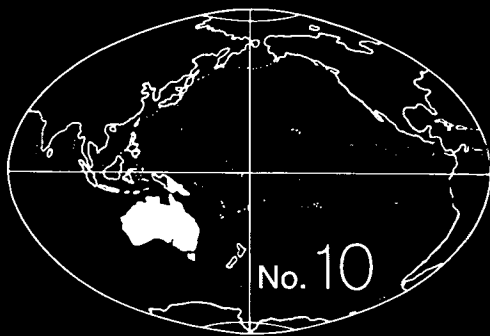




ROBERT J. O'NEILL

# The Army in Papua-New Guinea

With the possibility, in July 1970, of having to use force against rioting civilians — land squatters near Rabaul — the Australian Army in New Guinea entered a new era in which its activities are bound to be the subject of close scrutiny as the country moves towards independence.

After filling in the historical background of the Pacific Islands Regiment, Dr O'Neill sets out to examine the present role of the Army in Papua-New Guinea: defence against external attack, maintenance of law and order, training of loyal, non-political soldiers, and the civic action program.

But what will the Army's future role be, and who will bear the cost? Is a military elite developing? The author concludes that Australia ought to continue to support the New Guinea armed forces for a considerable period — more from the point of view of smooth political development than from that of Australia's future defence interests in New Guinea.

Publication date  
12/2/71

PLEASE RETURN TO:-  
EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

This book was published by ANU Press between 1965–1991.

This republication is part of the digitisation project being carried out by Scholarly Information Services/Library and ANU Press.

This project aims to make past scholarly works published  
by The Australian National University available to  
a global audience under its open-access policy.

**CANBERRA PAPERS ON STRATEGY AND DEFENCE**

**10**

# The Army in Papua-New Guinea

## Current Role and Implications for Independence

ROBERT J. O'NEILL

*A publication of  
The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre*

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY PRESS      CANBERRA 1971

© Robert John O'Neill 1971

This work is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, or criticism, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without the written permission of the Publisher.

Registered in Australia for transmission by post as a book

*Library of Congress Catalog Card no. 77-147122*

*National Library of Australia Card no. and ISBN 0 7081 0536 X*

*Printed and manufactured in Australia by  
Gillingham Printers Pty Ltd, Adelaide*

## THE ARMY IN PAPUA-NEW GUINEA

In July 1970, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Paul Hasluck, placed the Army in readiness to render aid to the civil power in the Territory of Papua-New Guinea should the normal forces of law and order have proved unable to cope with Mataungan Association land squatters near Rabaul. To a man of Sir Paul's background and record as Minister for Territories this action must have been taken with a heavy heart because it represented a break with carefully nurtured tradition and established a new precedent. Never before had the Pacific Islands Regiment been confronted with the possibilities of using force against rioting mobs of civilians, and the hasty training which followed the Governor-General's order must have left a deep impression on New Guinean\* soldiers who were learning the techniques of riot control for the first time. Quite clearly the Australian Army in New Guinea

\*The interchangeable use of the terms 'Papua-New Guinea' and 'New Guinea' raises obvious problems. In this paper 'New Guinea' has generally been used instead of 'Papua-New Guinea' for reasons of economical expression, except in such instances as proper names. On occasion 'New Guinea' is used with special reference to that division of the Territory and the reader's tolerance in interpreting this term in its context is requested. Where reference to Papua only is intended, 'Papua' has been used.

has entered a new era in which it will be the subject of close and penetrating scrutiny by those with a political point to press, not only in Australia, by the media, by some of those academics not included in the first category, and by the public at large.

