Sydney Morning Herald* December 3, 1990, 17

greater geo-political issue in 1984, but now it was shown in the Australian media as an aggressive and isolated incident. ‘What they have done is totally unacceptable... it will not help their cause, or anybody else’s cause. They had better release the hostages immediately’¹¹⁴. This was the last kidnapping aimed at the PNG media, the intended audience of the next was far more ambitious.

By 1996, when the Mapenduma group were taken hostage, the information age had exploded. Australian press not only had far greater access to information about international events, but also increasing public interest in other countries – especially its nearest neighbour, Indonesia. Australian perceptions of our global position and national identity had shifted, and Australians were far more interested in Asia and Asian politics than in the 1980s. There was a noticeable shift from a PNG focus to an Asian focus in Australian media coverage of Papua, denying the Melanesian identity of Papuans west of the border by firmly placing them in the Asian sphere¹¹⁵. The OPM moved with this shift. Unable to gain favour in PNG, their target audience was now the world at large and this was reflected in the internationalising of the operation.

Unfortunately the OPM now relied on a medium already compromised by its dependence on Indonesian benevolence. Censorship and restriction of movement was not an issue in the first phase of OPM kidnappings when the journalists covering the event were based in PNG, but permanent correspondents based in Jakarta need to be on the side of the authorities in order to maintain their rather precarious positions; if they published material unfavourable to the Suharto regime there was a good chance that they would be both out of Indonesia and out of a job¹¹⁶. Indonesia’s own media under Suharto was heavily censored, reports on OPM activities rarely filtered into the news because Suharto did not want any images of disunity and separatism to be publicised. While foreign correspondents did not need to bend to quite the same extent as Indonesia’s domestic press, their restrictions can be illustrated by the effects of the ‘Suharto and his billions’ story, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1986¹¹⁷. Suharto had all Fairfax

¹¹⁴ O’Callaghan, Mary Louise ‘PM rules out hostage deal with rebels’ *The Sydney Morning Herald* November 21, 1990, 12

¹¹⁵ As journalist Nic Maclellan says, ‘For many people who write about West Papua it’s put in the context of Indonesia. Now obviously you can’t ignore the vital role that Jakarta plays in this, and I’m not suggesting you should, but it’s how you frame the question. And, um, a lot of coverage by journalists ignores that history, and I think that’s a major problem in trying to understand where the West Papua nationalist movement is coming from. Um because they’re not simply focused on Jakarta, they’re also focused on relationships with neighbouring countries like Papua New Guinea, and unless you understand that as part of the picture, you miss key reasons for why the OPM has conducted activities like border raids across the border, setting up camps inside PNG territory, supporting and some would say encouraging refugee movements across the border, and the kidnappings that have occurred over time to create international attention. So that paradigm to me is really crucial.’ Interview East Brunswick, May 4 2005

¹¹⁶ This is not to say that the PNG government is any less sensitive about the issue of West Papuan separatism, in 1986 Australian journalist Sean Dorney was briefly thrown out of PNG when the ABC aired an interview with OPM leader James Nyaro who was involved in the kidnapping of Swiss pilot Werner Wyder. This action was interesting as Dorney had nothing to do with the interview. See the ABC website for more details, www.abc.net.au

¹¹⁷ Jenkins, David ‘After Marcos, now for the Soeharto Billions’ *The Sydney Morning Herald* April 10 1986, 1

journalists ousted from the capital. The first Fairfax reporter to return to Jakarta, Louise Williams in 1996, faced enormous pressure during the Mapenduma hostage crisis that year, as she had only just been reinstated¹¹⁸. Freelancers have no such obligations to governments or media corporations, but they are vulnerable to blacklisting and internal discrimination.¹¹⁹

The Mapenduma hostage crisis was popular news worldwide as the hostage group included young people, women – one of whom was pregnant – and represented four nations, appealing to an extensive audience. The story sounded like the script of a Hollywood blockbuster, and coverage reflected this perception. The portrayal of the OPM in the Australian press engages in racist discourse by depicting them as primitive stone-age rebels, thereby undermining the strength of their policies and motives, and frequently there were no attempts to consider their motives. Indeed,

‘Confronted by a country about which they knew little, a people about which they knew even less and a political history about which they seem to know nothing at all, journalists in Indonesia, London and Australia fell back upon stereotypical clichés, contradictions and downright lies, which were picked up by the wire services, spread around the world, and reproduced in report after report.’¹²⁰

However, in many respects this image of tribal primitivism has aided the OPM in that it appeals to the masses of western society, the most likely candidates for assistance given the enormous human rights and environmental abuses which constitute the basis for the OPM’s ambitions for independence. Allen’s assessment that, ‘Kwalik was naive in the extreme when he thought that the international press would provide a medium through which he could describe the plight of the people of Irian Jaya as he saw it’¹²¹ may have some merit. But paradoxically without this type of coverage the kidnapping may not have reached as many audiences.

