

West Papua

Action Update

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Tribes Draw the Line: Enough is Enough!

"The tribal warrior cultures of the native Papuans would rather die fighting than live another minute under the brutal, destructive and genocidal Indonesian regime. I have to say I agree with them."
- Friends of People Close to Nature activist in West Papua.

"In the forest we can fight and win with bows and arrows and a few old rifles. Give us a hundred guns and we could take Jayapura and drive the Indonesians out." - Malkaya Brower, 60, OPM activist.

December 1st, 2000: 39th anniversary of the failed, unilateral declaration of independence for the former Dutch colony of West Papua. Across the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya the banned Papuan 'Morning Star' flag is proudly raised with due contempt for the law and the people of West Papua announce that Enough is Enough: 'Independence - or death!'

The government response was swift, predictable and sickening. Army units marched into villages demanding the removal of the 'separatist' flags and killed, wounded or arrested those who tried to defend them. In Merauke township, 7 were shot dead; in Fak Fak, 2. On December 7th, police and soldiers stormed Abepura University, supposedly in retaliation for an attack by enraged Papuans on policemen who pulled down a flag in Jayapura. Students - most from fiercely pro-OPM hill tribes - were dragged from their beds; 1 was shot dead on the spot and 2 were stabbed to death with bayonets and beaten beyond recognition; 101 were arrested. Ori Dorongi, 19, was later beaten to death in custody; a witness saw him crawl and die on the floor, his brain exposed through the gaping hole smashed in his skull.

Fighting broke out sporadically throughout December; by the 20th, the death toll for the month stood at 19, bringing the years' total to nearly 50. Hundreds more had been arrested, wounded or 'disappeared'. Torture is routine:

"I could see the clubs, whips and split bamboo whips at their work. Their ends were smeared with blood, and blood sprayed the walls all the way up to the ceiling. Sometimes I saw the policemen hopping up on benches, continuing to strike blows from there or jumping back down onto the bodies "below." -



Oswald Iten, Swiss journalist nicked in West Papua

On January 7th, a cheery bit of poetic justice saw a plane packed with military top brass crash into a remote mountain top in Kurima district, robbing West Papua of some of its biggest bastards. Regional military command chief Major-General Tonny Rompiss, Irian Jaya Police Chief F.X. Sumardi and seven other scum on the torture and oppression scene perished in the 'unfortunate' mishap. Then on the 16th, an OPM guerrilla unit led by Willem Onde took hostage twelve workers from Korean timber company PT Korindo. The OPM are demanding \$1m compensation for the trashing of the environment, as well as the withdrawal of mobile units of cops from Asiki district, a total halt to logging and an end to the security forces' hunt for freedom fighters. The timber company promptly sent out a crack 'negotiating' team, complete with cheque book, to try to come to an arrangement with the OPM. The shit-kickin' Papuans simply took them hostage too! Jakarta has been warned to

start implementing the demands soon, or the OPM they would take more action.

So why now?

Why 2000, the 39th anniversary? Separatist sentiments boiled over last year when the 'softly-softly' approach and token gestures (legalisation of the flag and an official name change to West Papua) promised by President Adurrahman Wahid in '99 were overruled by his own hardline government. Preferring the no-nonsense days under Suharto's jackboot, they instead upped the military presence, overrode the 'flag' policy and generally sought to snuff out the tiny flame of hope the President's puny promises had kindled. The new ban on the flag has been brutally enforced by police and army.

2000 also saw the West Papuan independence movement instigate mass gatherings of the clans; the second 'Peoples' Congress', running from 29th of May to 4th June attracted 50,000 and saw the formation of the Presidium Council - a group of moderates trusted to conduct pro-

Around 1511, some Portuguese sailors found a big island north of Australia. It never occurred to them that it might already have a name, so they called it New Guinea. They wandered off shortly afterwards, as explorers will. In 1700 the Dutch arrived, and they weren't quite as laid back. They invaded and started plundering. The British and Germans dived in soon after, and that's how it all came to be divided up.

Rich gits of varying western nationalities spent the next few hundred years arguing over lines on maps, until 1969, when the OPM (Free Papua Movement) started kicking up shit. This was a reaction to the 1963 invasion of West Papua by Indonesia, which stopped the independence process. Indonesia promised to give independence, but of course this was bollocks. They killed some 300,000 people at least and are still killing anyone who opposes them, with help from the West, particularly the US and Britain. Despite the mass murder, tribal people continue to resist the destruction of their homeland, race and cultures.





independence dialogue with Indonesia. The moderates, predictably, went straight for compromise, amongst other things striking an agreement with the authorities to restrict the flying of the Morning Star to just 5 locations. The people were livid.

'It's a tragic decision, detrimental to the whole independence struggle.'

- John Rumbiak, Institute for Advocacy and Human Rights.¹

Both the OPM guerrillas and the Penis Gourd Council of Elders - whose exotic and risque name is derived from the traditional, 'minimalist' attire of the Dani hill tribe - have denounced the Council and have vowed to Live Wild or Die. They will undertake armed attacks as the only effective way of countering Indonesian brutality. Just about everybody in West Papua supports these 'hardliners'; no-one believes dialogue with Indonesia will get anywhere.