## COMPOSITION AND DISPOSITIONS OF THE ARMY IN THE TERRITORY

THE Pacific Islands Regiment had its beginnings over thirty years ago in the Papuan Infantry Battalion, the first company of which was raised on 19 June 1940.<sup>1</sup> This battalion was composed of Australian officers and indigenous privates. As the war progressed the numbers of Papuan NCOs increased and by 1945 some Papuans were holding the ranks of Warrant Officer Classes I and II. The battalion distinguished itself for its fieldcraft, particularly in the fighting along the Kokoda Trail. The successes of this battalion led to the formation of further indigenous battalions in 1944 and 1945, only these battalions were recruited from amongst New Guineans rather than Papuans. Some New Guineans had served in the Papuan Infantry Battalion and these men were transferred to become the nucleus of the First New Guinea Infantry Battalion in March 1944. The Second New Guinea Infantry Battalion was formed in September 1944 and the Third was raised in August 1945, just prior to the end of the war. After the raising of the Second New Guinea Infantry Battalion, a special staff, the Headquarters, Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR), was formed to administer both the Papuan Battalion and the New Guinea battalions. A PIR depot battalion was also raised, although two further planned battalions were not formed because of the cessation of hostilities. The Regiment was awarded eleven battle honours and twenty-three of its soldiers were decorated for gallantry. After guarding Japanese prisoners of war in New Britain, the Regiment was disbanded in 1946.

In late 1950, the Australian Government decided that the PIR should be re-formed with one battalion, which was raised during 1951 and 1952 and stationed at Taurama Barracks near Port Moresby. The officers and some of the NCOs were Australians. The highest rank then open to indigenous soldiers was sergeant. During the early 1950s

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account of the development of the Pacific Islands Regiment see N. E. W. Granter (ed.), *Yesterday and Today: An illustrated history of the Pacific Islands Regiment from its formation on 19 June 1940 until the present day* (Port Moresby, 1970).

a Citizen Military Forces battalion, the Papua-New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR), was formed as an all white unit. Since 1964 its composition has become multiracial. In 1952, a company outstation was established by the PIR at Vanimo on the north coast, near the border with the then Dutch New-Guinea. A second PIR outstation was located on Manus Island during the years 1954-62. This outstation was then shifted to Wewak until the raising of the Second Battalion, PIR, in 1965. The Papua-New Guinea Training Depot was opened at Goldie River, near Port Moresby, in 1964 to train recruits for the PIR and to give advanced specialised training which is not provided by the PIR itself. In September 1963, the Australian Government announced a general expansion of Army strength in the territory, involving the construction of new barracks, the raising of additional administrative and service staffs and units, and the addition of another battalion to the PIR. The Second Battalion was raised at Wewak from two of the companies of the First Battalion on 3 March 1965. The Second Battalion took over the Vanimo outstation and the First Battalion now has an outstation at Lae. A multiracial cadet battalion has also been raised.

The traditions of the Pacific Islands Regiment have, during the past thirty years, become well established on the basis of an excellent fighting record during World War II. When the Regiment was re-formed, many former members joined up again and a few are still serving. It has always been Australian policy that a large number of the NCOs would be indigenous personnel although the first indigenous officers did not commence training until 1963. It is probably fair to say that during the 1950s and early 1960s the PIR was maintained largely for reasons of Australian security. Since the question of independence for Papua-New Guinea has appeared to become one to be settled in a short time, rather than in a longer period, PIR training has been increasingly inclined to meet the needs of a newly independent nation. Despite its record of high proficiency on the battlefield and on patrol, the PIR has experienced a number of disorders involving disobedience by large groups of soldiers. These disorders began during World War II over matters such as differential pay rates and conditions of service, and during the late 1950s and 1960s there have been a few repetitions of trouble over similar grievances. To some extent, these troubles were caused by lack of communication between officers and men, but in several instances the Army has immediately discharged men who took part in commotions and disobeyed orders. A heavy surplus of applicants over vacancies within the PIR is a factor making for strict discipline.

During the 1960s, command of the Army in the Territory passed from the hands of the General Officer Commanding, Northern Command, whose headquarters is in Brisbane, to a local Commander, a brigadier, who takes his orders directly from Army Headquarters in Canberra. Altogether, Papua-New Guinea Command contains some 3,200 troops of whom 2,600 are indigenous soldiers, referred to by the Army as Pacific Islanders (PIs). The 600 Australians are mainly officers, senior technical NCOs, and a few corporals and privates. The Australian corporals and privates create some problems because, although they occupy lowly positions within the army hierarchy, their pay and accommodation are better than those of PI soldiers, even of PI NCOs who are superior to them. Consequently, even apart from the requirements of indigenisation, there are reasons for the Army to phase them out as rapidly as possible.