The greatest problem facing reporters was still access. In 1996 Ben Bohane was the only journalist to have ever spoken with this particular OPM faction. He was in the Mapenduma area just before the kidnapping and had met the scientists who were kidnapped on his way out of the mountains¹²². Bohane experienced a timely boom for his photographs and interviews with the rebels involved¹²³ and his work was able to furnish

¹¹⁸ Interview with Louise Williams Fairfax building, Sydney, July 6, 2005

¹¹⁹ As journalist John Martinkus asserts, ‘most reporters that are going out and presenting an alternative view are often discredited by the mainstream... it contradicts what they’ve already been writing and in some cases what they believe to be the case’. Interview with John Martinkus The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

¹²⁰ Allen, Bryant ‘Clichés Swarm in the Mist-Shrouded Rainforest of Irian Jaya’ *Pacific Research* November 1995/February 1996, 21

¹²¹ Allen, Bryant ‘Clichés Swarm in the Mist-Shrouded Rainforest of Irian Jaya’ *Pacific Research* 1996, 21

¹²² Elmslie, Jim *Irian Jaya Under the Gun: Indonesian Economic Development Verses West Papuan Nationalism* Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 2002, 194- 195

¹²³ Ben Bohane sold a photograph of ‘Kelly Kwalik’ to the Indonesian magazine Gatra for A\$10, 000, which they in turn sold to the ABRI to hunt the rebel down. Fortunately for Kwalik he had never met Ben

Australian media with some details. Most Australians reporting on the Mapenduma hostage crisis faced exactly the same media restrictions as journalists had in Papua since the Indonesian takeover. They couldn't actually go to Papua, largely because media outlets could not financially justify travel to the province where no other 'newsworthy' events were taking place¹²⁴, and also because of travel restrictions¹²⁵. Of the print journalists covering the 1996 hostage crisis, the dominant three, Roberts, Walters and Williams, were correspondents based in Jakarta. Roberts was the only one who made it to Papua during the kidnapping. The limitations imposed by access restrictions resulted in some intriguing manoeuvres by the Papuan human rights group, ELS-HAM. As former director John Rumbiak asserts,

'From the network we established in Wamena we received all this information from the OPM themselves, so we knew exactly what was going on.... We know exactly the strategy of the military, they would leak this information to us. We linked with TAPOL in London... these news stands in London, they would have Kelly Kwalik's picture on the front page.'¹²⁶

Through ELS-HAM and British human rights group TAPOL, on the other side of the world, British media had more comprehensive and more reliable coverage of the hostage crisis than their counterparts in Australia. The news media in Australia wound up using UK newswires to cover an event taking place around 250km from Australia¹²⁷.

As Williams has attested, this was a 'telephone' story, so sources were generally military outposts because no one else had a phone line¹²⁸. Ten articles from *The Australian* and Fairfax directly refer to statements by military spokesmen, many more summarise them without quotation. The impact of such heavy reliance on these sources in terms of underlying assumptions and selective reporting is critical. For example, the personal accounts the hostages later gave of their release differ considerably from the media version. Both Anna McIvor¹²⁹ and Daniel Start attest that when the two male Indonesian hostages were killed the rest of the hostages fled, running into the arms of an ABRI contingent that had been attempting to track them down. In Australian media reports quoting ABRI sources, and the Indonesian Antara news agency, the hostages were rescued in a 'commando style operation'¹³⁰. As Brigadier Prabowo is quoted, 'thanks to the swiftness of the military in a surprise operation the rebels did not have time to kill

Bohane, and the photograph was more likely to have been of Titus Murip, who has impersonated Kwalik on more than one occasion. Interview with Ida Palaloi Campbelltown, NSW, July 7, 2005.