"We are all OPM in our hearts" - student leader Jatin Wakerkwa

The Build-Up

In the months preceding Independence Day, the military machine of the world's fourth most populous nation geared up for full-scale assault on a province of tribal peoples armed with little more than spears and bows and arrows. On October 6th, the chief of police ordered that all Morning Star flags be pulled

No Refuge in PNG

Senior Papua New Guinea (PNG) defence officers have claimed that Indonesian troops have made more than 400 illegal border incursions in pursuit of rebels in a two month period. The PNG government has chosen to ignore these border violations, insisting the situation in West Papua is an 'internal' matter for Indonesia. Strange then that PNG has not extended its 'turn-a-blind-eye' border procedure to the West Papuan refugees the soldiers are chasing. PNG Deputy Police Commissioner Sam Inguba has stated that any refugee suspected of OPM activity will be arrested, charged and handed over to the tender loving care of the Indonesian authorities...

down within a month. The next day, in the highland town of Wamena, protests broke out after cops moved in to remove a flag; by nightfall 2 tribespeople lay dead and 21 were injured. Soldiers - some of them fellow Papuans recruited from Biak and Serui - fired on fleeing women and children and indiscriminately strafed the bushes with

In one incident, soldiers took a Papuan family hostage, cut the children up alive and fed the pieces to dogs.

machine gun fire. Prisoners were sexually assaulted with bayonets and forced to drink tea made with soldiers' urine. The people of the Baliem valley fought back. Thousands blockaded Wamena's Wama bridge; the authorities replied with a shoot to kill policy and by the end of the next day 30 lay dead - including Indonesian transmigrants killed in retaliation. In one incident, soldiers took a Papuan family hostage, cut the children up alive and fed the pieces to dogs.

By the end of November, 26 heavily-armed warships lay moored off the coast from the West Papuan capital Jayapura; at the same time more than 25,000 Indonesian troops were parachuted into the central highland region, the heart of the struggle. As in East Timor, Indonesia has also gone all out to raise pro-Jakarta militias from isolated villages. Then on the 28th, 5 members of the Papuan Presidium Council were arrested for insurrection (see below), despite being in dialogue with Wahid. The fear is that the OPM and other radicals are being baited into retaliation - easy 'justification' for all-out war on the Independence Movement.

On 28th December, presidential spokesman Wimar Witoelar spelled this out: the approach to dealing with the 'problems' in West Papua, he said, was to change from preventive to repressive. "From doing preventative ways to avoid occurrence of incidents, it will be changed to conducting efforts after an incident has occurred, which according to the President's term, are repressive ways."

Presidium Council Leaders Nicked

On November 28th, just ahead of the planned Independence Day celebrations, Jakarta made a move and had 5 Presidium Council members, including leader Theys Eluay, arrested for insurgency. In theory, they could get up to 20 years in jail if convicted.

The Presidium Council (PDP), formed during the second Papuan people's congress, has 31 members and a mandate of trust to forward demands for independence by 2005. Although dubious as to the efficacy of such a Council, the West Papuan people and the OPM cautiously agreed to back the PDP, recognising it as a useful 'tool' to help internationalise the West Papuan issue at a crucial time. Come the end of the year, however, Papuans felt they had been right to be doubtful.

"People are crying because PDP has become the Indonesians' little puppet" - Timi, OPM activist

On 29th August, the OPM invaded the PDP offices, shut them down and nicked the keys. The PDP, like most 'elected representatives', were selling out the people. Dialogue was keeping the independence issue an 'internal matter', not an international one; playing into Jakarta's hands. On the 6th December, 8 days after the arrests, the OPM announced to the world that the PDP's mandate was withdrawn. "Papuans will have a new meeting to make a new team to select people to speak the truth from the heart of West Papua" said a representative. Many in the OPM see the PDP as handing themselves to the cops on a plate, both to 'gain cred' - create an attractive illusion of 'dangerous radicalism' for a bunch of ineffective moderates - and to avoid Papuans demanding their accountability over what they've done since their election. Which ain't much.

This may be true - it would not be the first time aspiring bureaucrats used 'political arrest' as a handy protection mechanism. On the other hand it might also have got to the point where the Indonesian state wants to contain any Papuan organisations- however moderate.

The last year has seen a large political space open up in Papua. So called 'Papua posts' were set up all over the land where tribes talked and organised about their future openly when in previous years this would have been met with massacres. In many towns and villages a significant 'dual power' situation arose with Indonesian soldiers matched in number- if not in arms - by longbow carrying tribespeople. Big demonstrations and road blockades were beginning to impact on the economic running of some of the settler towns. Thousands of settlers have demanded to be flown out of Papua after conflict with the natives increased. By jailing - rather than





killing - members of the PDP Indonesia can achieve two things. Firstly it can send a stark message to all papuans that any resistance or minor demands will be met with firm repression. By arresting even the PDP Indonesia is saying 'that period is now over'. Secondly by jailing the PDP members, rather than simply killing them, it can hold in reserve a group which if mass struggle escalates it can wheal out to negotiate with and moderate the people. By both containing and maintaining moderates while murderously repressing militants Indonesia can hedge its bets.

Western NGOs have fallen over themselves to puff up the PDP as having unquestioning support - 'the true representatives of the peoples of West Papua' (Dutch NGO). To read newspaper and NGO reports the arrests of these leaders is THE most important event in the last six months. The reality however is that it is only a sideshow to the main attack on grassroots Papuan organisations in the towns and villages and armed assault on the OPM guerrillas in the forest. The PDP long ago lost its standing among Papuans- who can smell the sweet scent of bullshit for themselves. They heard the Council assure Papuans they will settle for nothing less than the top prize of total independence. Then they saw documents signed by the PDP kissing Indonesian arse, assuring the government that they are, in fact, quite prepared to settle for the wooden spoon

of 'increased autonomy' rather than full independence.

Never trust a bureaucrat. Certainly very few people in West Papua trust Theys Eluay - Presidium leader. Under his wise direction, Council members have managed to alienate most of the population - not least by lumping the Indonesian army and the OPM together as 'violent extremists'.