The Army in the Territory does not come under the control of the Administration, although there is close consultation and co-operation between the two bodies. In theory at least the first direct link between the Army and the Department of External Territories is in Canberra, through the Ministers of Defence and External Territories, and this degree of separation has given rise to some special criticisms, alleging unco-ordinated activities within the Territory.

It is difficult to penetrate the state of relations between the Army and External Territories. One has the feeling that current relations in Port Moresby are fairly smooth and perhaps better than they used to be. There seem to have been differences in matters of policy between the Army and External Territories in the past which have now been resolved. The ending of Indonesian Confrontation and the demands of the war in Vietnam may have countered any Army inclinations to build up a large force in the Territory, while the recent troubles on the Gazelle Peninsula may have diminished any External Territories' attempts to reduce the size of the Army and the scope of its activities.

In any event a compromise seems to have been reached whereby the PI strength of the Army is pegged at 2,600, which is approximately two-thirds the size of the total police establishment. This figure presents the Army with two problems. First, under such a ceiling, the Second Battalion of the Pacific Islands Regiment (2 PIR) can raise only three rifle companies instead of four. Although 2,600 men should be ample for two full battalions, the various supporting units eat into this number too heavily to permit 2 PIR to be at full strength. There have been rumours circulating for a few years that a third battalion was about to be raised, but it would appear that this is impossible under

the existing arrangement. Second, the Army can recruit only to make up wastage which is some 240 men per year. In view of the great demand within the Territory for Army vacancies, this small figure creates some selection problems, although it does mean that a very high standard for recruit entry can be set and that the threat of dismissal from the service is regarded very seriously by PI soldiers.

It is interesting that there is no artillery within Papua-New Guinea Command. Probably this deficiency is due not to any residual attitudes left over from the Indian Mutiny, but to the operational roles for which PIR is trained, and pressures of numbers and finance. The battalions train to operate over wide areas with considerable distances between companies and platoons. The nature of the terrain ensures that the patrols can be protected by nothing more than the weapons they can carry. Perhaps artillery could be useful for the protection of key points but it might be argued that if any war situation in New Guinea came to require the protection of vital points, it would be too late to turn the tables by fire support. There might be local political pressures after independence for more artillery, largely for reasons of face, but clearly at the moment artillery would be an expensive luxury and would require a major increase in Army strength, unless one of the battalions were disbanded.

Indigenisation of senior NCO and junior officer ranks has been proceeding since 1963. Nearly all PIR NCOs, from Regimental Sergeant Major downwards, are PIs. There are four PI captains—Diro, Guria, Lowa, and Noga—and twelve subalterns. By the end of 1970 there will be approximately thirty PI officers. The rate of officer indigenisation is being increased, both by sending more cadets to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea, Victoria, and by a new experiment—commissioning of senior NCOs after a three months' course at the Goldie River Training Depot. This rate is not spectacular, but there seems to be a problem of standards which makes further acceleration difficult. Furthermore, full indigenisation is not just a matter of numbers but also of time. In the Australian Regular Army it may take a Portsea graduate eighteen years to reach lieutenant-colonel and command a battalion, if he is doing well. The first PI battalion commanders may have only ten years experience behind them, if one envisages their taking over from Australian COs in, say, 1975. Probably all platoon commanders in PIR will be indigenous by 1972 or 1973 so that by 1975 there should be enough officers to indigenise completely the two battalions. However, it will be a long time before Australian officers in technical positions on Command Headquarters can be dispensed with.

There will also be some difficulty in deciding when to hand over command from an Australian brigadier to a New Guinean. Full independence may be a politically suitable point but unless this date is delayed to beyond 1980, such a move could have heavy costs in terms of operating efficiency.