¹²⁴ Interview with Louise Williams Fairfax building, Sydney, July 6, 2005

¹²⁵ 'They couldn't get in. I mean, the only way to go in was illegally... and if you go in illegally they're going to kick you out of the country so you don't report there again.' Interview with Mark Davis at SBS St Leonards, NSW, July 5th, 2005

¹²⁶ John Rumbiak in interview with Jim Elmslie

¹²⁷ "on a clear day, they say you can see Australia" Bohane, Ben, Elmslie, Jim & Thompson, Liz *West Papua: Follow the Morning Star* Melbourne: Prowling Tiger Press, 2003, 100

¹²⁸ Interview with Louise Williams Fairfax building, Sydney, July 6, 2005

¹²⁹ (One of the British hostages) McIvor, Anna 'Hostage in West Papua –What Now?'

www.campeace.org/WParchive/Hostage_in.htm

¹³⁰ Williams, Louise 'Two hostages, 8 guerrillas die in Irian Jaya rescue' *The Age* May 17, 1996, A11

them all'¹³¹. Start reflected, 'They didn't ask us what had happened as the official story had already been fabricated and released through the news agency, Antara.'¹³²

The most significant gap in coverage was not revealed until three years after the hostages were released, in a *Four Corners* report by Mark Davis¹³³. The Australian media failed to report the basic constituents of the agreement for 8 May release because the ABRI and ICRC did not release official statements on them. Instead reports ran like this,

'...there had been anticipation the hostages would be handed to the ICRC on Wednesday. But an apparent change of mind by one of the rebel leaders, Mr Kelly Kwalik, proved a further obstacle to the release of the group who are still being held...'¹³⁴

The Australian media were unaware of the duplicity of the ICRC's abandonment of negotiations and the subsequent ABRI attack on civilians at the time since there were no journalists in the region. Eight people were gunned down, many more went missing, and possibly hundreds fled into the forest, later starving to death when the ABRI burned their food gardens, unnoticed by the world for three years¹³⁵. That such gaps in the story regarding the consequences of an international organisation like the ICRC pulling out of negotiations could exist, and remain for such a long period, demonstrates how limited journalists were by access and their reliance on official sources. The information the ABRI/TNI supply Australian and Indonesian news agencies with regarding Papua is inevitably overtly biased and misleading because of their own deep involvement in the politics of the region.

Of the articles sampled, only Roberts' 'Caught in the Crossfire' cites Papuans who actually live in Papua. Roberts is also the only journalist from my sample to actually report from the province at any time, at Timika near the Freeport mine. The two OPM spokesman cited in the Australian press, John Ondwame and Moses Weror, located in Australia and Papua New Guinea respectively, were rather removed from the situation, leaving their credibility open for scrutiny. This is demonstrated in one article in *The Australian* where Ondawame is quoted as suggesting that there would be a monetary price set for the release of the hostages, clearly judging from earlier kidnapping incidents¹³⁶. However other sources attest that in this case the demands were always political rather than financial. It is significant that in contrast to Ondwame's announcement, Walters cites Weror's contention that '...the kidnappings are part of a new campaign by the OPM to focus greater international attention on their struggle for independence,'¹³⁷ attesting that narrative resistance was indeed the game the OPM were playing. Kwalik is generally cited as demanding independence, and independence only,

¹³¹ Walters, Patrick 'Jakarta boasts rebel body count in rescue' *The Australian* May 17, 1996, 8

¹³² Start, Daniel *The Open Cage: The Ordeal of the Irian Jaya Hostages* London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, 330

¹³³ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter 'Blood on the Cross' *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

¹³⁴ Walters, Patrick 'Red Cross abandons Irian Jaya hostage talks' *The Australian* May 10, 1996, 6

¹³⁵ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter 'Blood on the Cross' *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

¹³⁶ Greenlees, Don & Wilson, Robert 'Irian rebels plan ransom for captives' *The Australian* January 12, 1996, 3

¹³⁷ Walters, Patrick 'Indonesian troops hunt Irian kidnappers' *The Weekend Australian* January 13-14, 1996 p.5

for West Papua, but he initially requested a civilian plane and pilot to take OPM members to an undisclosed location¹³⁸. It is difficult to understand how Ondwame could profess to represent and predict the actions of this particular OPM group from Australia, given their extremely limited communication capacity.

One of the primary failures of the Australian media coverage of the hostage crisis was limited supply of background information. Clearly newspapers could not accompany every development in the hostage crisis with in-depth discussion and historical background, but without any explanation problems occur and the resistance narrative is lost. For example, a majority of the articles sampled referred to indigenous Papuans as Indonesians or 'Irianese', a title that encompasses Asian settlers in the region as well. Papuans¹³⁹ and Indonesians contrast, not only in terms of race, religion, culture and wealth, but also political affiliation, which was frequently not addressed in press coverage of the hostage crisis. Ignoring this difference created a number of problems. By not specifically saying that the majority of ABRI soldiers were ethnically different from the OPM, and that of the hostages taken the only two to have been killed were also the only Asian males in the group - the only ones to physically resemble the ABRI - Australian readers are left with coverage which does not really make sense.