"What the people want is INDEPENDENCE not investors!" - OPM communique

The Jakarta regime has tried various tactics to appease the pro-independence multitudes. Obviously, handing Papua back to the Papuans isn't on the cards; instead Indonesia has tried to buy the people off with the promise of a bigger slice of the profits from the mining and oil concessions which are Indonesia's reason for being there in the first place. This is where liberals like the Presidium Council become dangerous - they tend to 'negotiate' 'sensibly' around such offers, securing compromise deals that sell out the true demands of the people they're meant to represent in exchange for a taste of the multinational action, a cushy job in the new regime and, if you're lucky, a 'symbolic' gesture such as the decriminalising of the flag. Yorrys Raveyai, notorious one-time leader of a Jakarta-based 'thugs-for-hire' group and executive member of the PDP has publicly voiced opposition to independence. "I want

Irian Jaya to remain part of the Motherland" he says, somewhat controversially for an 'independence leader', urging the government instead to spend more on 'economic development' of the province.

The People of West Papua don't want this. They don't want copper mines, money, or next years' cops in the shape of the Presidium Council. They want their forests un-raped and they want the freedom to live without being fucked over. 'Yi Wa O' - Just leave us, please.

Notes

1) Opinion on the flag issue is divided within the OPM; some see the defence of the flag as an important symbol of aspiration, others as a senseless waste of Papuan lives.



Guerrillas, Guns 'n' Gourds: A Way of Life For The OPM

"We have 6,000 troops split into 15 battalions in Merauke. We have enough weapons and war equipment. All these forces will make their move once I instruct them to do so." says Willem Onde, leader of the OPM battalion responsible for seizing over 20 employees of a Korean logging company in the past few weeks. Onde, a wild-looking character with long matted hair and huge whiskers, holds the unofficial rank of 'Colonel' and steers his troops from a jungle HQ in the Asiki forest, eight hours drive from Merauke. Only a radio transmitter and a mobile phone link them with the outside world. Onde learned to fight young; joining the OPM aged 12 (he's now 40), he's perfected the OPM tactics of sudden surprise attacks on a target followed by a swift retreat into the heavily-forested mountains.

Onde and his troops have been holed up in the Asiki forest since 1976. Often, they'll have only corn to eat, not even any vegetables or salt. This war is, as the cliché goes, a lesson in survival. Onde's matted hair itself is illustration enough: "To buy a comb, I'll have to go to the town. This means clashing with the TNI (Indonesian). It makes no sense that we must fight a battle just to buy a comb."

Onde's is but one of numerous such OPM guerrilla units. Pretty much autonomous, each unit fights the war against Indonesia in its own territory, always from the comparative safety of a wild hideout. The OPM know the mountains, swamps and jungles; it's their birthright. Even with their M-16's against the OPM's 'primitive' weaponry, the TNI wouldn't stand a chance here.

OPM Military Area III is under the command of Kelly Kwalik, the guerrilla chief best known for the kidnap of seven European botanists in 1996. To get to his battalion HQ near Timika involves a trek of several hours, usually conducted under the cover of darkness and in total silence. Such is the way of the guerrilla; the roads are the enemy's territory. Being spotted could mean death. Instead, visitors to camp walk single file, with an armed guard front and rear, up and over a landscape littered with the tailings from the Freeport mine. Stops are made en route at intermediate camps. Guerrillas sit around, cleaning weapons and chewing betel nut, eyeing visitors with necessary suspicion. Spies and suicide bombers are ever-present dangers; strip searches and body inspections are mandatory. At Post III, Kwalik's headquarters, security is even more intense. It has to be. But inside the heavily - guarded perimeter, life is...well, normal. The softly-spoken Kwalik munches sweet potato and sleeps on the floor of a simple thatched hut, his pillow a block of wood covered with black cloth. The life of the guerrilla is not glamorous. It is a life stripped to the bare necessities. None of these people are professional soldiers; none of them want to have to fight. They are proud mountain people who have the audacity to want to live their lives unmolested by the rapacious industrial hydra. Who favour the full, deep relationship with nature of their forebears over a never-never land of tv sets, cars and cancer. For this crime, they are forced to take up arms. To wage war on the dismal tide of Progress. Their fight is also ours.



May all their arrows find their targets.

A Journey on the Trans-Papua Highway

I squeezed into a shiny green minivan whose Indonesian driver advertised his destination as 'Kilo', meaning an unspecified kilometre marker along the newly constructed but still treacherous section of the Trans-Papua Highway. Techno music began throbbing, the driver started up the engine and my travelling companion Kansus Uweia, a determined man who is the Tribal Head of the Oge Bage Mee, stuck his arm out in a stiff wave to the well-wishers who had come to see us off from the bus terminal.

When Kansus heard that I wanted to be the first anthropologist to study the Oge Bage Mee he offered to accompany me to my new field site. During the journey he intended to do some research of his own. A gold rush had brought settlers into land by Sandalwood River, which has traditionally been Oge Bage Mee hunting land, and Kansus wanted to prevent the situation from going out of control.

Gardens, pastures, the city dump, and dense tropical vegetation zoomed by as we climbed up into the foothills on a rocky dirt track. A Malaysian timber company had built this segment of the highway in exchange for logging rights to a 5 km wide swathe of forest on either side of the road. While there were no towering canopy trees to be seen now the forest still buzzed with life. Periodically we would drive by unseen cicadas, their grating metallic whine increasing in pitch as we whizzed past.

West Papua is home to the largest contiguous tracts of tropical forest in Southeast Asia, and the logging that took place here during construction of the Trans-Papua Highway was on a relatively small scale. The felling of the large canopy trees close to the road had created what tropical ecologists call the 'gap effect': light was able to penetrate deeper into the forest, allowing understory trees to flourish and seeds that had lain dormant in the soil to sprout. The gap effect actually increases biodiversity as long as the forest is given enough time - at least a century - to regenerate. The real threat to biodiversity is the easy access to this area that the road gives to agents of global capitalism.