Most of the Army is located in and around Port Moresby. The Command Headquarters, supporting units, and 1 PIR are all within the town while the large Papua-New Guinea Training Depot is only some twenty miles away on the Goldie River. In addition to the 1 PIR rifle company at Lae are the Military Cadet School, which trains officers prior to attending OCS Portsea, the headquarters of the CMF battalion, PNGVR, and an independent reconnaissance flight equipped with Sioux helicopters and Pilatus Porter light aircraft. As already mentioned, 2 PIR is at Wewak with one rifle company at Vanimo. Each battalion usually has at least a company on patrol, and these patrols, of several weeks or a few months, cover all parts of the Territory including the islands such as New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, and Manus. Australian Army engineers play an important role in assisting with public works in the Territory, particularly in the construction of roads and bridges.

The Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force are also represented in the Territory. For many years, the chief RAN concern has been the Manus Island base, built at great cost by the Americans during the final stages of World War II. For complex reasons, this great base was allowed to be run down after the war, although the RAN and RAAF continued to make some use of it. In 1964, the Australian Government decided to restore the fuel installations there and to construct a depot for the coastal patrol boats which were soon provided for the Papua-New Guinea Division of the RAN. These boats are manned largely by indigenous sailors, under Australian officers. Altogether the Division has some two hundred indigenous personnel, and has recently begun training some to become officers.

The RAAF maintains only a small transport capability of three Caribou aircraft, stationed at Port Moresby. Sabre fighter aircraft and Canberra light bombers have been sent to Port Moresby on occasion, and Hercules heavy transports are kept on stand-by at Australian bases for use in the Territory, amongst other places. Most of the efforts of the RAAF in the Territory have gone into airfield construction, particularly at Wewak, Nadzab (near Lae), and Daru on the south-west coast. Much of this activity was accelerated during the period of Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia, and since Sukarno's fall the pace of construc-

tion has lapsed. No indigenous personnel have been recruited for the RAAF and no plans have been announced for a future New Guinean air force. Consequently, independent New Guinea will be dependent on an external power for the air mobility which is vital for efficient use of the manpower of PIR. This consideration applies not only to the relatively simply operated transport aircraft, but also to helicopter support, provided at present by the Army. PIR patrols have become accustomed to being able to call on helicopters to fly supplies and heavy items of special equipment in to remote areas, to assist in crossing natural obstacles, to provide navigation assistance in difficult terrain, and to evacuate personnel requiring urgent medical attention. While it may be many years before New Guinea has its own force of transport aircraft, it will be even longer before New Guinean army patrols can rely on their own helicopter support.

## THE ARMY'S TASKS

### DEFENCE AGAINST EXTERNAL ENEMIES

The main traditional justification for the existence of armies has been to provide protection against external enemies. In the case of Papua-New Guinea, as for many countries elsewhere, it is difficult to see any likely external enemies for at least some years to come. There was some concern in Australia in 1963 and 1964 that Indonesia might covet the whole of Irian but times have changed and the vague threat has disappeared. However, one cannot rule out entirely any possibility of an Indonesian reversion to Sukarno-style policies, and so the PIR trains to meet the eventuality of a threat from across the Indonesian border.

This training is carefully controlled to avoid giving offence or provocation to the Indonesians, and the border area is controlled by the Police rather than the Army. Some PIR patrols move along parts of the border area from time to time, and there is a company of 2 PIR close by the northern end at Vanimo, but generally the Army seeks merely to familiarise soldiers with border terrain and people, rather than to control the area.

One might ask what use the Army would be in the event of cross-border infiltration. The length of the border is nearly 500 miles, and it can be crossed at will by small groups at almost any point. Much of the border area is covered in thick jungle and the northern half lies through rugged mountains. A single infantry battalion in such country is capable of maintaining close surveillance over only one or

two miles of frontage, so obviously the two battalions of PIR, even with police assistance, can provide no guarantee against cross-border infiltration, except where only a few isolated groups are involved and where their approximate whereabouts has already been reported.