Tension in the resistance narrative was created by over-emphasising the significance of the Freeport mine, and understating Indonesian state culpability for human rights abuses and indigenous disenfranchisement in background. Many news articles make reference to Freeport, even though there is no substantial connection between the kidnapping and the mine. Most references to the mine are used to build background context for the foreign abuses and exploitation indigenous Papuans face. However, use of phrases like 'OPM's list of grievances against the Freeport mine is extensive...' ¹⁴⁰ and 'The OPM also wanted compensation from Freeport...' ¹⁴¹ without reference to their continual fight against the Indonesian government and the ABRI undermines the struggle of the OPM, and disregards their legitimate complaints about Indonesian rule. Williams asserts in two articles that the mine is near the spot where the hostages were taken¹⁴² when in fact it is 140km¹⁴³ away, a mistake that could lead to questionable assumptions about the significance of Freeport to the kidnapping itself. Kwalik, who is of the Amungme tribe,

¹³⁸ Roberts, Greg 'Jakarta grows impatient with rebels' *The Age* January 19, 1996 It is likely that their intended destination was New York to the UN headquarters. Papuan leaders had been trying for a long time to plead their case, just as the East Timorese diplomat Jose Ramos Horta had been doing for East Timor, since William Zonnganaou and Clemens Runawery's attempt was thwarted by the Australian government during the 'Act of Free Choice' in 1969. See *The Diplomat* Directed by Tom Zubrycki, Film Australian and Emerald Films 2000

¹³⁹ The word 'Papuan' is Malay for 'frizzy haired black people'. Papuans contrast most Indonesians who are predominantly Javanese -Asian with straight hair and brown skin. Papuans are generally Christians, while Indonesians are generally Muslims.

¹⁴⁰ Roberts, Greg 'Irian rebels snatch hostages' *The Sydney Morning Herald* January 11, 1996 Features p. 1

¹⁴¹ Greenlees, Don & Wilson, Robert 'Irian rebels plan ransom for captives' *The Australian* January 12, 1996, 3

¹⁴² Williams, Louise 'Two hostages, 8 guerrillas die in Irian Jaya rescue' *The Age* May 17, 1996 A11

¹⁴³ Roberts, Greg 'Irianese warn rescue attempt will risk hostages' lives' *The Sydney Morning Herald* January 13, 1996 World, 15

lost five family members to ABRI forces operating out of Freeport in 1994¹⁴⁴, but he was not solely accountable for the kidnapping¹⁴⁵. As suggested by Start and Walters, there were two different OPM groups involved in the incident, and it was in fact men from the Nduga tribe led by Daniel Yudas Kogoya who were primarily responsible for the kidnapping and care of the hostages¹⁴⁶. It is unlikely these men would have been directly affected by any repressive measures taken by Freeport considering their distance from it. Without key background information interpretation is limited, and the readers are unable to come to any significant conclusion that would explain why the OPM kidnapped the group or murdered the male Indonesian hostages.

Since the fall of Suharto and the creation of the Presidium, the appeal of sensational stories like OPM kidnappings has waned. At the turn of this century the media had greater access to Papua than ever before, and they discovered that there was more happening there than jungle abductions. The Australian press were especially interested in stories that further condemned the already hated Indonesian military in the aftermath of the East Timor referendum. As such Australian media responses to the February 2001 kidnapping of the Korean loggers were virtually non-existent, probably because the hostages were Asian¹⁴⁷. The little coverage that the kidnapping did receive in Australia was confused and contradicted Asian reports. One of two substantial print articles regarding the event related a phone call to the AAP office in Port Moresby from a man calling himself 'Charlie Fred' who purported to be the acting commander of the OPM. His ransom demand was the release of prominent OPM commander and spokesman Matthias Wenda along with twelve other OPM rebels in PNG prisons, threatening to kill 'the whole refugees' if they were not freed¹⁴⁸. The article is completely unlike contemporary reports in Asia in that its central theme is not really the kidnapping, but the imprisonment of Wenda, which received a notable amount of coverage in Australia at the time. It also introduces Fred, who is not identified in any other media reports or academic texts. The Korean loggers kidnapping can be seen as reflecting the marginalisation of the OPM in a new era where the independence movement centred on the legitimate body of the Presidium, the only reports regarding the OPM reiterate its degeneration by recalling Wenda's imprisonment.