The amount of plastic rubbish littering the road dramatically increased as we approached Kilo 74. We careened around a sharp bend and stopped just short of a partially washed-out bridge which would have thrown us into a

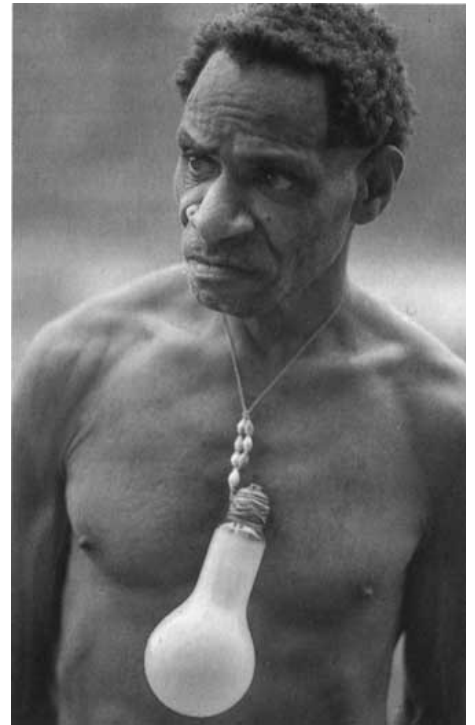
river gorge. The fact that our minibus ride was over was not as dismaying to me as the sight on the other side of the river: a large clearing burned out of the rainforest and filled with two dozen makeshift huts with colorful plastic tarps as roofs.

Kansus and I carefully balanced our way across the remnants of the bridge and walked into the makeshift Kilo 74 village. It had the rough-and-tumble feel of a John Wayne cowboy movie, with two minibuses, half a dozen motorcycles and about 50 people milling around. A man from Sumatra named Petrus called me over to where he was sitting in the 'store' and offered me a fried banana. I invited Kansus to sit down too, but being Papuan he clearly was not welcome.

Petrus told me that he had been a middle man along the Highway for over six months. He and his son had made day trips in their minibus, travelling from the city to the gold camps to sell items such as rice, cooking oil, ramen noodles, soap, and petrol. At the more remote camps he could sell goods for more than 4 times the price that he had paid for them. He bought gold from the panners, which he would then sell to dealers in the city at a similar profit margin.

Three weeks earlier, on his journey back to the city, Petrus discovered that the Kilo 74 bridge had been wrecked. Torrential rain had made the steep road back to the mining camps impassable as well, so he decided to build a tarp hut and stay with his prized minibus until the government road crew fixed the bridge. His makeshift store contained the same items that he had sold directly to the gold panners, but he complained that being a stationary middle-man was not very profitable.

Petrus tried to convince me to stay at Kilo 74 and let him show me a good time: there was a diesel generator that powered a karaoke



machine, and that night there would be some hookers who might even give me a discount for being white (!)

However, we were ready to move onward to Oge Bage Mee land so I said good-bye to Petrus and hired some motorcycle drivers to take us further up the road. Willy, a burly Dani man from the highlands and Edi, his friend from Biak island, agreed to go as far as Kilo 117, where there was a huge landslide passable only on foot. Willy drained a bottle of sour Indonesian beer as I slid behind him on the bike. Surprisingly, we only fell three times during the trip.

We zoomed through the mining settlement at Kilo 96 without stopping. A motley crew of over one thousand residents - from Dani men in penis gourds to clean-cut Javanese merchants - lived there. In addition to hundreds of tarp huts there were more permanent structures with tin roofs, built to



Industrialism reaches deep into the jungle, yet the earth resists it all the way. Landslides and collapses punctuate the Highway.

house the loggers and then abandoned to squatters. Supplies were driven to Kilo 74, and then transferred to motorcyclists who would carry them the remaining distance.

The army barracks at Kilo 96 maintained a degree of law and order in the settlement. But the soldiers perceive themselves as occupying a frontier outpost on the borderlands of hostile natives. In the early 1990s a platoon went looking for OPM rebels on Oge Bage Mee lands, guided by a former OPM soldier named Jap. After several fruitless days Jap, not wanting to disappoint his masters, pointed out several innocent villagers who were promptly shot.

By the time we reached the landslide at Kilo 117 my legs were coated in mud, and blood was oozing from cuts from the falls that I took with Willy the drunken driver. Kansus had somehow managed to get through relatively unscathed. The destroyed landscape here was evidence of the vast powers of nature: several hundred tons of rainforest, boulders, mud, and water had slid off the mountain to bury a football field sized stretch of the road. A footpath had been built across the jumbled wreckage, with a rickety bridge spanning a jagged chasm. Kansus said that this landslide was the earth's way of protesting the recent invasion by outsiders.

We continued down the road on foot, our shadows stretching out behind us in the afternoon light. We were now in Oge Bage Mee territory. A relative of Kansus named Marten lived in a small forest hamlet near Kilo 128 and we hoped to spend the night with him. We soon realized that we would not arrive until well after dark.

As the twilight faded the raucous chorus of jungle animals - crickets, cicadas, parrots, tree frogs - surrounded us. Kansus told me about a being named Tsuku who lived on the shore of a large lake in the forest near Kilo 96. You can only encounter him in an altered state of consciousness and he has the power to travel with the wind or the rain. Several people have been invited to Tsuku's house and shown his wealth: a petroleum field, rubies (batu delima), and a large herd of pigs. He simply kills humans that he dislikes - a group of gold panners went missing near Kilo 96 recently and Kansus suspects that they were Tsuku's victims.

We arrived at Marten's hamlet in a state of exhaustion and I went to sleep on the bark floor immediately. Kansus woke me at daybreak and after breakfasting on sweet potatoes and steamed tree fern leaves, we set out for Sandalwood River gold camp. Turning off the road onto a small trail, razor sharp lianas tugged at our clothes and forest leeches competed with each other for a place on our skin. Although the sun was high in the sky when we reached the camp, the thick canopy of the forest made for a dark scene. A small city of tarp huts spread out among the fat trunks of canopy trees. The gold panners were almost exclusively Papuan, although there were only two Oge Bage Mee families at the camp.