However, if infiltrators crossed the border with any serious purpose, they would be unlikely to remain in the central fastnesses of the island. They must move eastwards if they are to have any effect on the populous areas or administrative centres. The further east they move, the narrower becomes the frontage on which they can operate, the more people there are to report their movements, the longer become their lines of communication and the shorter become those of PIR. In other words, defence in depth is a serious factor in Papua-New Guinea—one which is just as likely to be taken into account by a potential aggressor as by a defender. As the Japanese found out to their cost on the Kokoda Trail, the only way to take control of Papua-New Guinea is via a direct airborne and naval assault on the major administrative centres on the coast—Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Wewak, and Rabaul. A few companies of paratroops dropped into the highlands could profitably add to the confusion and quicken a final collapse.

In 1970 such a situation is fantastic. If New Guinea is ever seriously threatened by war, it will not be simply through border violations but the result of a long and careful enemy build-up, which will provide time for allies to consider assistance.

The chief border task of PIR would seem to be limited to providing assistance to the Police in controlling minor incidents and illegal border crossings by unconcerted small groups. For a large army, such a task would be of small significance, but for a two-battalion force with many other concerns it represents an appreciable commitment and must be taken seriously.

Some complications attend border patrolling, particularly in the northern sector. Although the available maps are now accurate, the dense jungle is threaded by a multitude of foot tracks running in all directions. To march on a compass bearing for any distance is extremely difficult and any patrol is dependent upon local assistance for guidance from one village to the next. Obviously an effective public information program is a vital military tactic. The Indonesians seem to have realised this as much as the Australians and it is wishful thinking to imagine that the villagers on the western side of the border are any less favourably disposed to their rulers than those on the eastern side.

Another facet of PIR training to meet external aggression is the system of exercise patrols which cover both the mainland and the

major islands of the Territory. The size of the area to be covered and the resources at the Commander's disposal mean that individual regions are patrolled through at infrequent intervals—perhaps several years between successive patrols. The major purpose of such patrols is for tactical training but, as in the border areas, these patrols have to take into account the attitudes of the local inhabitants whom they encounter along their route.

The Army has a broad program for cultivating good relations with the indigenous people, and although this program has wider application than merely to increase the Army's capacity to provide protection against external enemies, it might conveniently be discussed at this point. One particular aspect of this program, civic action, has been the subject of recent controversy and deserves examination.

Critics of Army civic action, or the direct use of soldiers for projects which improve village life, have pointed out that such action tends to undermine the standing of the civil administration in the eyes of the people whom the Army assists. Civic action could, it is alleged, be indirectly creating the basis for a military dictatorship after independence because the people will look to the Army as a friend and helper, while the civil government will be regarded as an enemy. When villagers see the PIR patrols approaching, they have some expectation of assistance. When the Administration appears in the form of the local patrol officer or *kiap*, all too frequently it is to gather taxes, to arrest someone, or to administer punishment. If apparent separation is maintained between the Army and the Administration, then the villages are bound to associate the men in green of the PIR with their interests while the civil administration will be regarded with some hostility.

It is curious that civic action has not come under criticism before recent times because it has been a continuous element in Army policies in the Territory since the PIR was reactivated in 1951. No doubt the war in Vietnam has had something to do with this, focusing attention on the techniques of people's war. The Army tended to publicise its civic action program in Papua-New Guinea as a sensible and progressive technique just at a time when opponents of the war in Vietnam were in a mood to damn the methods of counter-insurgency which include civic action.

Irrespective of the timing of this controversy, the weight of the argument against civic action is considerable and bears close examination. However, at the outset one might inquire as to how much of the Army's efforts are put into civic action. Typically out of a six weeks' patrol, two weeks could be devoted to civic action. The seven rifle

companies of the PIR might spend three months each year on patrol duties and so the Army's total civic action commitment would amount to the labour of some eight hundred men for one month each year. When set against the resources of an Administration employing several thousands, such a program is unlikely to have a major impact on the welfare of the Territory, and, if it does, it hardly says very much for the Administration.