The most recent kidnapping of foreigners by the OPM in Papua, the Belgian filmmakers taken in 2001, went completely unnoticed by the Australian print media. Apparently some footage of the Belgian's release was shown on an Australian television news program but I was unable to find out which one¹⁴⁹. This can also be attributed similarly to

¹⁴⁴ Ballard believes that 'A clear line of connection can be traced between the events of 1994-95 and the taking of the hostages at Mapenduma by the Organisasi Papua Merdeka. The local OPM leader, Kelik (Kelly) Kwalik, was an Amungme who had lost at least four family members during the 1994-95 killings'. Ballard, Chris 'Irian Jaya' *The Contemporary Pacific* Vol. 9, no. 2, Fall 1997, 469

¹⁴⁵ Browne, Susan J. *Irian Jaya: 30 Years of Indonesian Control* Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 1999, 23

¹⁴⁶ Walters, Patrick 'Mission tries to free Irian hostages' *The Australian* January 22, 1996, 4

¹⁴⁷ This kidnapping was big news in Indonesia, Japan and Korea.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter, Russell 'Difficult times on PNG's border' *The Weekend Australian* June 19-20, 1982

¹⁴⁹ Interview with John Martinkus The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

the more prominent coverage of other events in Papua, namely the political fallout the Presidium was experiencing as its leaders faced subversion charges for promoting a free Papua¹⁵⁰, and reports of police and military violence¹⁵¹. It cannot be said that the media were ignoring Papua, quite the contrary, newsagencies were overwhelmed with the number of things going on there, and kidnapping had been done before. As Williams put it, ‘what makes news is change... the lack of change means that it’s not an interesting story to a lot of people’¹⁵². The tactic of politically motivated kidnapping in Papua by the OPM was no longer newsworthy, whereas the Presidium was. This was the only kidnapping where the hostages came to the OPM rather than the other way round, so it is unlikely that any planning went into the avenues of communication dictating ransom demands and publicity.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Tight security for Irian Jayan subversion trials’ *The Australian* May 15, 2001, 8

¹⁵¹ For example Poulgrain, Greg ‘Police accused of Irian terror tactics’ *The Courier Mail* (QLD) July 20, 2001, 12 and Poulgrain, Greg ‘Papuan killed in Irian timber row’ *The Courier Mail* (QLD) May 19, 2001, 19

¹⁵² Interview with Louise Williams Fairfax building, Sydney, July 6, 2005

Conclusion

For the last forty years the Australian media has mirrored Australian government policy on Papua, either ignoring indigenous struggle and Indonesian human rights violations, or playing them down. Programs of transmigration and the exploitation of West Papua's resources fuelling intense Papuan resentment towards the Indonesian authorities, who are perceived by many to be neo-colonial invaders, have received little coverage¹⁵³. OPM kidnappings created the most substantial news events regarding Papua right up until 2001, and they only made the front page once in Australia¹⁵⁴. Continuous struggle against Indonesian authorities, including attacks on the Freeport mine, and the refusal to culturally conform has resulted in the same kind of heavy military repression seen in East Timor and Aceh, whose struggles have received considerable airplay in the Australian news media. Abandoned by the UN following the 'Act of Free Choice' Papuans have suffered as the TNI openly used rape, torture and execution to control the indigenous population, without any kind of reprimand from their government or the international community¹⁵⁵. The OPM cannot hope to combat them militarily so they have aimed to attract recognition and political support from alternative sources, beginning in the 1980s with the PNG government. Kidnapping foreigners has become a recurrent method of the OPM in this context. I have therefore argued that this is because it catches the eye of the international media. It is exciting and dramatic, but also reminds the world that the OPM exists. It is only through extreme operations involving members of the outside world that the OPM have been able to utilise the kind of narrative resistance that could ultimately be their vehicle for gaining international support.

Historically, the abduction and holding of foreigners has done little in terms of material or political gain for the OPM. None of their ransom demands has ever been met, from the A\$2.1 million dollars requested for the life of Swiss helicopter pilot Werner Wyder, to the freedom of West Papua from Indonesian rule demanded in return for the release of the Mapenduma British, Dutch and Indonesian scientists in 1996. This supports the argument that the real purpose of the kidnappings has been to obtain attention and acknowledgement of the OPM's struggle. Although it is possible that the end results of the kidnappings have been mere bungling by the divided and disorganised factions of the OPM who, in tiring of the charade, have taken the easy road by releasing their captives, evidence suggests otherwise. Many of the journalists who have reported on the movements of the OPM believe that kidnappings are the product of desperation¹⁵⁶, yet this does not suggest a lack of planning. The OPM may be oppressed, but they are not