Kansus and I were escorted to a large platform and up to a thousand panners crowded around. Kansus announced that those present could remain if they each paid the Oge Bage Mee Peoples Foundation a one off fee of 5 grams of gold for a license. Any newcomers would have to apply through Silas, one of the Oge Bage Mee men in the camp, for permission to pan.

Kansus and I had gone to Silas's house, when a man from Sorong (a city in the Bird's Head Region of West Papua) approached. He said that a large group of the gold panners had just decided that they would not pay the license fee. Instead he offered Kansus a film container with what he claimed was 35 grams of gold, and a handwritten letter requesting exclusive rights for his group to pan along Sandalwood River. Kansus brusquely dismissed the man and refused to take the container, which actually contained less than 15 grams of coarse ore.

As we left the Sandalwood River mining site, Kansus raged about the Malaysian corporation and Indonesian government that had built the road bringing these unwelcome guests. If the panners continued to find gold there the deforestation, prostitution, and drunken rowdiness of the settlements near the city would infest Oge Bage Mee territory. After returning to the city, Kansus petitioned the government to help regulate the gold panners, but so far his requests have been ignored. Given the Indonesian government's skill at denying such official requests, it is no wonder that many Papuans have turned to armed resistance to defend their rights.

Names and geographical specifics have been changed to protect the innocent.

The author of this piece can be contacted via OPMSG (Brighton).



New Guinea Ecology



Thanks to its great altitudinal gradient, from sea level to almost 5,000 meters, the large island of New Guinea (of which West Papua is the western half), harbours a spectacular variety of ecosystems. Alpine regions, montane forests, grassland and mangroves are all found in West Papua. While an increasing part of the island is being encroached on by industrialism most remains wild and diverse.

Precipitous mountain ranges serve as effective barriers, isolating highland valley species. Jaya peak at 4,884 meters is the highest elevation between the Himalayas and the Andes, and has rare equatorial glacial meadows. This division has resulted in amazing amounts of specialisation and evolutionary change - culminating in tens of thousands of species.

Among the vast forest, hundreds of birds species - many endemic - soar through the canopy. Most famous are New Guinea's brightly coloured birds of paradise. (One species of many is pictured above). Meanwhile on the ground there are three species of cassowary. These enormous flightless birds - some of the largest land animals on New Guinea - feed primarily on fallen fruit.

An incredibly cute looking mammal, the spotted cuscus climbs up among tree trunks, and is prized by Papuan hunters for its meat and thick woolly fur. More amazing still is the honey glider, a marsupial that, like the flying squirrels, has adapted to life in the canopy. The patagium, a flap of skin that connects its fore and hind limbs, allows it to glide gracefully from tree to tree in search of flower nectar.

The goodfellows tree kangaroo (below) is endemic. In the absence of monkeys it has taken over the niches of arboreal fruit and leaf eaters on the island. Slithering among the same boughs is the green tree python. Brightly coloured caterpillars feast on ginger blossoms in the montane forest. Later they emerge as huge birdwing butterflies with wingspans over 25 cm.

Vast mangroves and swamps cover much of lowland West Papua supporting a wide diversity of life, including fish, shrimp, birds and reptiles. All in all New Guinea is one of the wildest and most precious places on earth.



Ecological Revolution Flourishes on Bougainville



“We now understand and have seen with our own eyes the destructive effects of the copper mine operations on our land, our environment, our society and our culture. The mine will remain closed for the rest of our lives.” - Panguna landowners, 1992

With a population of only 160,000 Bougainville has managed to close and keep closed one of the biggest copper mines in the world. Despite having to fight the Australian armed Papua New Guinea (PNG) army, they have held their ground for twelve years with antique guns and home made guns made out of water piping and planks.

At the Freeport mine in West Papua heavily armed state soldiers patrol the outskirts of one of the worlds largest mining operations. The mountains are laid waste. The rivers polluted, whole ecologies decimated. The indigenous life destroyed. Meanwhile the coffers of the British mining corporation RTZplc swell.

On an island off the eastern side of Papua the story used to be the same. In 1969 a RTZ plc copper mine was forcibly established on Bougainville. From the beginning the island's people resisted. News footage of women fighting with riot cops over survey pegs received international coverage. In Bougainville women are the traditional landholders; land is passed from 'woman to woman'. To put it lightly, on this occasion it was clear their land was not being passed on in the traditional manner. The building of the mine saw 800 villagers landless and another 1,400 without fishing rights as land was seized and rainforest destroyed. The subsistence life of gardening and fishing was destroyed. 220 hectares of rainforest was poisoned, burned and bulldozed.

After 20 years the mine had grown to a huge crater half a kilometre deep and nearly 7km in circumference, creating over a billion tonnes of waste. This was dumped into the Jaba River valley creating a wall of waste hundreds of metres high, turning one of the islands biggest river systems bright blue.

In 1988, after two decades of ignored protests, petitions and compensation claims the Bougainvilleans had had enough. A handful of islanders stole company explosives destroying electricity pylons, buildings and machinery. By using guerrilla tactics they succeeded in closing the mine.

Until the war broke out in 1988, the mine accounted for around 45% of all Papua New Guinea's total export earnings. Without these earnings PNG is going bust. PNG, with the assistance of Australia, responded by sending in the military. State soldiers strafed villages from helicopters. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) was formed to defend the land and people from further exploitation. Ten years of war followed.

PNG herded people into 'care centres' (concentration camps) and enforced a medical blockade on the island. 10,000 – one in 16 Bougainvilleans - died in the conflict. Against the odds, despite being heavily outgunned the BRA succeeding in keeping the mine closed. They pushed the state soldiers off most of their island and forced a peace. The land of the mine is slowly regenerating. The people have returned to their age-old subsistence agriculture.