If this program has been carried out in such a way as to undermine the status of the Administration, its termination ought to be seriously considered, despite its modesty and military value. Detailed examination of the working of the civic action policy, however, reveals small chance that the authority of the Administration is being undercut by the Army. Responsibility for initiating projects rests not with the Army but with the local people and the Administration. Requests come from local government councils and increasingly from elected members of the House of Assembly. They are discussed together by the Administration and the Army several months before the patrols are to go out, and a patrol plan is fixed which caters for the needs first of army training and second of the civic action program. As far as the Army is concerned, the indigenous politicians are welcome to the kudos for projects carried out in their electorate.

In the execution of Army civic action projects, some care is taken to see that there are Administration representatives present for at least part of the construction time, and on completion it is stressed to the villagers that the local leaders and the Administration are entitled to some of the credit. The selection criteria for projects include, apart from clear indication that the local people want the project, short completion time, tangible results and benefit to the greatest possible number of people. Emphasis is also placed on the principle of self help, with the Army's functions limited more to technical guidance and overall direction than to the provision of a labour force which might build something that the villagers do not really want. Typical projects include malarial control, community halls, school playgrounds, footbridges and tracks, water supplies, and medical aid. The Army is wary of taking on road building projects because such labour is a normal Monday chore set by the Administration for most villagers, and if the Army were to appear on the scene on Tuesday or Wednesday, and suggest more road work, the results would hardly be of benefit to the Army's standing.

In short, this is the way in which Army civic action is currently administered. While these principles are followed, it would seem that,

on balance, the advantages accruing to the Administration, the indigenous politicians, the Army and, not least, the villagers, easily offset the dangers to the principle of civilian supremacy over the military. In addition, by PIR civic action, the indigenous people are shown an example of successful tribal integration which can break down local prejudice against other tribes and help in the long and difficult task of building a national consciousness within New Guinea. A senior academic in Port Moresby stressed to me that it was 'good for the soldiers to have their noses rubbed in the problems of the villages from time to time', while a former senior Administration official admitted that although he had been opposed to Army civic action several years ago, he now thought that it was a good policy for the Territory at large.

#### MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL LAW AND ORDER

Alongside the primary function of protection against external enemies, most armies have the secondary role of maintaining internal law and order, should the government be threatened by violence which the civil police cannot handle. After the recent disturbances on the Gazelle Peninsula,\* New Britain, it is readily apparent that the PIR has been given this additional role. Indeed, when one weighs the probabilities of New Guinea suffering violence from external enemies against the chances of severe internal disorders in the immediate post-independence years, one wonders whether internal law and order might not become the PIR's major preoccupation.

Such a situation is clearly fraught with dangers to the preservation of democratic institutions and civil supremacy and it might be asked whether it would not be preferable to leave law and order entirely in the hands of the Police, who, as an armed constabulary, have firearms and other riot control equipment. In most countries it is unusual for the police to need military support, but there have been several recent examples, such as in Northern Ireland, where police methods and equipment have not been sufficient to meet the demands of this role. Sometimes, of course, the military are needed purely to increase the numbers of available policemen, although such use is generally wasteful as soldiers are not trained to be policemen. However, the reverse is also true: policemen are not trained to be soldiers. Situations may

\*During 1970 there has been a serious dispute between the Administration and the Mataungan Association, which represents a high proportion of the Tolai people, concerning land rights. These disturbances grew to a climax in July.

arise in which the only way that it is possible to re-establish law and order is through a large body of armed men, who are trained to operate under fire and who can use battlefield tactics. I strongly doubt if any such situation has yet arisen in the Territory, but the unwelcome, if improbable, prospect that it might arise at some future date must be faced.