¹⁵³ Bohane, Ben, Elmslie, Jim & Thompson, Liz *West Papua: Follow the Morning Star* Melbourne: Prowling Tiger Press, 2003, 8

¹⁵⁴ Roberts, Greg 'Irian rebels snatch hostages' *The Sydney Morning Herald* January 11, 1996 Features p. 1

¹⁵⁵ Martinkus, John *Paradise Betrayed: West Papua's Struggle for Independence* Melbourne: Black Inc. 2002, 4

¹⁵⁶ Interviews with Carmela Baranowska, Brunetti, Carlton, June 21 2005; John Martinkus, Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1, 2005; Ben Bohane QVB, Sydney, July 4, 2005; Nic Maclellan, East Brunswick, May 4, 2005

stupid¹⁵⁷. Kwalik believed that ‘If people had any understanding of what has happened to us they would have to feel sorry for us.’¹⁵⁸ I believe the OPM’s true motives have never really been to obtain money or political ends for themselves, but instead to promote their desire for these ends, publicising Papuan discontent¹⁵⁹. Even if OPM ransom demands are not met, there is a need for media, if ever so briefly, to provide contextual information, giving substance to narrative resistance.

It was clear by the end of the 1970s that OPM activities in Papua would only ever receive limited airplay in Indonesia. The OPM demonstrated commitment to both Melanesian Consciousness and narrative resistance as it became aware that it was more likely to receive coverage in the PNG press that would be relayed to the world in contrast to the highly closed and censored media of Indonesia under Suharto. The Indonesian military was not keen to promote the fact that there was serious opposition to Indonesian rule being asserted through guerrilla actions¹⁶⁰. By kidnapping foreigners and involving PNG citizens and government the OPM ensured that the event would be covered internationally, and that information would be more clearly and comprehensively dispelled. Additionally the fact that reporters in PNG were fellow Melanesians meant that coverage was typically sympathetic when relayed by newswires such as AAP. The manner in which the kidnappings played out suggests that the OPM used conditions in PNG to meet their own purposes for publicity. If publicity was the only aim of the operation they were very successful. In the first phase of kidnapping the OPM were ideologically driven by a sense of Melanesian unity to seek assistance from PNG, as is demonstrated by such tactics as requesting Narokobi and Momis negotiate, as well as releasing photographs, tapes and letters. While they were unsuccessful in gaining official support, it is clear that the people of PNG sympathised with West Papuan desire for independence.

The second phase of kidnapping focused on the distribution of the resistance narrative. The OPM have resisted a neo-colonial force in an extremely isolated part of the world suffering from heavy censorship, and have been unable to access political media outlets. But by 1996 the OPM were able to engage a far wider audience, not only in their hostages’ home states, but in Australia as well. However, by relying on the ICRC and other organisations to release statements and material, such as photographs, video footage and interviews, for them, the OPM were unable to replicate the same degree of sympathetic coverage as earlier kidnappings had done directly through PNG press. The OPM received unprecedented publicity globally following the 1996 hostage crisis, which

¹⁵⁷ O’Neill, Theresa D. ‘Telling about Whites, Talking about Indians: Oppression, Resistance and Contemporary American Indian Identity’ *Cultural Anthropology*, no. 1, vol. 1, 1994, 116

¹⁵⁸ Davis, Mark & Cronau, Peter ‘Blood on the Cross’ *Four Corners* broadcast 12 July 1999

¹⁵⁹ Davis concurs in his comments on the 1996 Mapenduma kidnapping, ‘Throughout the kidnapping their one demand was that CNN came in or ambassadors of other countries come in. They weren’t after any money, they weren’t after any other tangible result. They weren’t expecting the mine to close down, they weren’t expecting the army to leave, nothing. They just said, hundreds of people have been killed here... Absolutely the purpose was to gain international attention.’ Mark Davis, Interview at SBS, St Leonards, NSW July 5th 2005

¹⁶⁰ See Kirksey, Eben S. & Roemajauw, J. A. D. ‘The Wild Terrorist Gang: The Semantics of Violence and Self-determination in West Papua’ *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2002, 192

created awareness of their existence and struggle. The success of this operation as a vehicle for narrative resistance can be gauged on a number of different levels. While it pushed their resistance narrative further over the globe than ever before, coverage sensationalised the event and the OPM, utilising what Martinkus refers to as ‘the National Geographic approach’¹⁶¹, producing content that was simplistic, melodramatic, and occasionally deeply inaccurate. Nevertheless it could be contended that ‘any publicity is good publicity’.