In both cases - West Papua and Bougainville- the London based mining corporation RTZ colonised and destroyed the land, its animals, its plants and its peoples. In both cases when the people resisted western funded and armed state soldiers waged war on them. In both conflicts the same London based mercenaries were employed to attack the indigenous. In West Papua the soldiers that directly confront the people march under the flag of Indonesia. In Bougainville they march under the flag of Papua New Guinea. Military elite's in Jakarta (Indonesia) and Port Moresby (PNG) may command the troops but they in turn are commanded by global corporate elite's. Multi-national corporations do not respect borders, and neither should the resistance. To understand West Papua one has to realise that West Papua and Bougainville are different battles in the same war.

After the Second World War the US elite gave each region of the earth a specific role for the expansion of its capital. The Pacific region was to be used primarily for basic resource extraction and export. Along with the

dictator Suharto one of the founders of the RTZ/Freeport mine in West Papua was Henry Kissinger- global manager and US Foreign policy guru.

The following fifty years saw mines and oil exploration spread over the entire region. The homes and lands of countless indigenous people have been destroyed. The Bougainville and Papuan situations are very similar but there is of course one major difference. In West Papua despite occasional assaults on the mine the indigenous have until now lost- on Bougainville the indigenous are victorious. Why did they win when the Papuans have not?

Bougainville has three advantages that West Papua does not have. Firstly though Australia has pumped money and aid into the PNG military it is still a minor power. For domestic political reasons it would be impossible for Australia to directly intervene rather than through a proxy state. Indonesia on the other hand is a geopolitical superpower with hundreds of thousands of troops at its disposal plus bucket loads of foreign aid. Taking on PNG/Australia was always going to be more realistic than taking on Indonesia.

Secondly Bougainville is culturally part of the Solomon Islands and for that reason the Solomon's government turned a blind eye to aid boats etc leaving to cross the straits to Bougainville. While not supporting the BRA the government was not about to start launching waves of arrests and offensives against BRA sympathisers within its territory. The situation for West Papuans in PNG is very different. Though tens of thousands have sought refuge across the artificial western created border they have not always found it. OPM training camps in the mountainous PNG border area has long been used in the struggle. The last year alone reportedly saw 5,000 go through basic training. (what ever that means in an army with very few guns!) However the PNG military has occasionally cracked down on them, with sporadic jailing of OPM activists. Only this month PNG arrested one of the OPM longest fighting and most respected guerrilla leaders, Mathias Wenda. He and 13 others have been charged with entering PNG illegally and raising an illegal army. The border area is very remote and this combined with the state of the over stretched and collapsing PNG army (a factor the OPM can thank the BRA for) has insulated them against what PNG would have liked to have done years ago. Increasingly PNG is turning a blind eye to Indonesian operations within its territory and has begun serious cross border co-operation.

The third factor, which has helped the Bougainvilleans, is the contemporary nature of themselves as a people. Bougainvilleans are smaller in population than the Papuans but this is balanced out by the level of organisation and mobilisation possible in a people who share a common culture. Papuans on the other hand represent 25% of all languages on earth, a major stumbling block to organising. A small amount of Bougainvilleans have also got knowledge of basic technology having worked in the RTZ mine. Francis Ona, main commander of the BRA and the person who organised the initial attack on the mine, was himself a mine engineer. This level of cultural exposure to modern technology has helped

them to fight a guerrilla war. They can use radios, make guns, run vehicles, set up waterpower generators to run their village workshops. They can use dynamite. The BRA has used the abandoned RTZ mine as a supplier of all they need to fight the PNG. Bougainville really is a recycling revolution. In contrast what makes the West Papuan cultures so precious- their literal Stone Age way of life is a major barrier to their military success. OPM has never gone beyond its traditional fighting style. As they say themselves the OPM is dominant in the jungle but without modern weaponry they can never drive the Indonesians away from the mines and oil fields.

What Bougainville shows most clearly is that 'Independence' within the global capitalist system is practically meaningless. The people of PNG despite being 'free' are still at the whim of the same mining corporations as their West Papuan brothers and sisters. All over the Pacific indigenous people confront the same attacks from state and capital.

When PNG launched its last two operations to wipe out the BRA ('96 & '97), activists from the EFi Network in Britain took action. They invaded and paint bombed RTZ's London HQ, forced the Australian embassy closed for a day and demonstrated outside the PNG embassy. While the peace holds there is little need for solidarity actions. However PNG/Capital may try to gain control of Bougainville once again. More action will then be needed. West Papua & Bougainville are different battles in the same war. For this reason supporters of the OPM should mobilise if the BRA is attacked.

The tenacity of Bougainville's self-described 'ecological revolutionaries' has been an inspiration both to western radicals and Pacific indigenous groups. Against the odds they have shown us that 'powerless' people can win. With determination and the right tactics and technology they can defeat multinational corporations and modern armies. We can only hope that more peoples around the world will -as the PNG saying goes -'do a Bougainville'. Some day maybe even us here in Britain.

Educate Yourself

*Background information and regular updates can be found on www.eco-action.org/bv/

*Get on the Australian Bougainville Freedom Movement' (BFM) e-mail news list by sending your address to: v.john@uts.edu.au

*For an overview read 'Peace on Bougainville?' *Do or Die* 8 and get a copy of the Bougainville Video Compilation available from OPM SG (see back page).

Direct Aid

*Cash for medical aid, clothing etc is needed both for humanitarian reasons and to strengthen the more militant communities on the island- countering the opposite process being carried out by foreign charities. Whatever you can send do- everything counts. Send cash in Australian dollars to : The BFM, PO BOX 134, Erskineville NSW, AU 2043. If sending more than \$50 you should do a cash transfer to the following account: 'Bougainville Freedom Movement 2212 - 1002 - 9038, Commonwealth Bank, Newton Branch, Sydney, Australia.' Send the BFM a letter to inform them that your money transfer was to be used for aid.