The cost of appealing to this kind of sensationalised story has been the decline of interest in coverage of kidnappings of foreigners, reducing the power of coverage to act as a resistance mechanism for the OPM. The third phase of OPM kidnappings reflects this and the deterioration of the OPM’s monopoly on separatist struggle in Papua as the Presidium overwhelmed coverage of rebel operations. The race of the hostages and timing of the first 2001 kidnapping prevented any substantial coverage in the Australian media, who were already running a story on the OPM regarding the imprisonment of Matthias Wenda. The Korean logger kidnapping demonstrated how the TNI profit from appropriating OPM tactics such as kidnapping to advance a negative portrayal of that group¹⁶². The lack of coverage of the Belgian kidnapping in Australia conveys the failure of the operation to continue to utilise narrative resistance through this tactic as change makes news not repetition.

External political factors such as border relations between PNG and Indonesia, the fall of President Suharto, and the establishment of the Presidium frame the way the media present OPM kidnappings of foreigners, while access, background information, public interest and financial viability of travel restrict communication between international media and the OPM, significantly impacting upon coverage of kidnappings. Media shape the tactics used by the OPM in resisting Indonesian neo-colonialism to the extent that OPM operations have developed to accommodate media needs, namely sensational stories like foreigners kidnapped in the jungle, that will sell newspapers. While kidnappings depend on the presence of foreigners, and circumstances that enable their abduction, kidnap planning is aimed as the OPM themselves suggest, at attracting international media attention. Through direct distribution of material the OPM, driven by Melanesian Consciousness, initially sought the support of the PNG government to forward their resistance narrative. While it became clear that the OPM would never

¹⁶¹ ‘It reduces their conflict to this sort of funny little milieu, you know penis gourds and grass skirts running around the mountains um which actually kind of belittles what has actually happened. And belittles the reasons they’re actually fighting’ Interview with John Martinkus The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

¹⁶² The immediate result of corruption surrounding the OPM is that foreign journalists attempting to cover their activities have extreme difficulties in finding a legitimate member of the OPM to speak for their faction. Carmela Baranowska, an Australian documentary filmmaker, found working in Papua in 2003 a highly frustrating experience, as she was unable to locate a solid information base for a film as no one would talk to her, ‘I think a lot of people know about what’s going on, you’re in West Papua, people know what’s going on but they won’t talk to you because either they’re sitting on the information, or everyone’s supposed to know anyway. It’s mad. And that’s the situation you’re working in.’ Baranowska says that the big question really is ‘Who are the OPM?’, because she, and many others like her, have no idea. Interview with Carmela Baranowska, Brunetti, Carlton June 21, 2005

achieve such support because of the need for peace in PNG's relationship with Indonesia, their resistance narrative went beyond Melanesia through media coverage. It can be seen as successful in its capacity to raise awareness of the OPM and its struggle in Australia, especially since the advent of the information age. But the OPM cannot continue to use the tactic of kidnapping as a vehicle for narrative resistance as it has ceased to be newsworthy material in Papua.

Appendix

Interviews

Interviews with the following people were conducted and recorded by Eleri Harris in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. Transcripts will be made available on request.

Ida Palaloi, Indonesian print journalist: Interviewed in Campbelltown, NSW, July 7, 2005

Palaloi has worked for many years as the Australian correspondent for the Indonesian Magazine *Gatra*. In 1996 she reported on the Mapenduma hostage crisis using Australian sources to give an alternative view on the kidnapping to official Indonesian reports, something she has tried to do throughout her career. In 1996 she used such alternative sources as Ben Bohane for photographic material and controversially interviewed OPM representative in exile John Otto Ondawame, who lived in Australia for many years. Palaloi bought a photograph of Kelly Kwalik from Bohane for A\$10, 000 to accompany her article, a photograph she says was later passed on by *Gatra* to the Indonesian military. Fortunately for Kwalik he never met Bohane and so the picture was of some other rebel, most likely Titus Murip who is legendary for his Kwalik impersonations.

Carmela Baranowska, Australian documentary filmmaker: Interviewed at Brunetti, Carlton June 21, 2005

Baranowska is an award winning documentary filmmaker who has covered conflict in regions such as East Timor and Afghanistan. In 2003 she and John Martinkus went to Papua to research the OPM, but the trip proved fruitless in terms of footage because of the restrictions Baranowska faced filming, and the problems they had finding sources. Baranowska, constantly being pulled aside by police and army officers for filming, did not get enough material to warrant a project of any size.

Chris Pigram, Australian geologist: Interviewed at the Geology Australia Building, Canberra, July 14 2005

Pigram was, as far as I know, in 1982 the first white person to be kidnapped by the OPM. Until I began research he was not aware of his mention in Osbourne's 1985 book about the OPM, which in any case is a distorted version of the abduction. His experience has been recorded in this thesis to demonstrate the inaccuracies of reporting through two languages and multiple layers of political agendas, for the media, the military and the censorship regime of Suharto, even though his kidnapping was not recorded in the Australian print media.

John Martinkus, Australian print and TV journalist: Interviewed at The Clyde Hotel, Carlton, June 1st 2005

Martinkus, currently employed by SBS's *Dateline*, has primarily worked as a freelance Australian print journalist who has taken to writing book length versions of his

experiences in Indonesia's insurgent regions. These are *Indonesia's Secret War in Aceh* and his highly acclaimed work about East Timor, *A Dirty Little War*. He wrote 'Paradise Betrayed' about West Papua for *The Quarterly Essay* in 2002 and has since been blacklisted in Indonesia. His work and interview have proved invaluable as insight into working as a freelance Australian journalist in Indonesia.

Louise Williams, Australian print journalist: Interviewed at the Fairfax building, Sydney, July 6, 2005

Williams is a senior journalist with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and has worked in Asia for many years. In 1996 she was the first Fairfax journalist to be reinstated in Jakarta following the 1986 'Suharto and his Billions' story that so angered the former dictator. Her reinstatement was soon followed by the Mapenduma hostage crisis that she covered exclusively for Fairfax from Jakarta, unable due to financial and travel restrictions to visit the province. Since 1996 Williams has written a great deal about West Papua, and visited with the Australian military during the 1996-1997 drought, although she is now based in Sydney. As the only mainstream permanent correspondent that I interviewed, Williams provided a great deal of information on how journalists and editors filter reporting on Papua.

Nic Mclellan, Australian radio and print journalist: Interviewed in East Brunswick, May 4, 2005

Mclellan has worked as a journalist, researcher and community development worker in the Pacific islands. In 1984-5 he compiled reports for AusAid on the refugee crisis along the border between PNG and Indonesia. He worked with the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) in Suva between 1997-2000. For over a decade, he has testified as a Special Expert to seminars of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, and has written a number of articles and monographs on West Papua and Australia / Indonesia relations.

Mark Davis, Australian documentary filmmaker: Interviewed at SBS, St Leonards, NSW, July 5th 2005

Davis has worked for many years in the Asia Pacific region as a documentary filmmaker. In 1999 his film 'Blood on the Cross' was broadcast on the ABC's Four Corners, detailing the complicity of the ICRC in the bloody aftermath of the Mapenduma hostage crisis. His film showed footage of Kelly Kwalik's speech on the 8 May release day for the first time on Australian television, allowing the OPM a direct voice to Australian audiences. Davis has since been blacklisted in Indonesia. He is willing more than any other source to defend the actions of the OPM, and is blatantly sympathetic to their cause.

Ben Bohane, Australian photo-journalist: Interviewed at QVB Sydney, July 4th 2005

Bohane is the freelance photo-journalist who first met the Nduga faction of the OPM weeks before the Mapenduma kidnapping. He photographed and interviewed members of the OPM group responsible, unfortunately tricked into believing Titus Murip was Kelly Kwalik, and supplied a great deal of the background information given in Australian coverage of that kidnapping. He also met the scientists who were kidnapped on his way out of the bush, warning them that having the Indonesian scientists with them was

creating some tension. Bohane was blamed for instigating the kidnapping, but he has attested that he never suggested it, and the Nduga acted on their own accord.

Transcripts of an interview of prominent West Papuan human rights and independence activist John Rumbiak from ELS-HAM were kindly supplied by Dr Jim Elmslie, a leading academic specialising in West Papuan economic history. These interviews formed part of a book Elmslie is currently writing about Rumbiak, as such they cannot be made available upon request to Eleri Harris, instead Dr Elmslie should be contacted. Rumbiak was based in the mining town of Timika during the 1996 Mapenduma kidnapping and was responsible for relaying leaked military reports and OPM statements regarding developments in the negotiations to the London based human rights organisation TAPOL.

Reference has been made to Wolfe, Patrick 'Structure and Event: Settler Colonialism, Time, and the Question of Genocide' from Moses, Dirk A. (ed.) *Genocide and Colonialism*, New York, 2006 a book that has yet to be published. A copy of this chapter is attached.

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