Tribal War NOT National Liberation



' "Flag raisings" and "independence movements" have become burnings songs lately in West Papua. Then people might ask, "Do they want a nation state called West Papua?" The answer is of course "Nein!" We instead want to be left alone as we have been and as we are. It does not matter if we are regarded as primitives. The struggle to free West Papua is not to take away one government and then replace it with a new government. We do not want to administer ourselves the capitalists "profit-making". It is a struggle between modern society and tribal people. It is a struggle between an ecologically harmonious life and an environmentally exploitative one.'

- From OPM/TPN Communiqué 1/12/99

As eco-anarchists we in OPM SG (Brighton) do not support 'national liberation' struggles. This is not ideological nit-picking. Most of the population of this earth live in countries 'liberated' by the struggles of the anti-colonial wave. Millions of courageous workers and peasants sacrificed themselves for their 'nation's liberation'. Mostly all that was gained was the freedom to be oppressed and exploited by an emerging native managerial class. 'National liberation' builds nation states while obscuring pre-existing and emerging class antagonisms with the ideology of nationalism. Indonesia itself was forged in the heat of a guerrilla war of national liberation against the Dutch and Japanese.

Often radicals in western countries project onto a 3rd world movement an image that is largely a reflection of their own ideologies not the aspirations of the movement itself. For understandable reasons of survival and diplomacy many 3rd world organisations help this situation by either saying different things to different groups or remaining vague enough to be all things to all people. Is this the case with West Papua?

Papua's mountains and jungles have shaped one of the most diverse peoples on earth. The million or so West Papuans constitute less than 0.1% of the world's population but account for up to 25% of all known languages. Some tribes live far from civilisation (literally meaning 'the culture of cities') carving out a subsistence lifestyle. Others live in or near the Indonesian created towns and roads and have seen their land destroyed by mining, logging and oil exploration. In some places missionaries have made Papuans reject their culture and traditional (un)dress while in others the godbotherers still get attacked if they try to spread the 'good news'.

It would be ridiculous to claim that all Papuans have the same ideas about their struggle. In fact some do not know that the struggle, the OPM or Indonesia even exist.

Those Papuans who know 'Indonesia' has declared war on their race and their ecology could not for a moment envision Jakarta, the New York Stock Exchange or the matrix of global industrialism. Some of the baggage of 20th century 'revolutionary nationalism' has reached the OPM - flag raisings, pompous sounding military titles, in the past even a minute amount of Marxism. On the whole however the OPM has more in common with American Indian resistance in the wild west than Leninist guerrillas in Kurdistan.

There is always a danger that the struggle against Leviathan turns people of the resistance into monsters themselves. Is there a state waiting to be born within the OPM? It is possible but we think unlikely. There are many factors playing against the OPM ending up as 'national liberationists'. The scattered OPM guerrillas have a number of leaders but no central command. They love the land and dislike cities. They demand an end to logging and mining, not just a share of the profits. No other nation states of any meaningful size support the West Papuans - if they get aid at all it will be from either Pacific indigenous groups or anarchist/ecological networks. The diversity of their tribal cultures and the geography of their land both negate state creation. They defend the traditional and largely reject the modern. Their prime demand remains - 'Leave Us Alone!'

However it is not inconceivable that a native managerial elite could be constructed from Papuans in exile, some within the OPM and members of the Papuan Presidium Council. Anarchist orientated elements in the OPM have been guarding against this possibility both in word and deed. The OPM is at root a tribal war of stateless peoples, anarchist peoples, against the destruction of their land by the global industrial machine. As long as that remains so it is our responsibility as radicals in the heart of the empire that attacks them to aid them in whatever way we can.

- OPM SG (Brighton)

Resources from OPM SG

Rumble in the Jungle: Fighting For Freedom in West Papua (22pp)

An interview with a representative of the OPM. The interview covers: Papuan traditional culture, the impact of the Indonesian occupation, multinational mining scum, the OPM and resistance to Indonesian rule, women in the struggle, West Papua after Suharto and what the future holds. A reprint from the radical ecological journal *Do or Die*. £0.60 + postage (inland 30p, EU 40p, World-wide £1.10)

Frontier Wars: West Papua Video Compilation (3hrs)

Three films covering the history of the West Papuan struggle with interview with OPM fighters in the Bush. Amazing footage that shows how the tribal people live and resist in the wild forests and mountains. One film concentrates on the 1996 British hostage situation and exposes the involvement of UK based mercenaries, the SAS and the Red Cross in the massacre that followed. Both shocking and inspiring. £3 + postage (Inland £1.00, EU £2.00, World-wide £3.00)

Ecological Revolution on Bougainville: Video Compilation (1 hr 30 mins)

The successful ecological revolution on Bougainville (see article above) has been an inspiration to Indigenous people and radical ecologists all around the world. This compilation carries two films one from 1995 and one from 2000. £3 + postage (Inland £1.00, EU £2.00, Worldwide £3.00)

West Papua Action Update

This! We intend to publish the Update irregularly when news and events necessitate. For this reason subs are for a number of issues, rather than a period of time. A five issue sub is £1.50 + postage (Inland £1.25, EU £2.00, World-wide £5.50) If you can help distribute we will send you a bundle.

E-mail News List and Website

There is a low volume news list. Send a message to opmsg@eco-action.org asking to go on the opm news list. Our web address is www.eco-action.org/opm

Send order details along with payment (blank payee postal orders only) to the OPM SG (Brighton) address below. Contact us for bulk order details or if you want to make a donation over £20.

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OPM SG (Brighton) see address at bottom.

OPM SG (Ireland) and OPM SG Web site

opmsg@eco-action.org Post to OPM SG (Brighton) addressed OPM SG (Ireland) will be forwarded.

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mancef@nematode.freemove.co.uk

Bristol c/o Kebele, 14 Robertson rd, Bristol, BS5 6JY
kebele@marsbard.com

Oxford Oxford Papuan Rights Campaign
opr@altavista.com

Friends of People Close to Nature (FPCN)

33, Gould Close, Welham Green, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 7EB rains@fpcn-global.org (Direct aid for tribal groups. Great worldwide contacts.)

Delta Box Z, 13 Biddulph St, Leicester, LE2 1BH
lynx@gn.apc.org (Solidarity group for Ogoni and Ijaw

Indigenous resistance to oil drilling in Nigeria)

Chiapas Link Box 79, 82 Colston st, Bristol
chiapaslink@yahoo.com (Solidarity group for the Zapatista Indigenous resistance in Mexico)

Genocidal Corporations



Forests fall, land is destroyed and people are killed so that resources can be extracted for export to the industrial heartlands. Many of the companies involved are based here in Britain.

Last year at the Grovesnor hotel in London an Indonesian trade delegation held a reception for hundreds of British corporate reps. A successful warning demo confronted them. Delegates were pried as they pushed through a barrage of abuse to enter the meeting. Companies attending were told that if they invested in West Papua they would be targeted. This was no empty threat. The previous months had seen four office occupations of British companies active in Papua. In a story like West Papua where the forces of monoculture and capital move against those of freedom and wildness, it is not our place to be passive spectators. What follows is an introduction to some of the companies behind the destruction- more information can be found on the OPM SG website.

Conoco: Oil-drilling in Lorentz

The Lorentz national park is so ecologically valuable it is classified as a UNESCO Biosphere reserve and a World Heritage Site. It is Indonesia's biggest national park encompassing more than two million hectares of wilderness, including snow capped Mount Jaya. All seven of West Papuas major environments are represented in the park, from alpine regions, glaciers down through upper and lower montane forests to grasslands and mangrove forests and swamps. The reserve is home to more than 350 bird species (20 endemic) and at least 123 of West Papua's 154 known mammal species are found here. It is also the home to Papuans from eight tribes.

Last November the US oil giant Conoco started exploratory drilling looking for oil within the park. It has been given a 150,000 hectare concession. At the moment Conoco is only at the opening stages. Action now could stop the project before mass investment puts Conoco beyond the point it will step back.

Conoco has number of different businesses in Britain- all are ripe for pressure. They have four offices in London: The Britannia Project, Conoco House, 203 Blackfriars Road. Tel: 0171 705 2400 Fax: 0171 620 4119. Conoco Ltd, Park House, 116 Park st. Tel: 0171 408 6000 Fax: 0171 408 6660. Brown & Root (U.K.) Ltd, 5 St.George's Road, Wimbledon. Tel: 0181 544 5000 Fax: 0181 544 5579. Kinetica Ltd, 20 Bedfordbury, Covent Garden. Tel: 0171 497 7000 Fax: 0171 497 7020. They also have offices in Aberdeen Tel: 01224 205000; in Great Yarmouth 01493 857351, in Warwick 01926 404000 and Gloucester (under the name Vortoil Separation Systems Ltd), Tel: 01452 386222 They also have

works at Tetney Oil Terminal & Humber Refinery near Grimsby. Why not give them a ring?

RTZ: The Biggest Copper Mine in the World

RTZ is the biggest mining company in the world and for thirty years it has been, with US based Freeport McMoran, mining the highlands for copper and gold. It is a minority shareholder in the mine itself but owns 40% of its (vast) expansion rights. The mine is the single biggest taxpayer in Indonesia and mines 210,000 tonnes of ore A DAY! The ecological destruction to the land and river systems is beyond measure. Local people have stormed and rioted through the mine a number of times but always have had to retreat with the onslaught of soldiers. RTZ has its head office in London in Grovesnor Sq, as well as large offices in Bristol.

BP & BG: The Tangguh Gas Project

Indonesia, through its state oil company Pertamina, is currently the largest marketer of liquid natural gas (LNG) in the world with a 50% market share in the asia-pacific region. During 97/98 the US based ARCO (Atlantic Richfield) and the BG Group announced proved reserves of gas in excess of 18 trillion cubic feet in West Papua. These reserves, consisting of several gas fields both on and offshore, rank as one of the largest gas accumulations in the world. Indonesia intends to exploit this resource through the Tangguh project (meaning strength in Javeneese) involving extraction operations and the construction of eight liquification plants. The major players are Pertamina, BP, and the BG Group, with the project due to begin production 2004. BP (BP Amoco-Arco) became involved in the Tangguh project by buying ARCO predominately because of its stake in this project. The BG Group, parent company of BG Exploration & Production Ltd, was previously British Gas plc before a recent demerger disassociated the UK domestic supplier British Gas (now Centrica) from the international BG Group. BG Group's interests in the UK include BG Storage, a company specialising in selling massive subterranean gas storage capacity to gas suppliers.

BG Group plc, 100 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PT Tel:0118 935 3222 or 0118 935 3484 Email: info@bg-group.com Operates five business segments: Exploration & Production; Liquefied Natural Gas; Transmission & Distribution; Power; and Gas Storage. It is not involved in direct gas supply to the door- that is Centrica (trading under the name British Gas) a separate company not involved in West Papua.

BG Storage (subsidiary of BG Group.), Consort House, Princes Gate, 6 Homer rd, Solihull, W.Midlands, B91 3SA Tel: 0121 711 6200 or 0121 711 6217 Email: tracy.evans@bgstorage.co.uk or storage.box@bgstorage.co.uk

Why not drop them a line to tell you what you think of ethnocide and ecocide!

BP-Amoco Its on-shore UK concerns include Oil refineries: Grangemouth, Firth of Forth, Scotland; Coryton Essex. Chemical factories: Grangemouth, Scotland; Hull; Wilton on Teeside; Baglan Bay, Wales. Research & technology: Sunbury on Thames, near London. Its owns ARCO which has among others offices in Guilford.

“You have learned why the OPM is still fighting. It is the wish of our ancestors that we in the OPM never give up. Therefore, our struggle will always continue beneath the cover of our vast forest.”

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