Some thought about the need to provide a stable force which could deal reasonably impartially with tribal disputes has evidently been applied to PIR recruiting. Soldiers are drawn from each of the eighteen districts in direct proportion to the census population totals for each district. Sometimes, in the more backward areas, such as parts of the Western Highlands, educational standards must be lowered in order to secure adequate local representation within the Army, but this compromise of standards is deemed acceptable. Once soldiers have been recruited they are subjected to the detribalising influences of a partially integrated society. Major Bell's study of this subject<sup>2</sup> provides a detailed insight into the operation of these influences and their degree of success. Personal friendships transcending tribal loyalties are quickly formed by most soldiers and old inter-tribal prejudices wane. However, Major Bell makes some qualifications:

As a generalisation it could be said that New Guineans have gained moral ascendancy over Papuans, Highlanders over fellow New Guineans and Bukas over all.<sup>3</sup>

And further:

The three groups most likely to desire secession from Moresby—Bougainville, the Highlands and the Tolais—are the three most dominant groups in the Army.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, as in most societies, numbers do not mean everything when it comes to weighing the relative powers of special groups. The old line system, whereby small language groups or men from one sub-district or district are led by a line-boss, is still present in the Army and forms an obstacle to integration, but the younger soldiers with better education are much less susceptible to the power of the line-boss than the older soldiers.

Within the PIR battalions, company and platoon compositions are heavily influenced by tribal considerations and each man is listed

<sup>2</sup> Harry Bell, 'Goodbye to All That—Integration in the PIR', *New Guinea*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June-July 1967, pp. 49-58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

on organisation diagrams both by his name and by his district. Generally there will be several other soldiers from his district in the same company, although not necessarily in the same platoon. Major Bell wonders whether or not the PIR itself may be becoming a separate tribe. It may be moving in this direction although at present most soldiers still maintain close links with their *plex*, or home village, and look to return there on retirement and to be cared for by their relatives in old age. These attitudes are changing but it will be another generation at least before they are extinct.

Given this basic structure which offers some hope for impartiality, should the PIR ever be pitted against unruly tribal groups, one might ask what more has been done to prepare the Army for rendering aid to the civil power in such a crisis. Strangely, it seems that very little specific preparation has been carried out, possibly because of Administration fears of public and international comment should such training be publicised in the press. Prior to the confrontation between the Mataungan Association and the Police over disputed land at Vunapaladig, the Army had never trained or rehearsed the difficult procedures required for crowd control, once the police are no longer sufficient. It is to be hoped that, in the future, the PIR does carry out a full training program for rendering aid to maintain law and order.

Out of the recent Mataungan disturbances, a number of lessons seem to have emerged. Most important of these would be that the decision to use the Army if necessary to support the Police exhibited over-reaction within the Administration. The one thousand policemen flown into Rabaul were proved adequate to control the squatters, and the Mataungan clubs and bullets, found afterwards in the bush, would have been no match for police equipment. It is now quite obvious that the Mataungan leaders knew exactly how far to go in provoking a confrontation and when to walk off, although this may not have been apparent before the event. The Administration was certainly faced with a difficult and unprecedented situation and would have been open to graver censure had serious violence occurred, resulting in loss of life and widespread damage to property. However, the situation as it eventuated was so far short of this state of affairs that it would seem that a policy of greater caution in future disturbances is called for from the Administration with regard to requesting military assistance. Perhaps the Administration had requested Army assistance merely to have additional labour to carry Mataungan squatters into trucks, but the dangers of provocation which could have arisen through the Army's appearance on the scene, even though it might have been

engaged in a relatively peaceful activity, far outweigh the possible advantages of having more hands to shift the squatters.

For the Army to have been used against the Mataungans would have been a disaster, both for relations between Tolais and the Administration and for the image of the Army within the community. In particular, it must be remembered that once the Police have lost control of a situation, the Army will have to apply greater violence to relieve the situation. The Administration could have started on a vicious cycle, simply through the indirect provocation of the Army's presence. The only conditions which would have justified the use of the Army in the Rabaul area would have been the complete collapse of order, evidenced by widespread destruction of property and loss of life.

Press reporting of the decision of the Australian Government to stand the Army by for assistance revealed a lack of understanding, either by some journalists or by government spokesmen, of the operation of our laws which regulate military aid to the civil power. Several accounts, which were otherwise distinguished in their depth and accuracy of coverage, implied that as a result of an emergency meeting of Cabinet on Sunday, 19 July 1970, command of the PIR had been placed in the hands of the Administrator for purposes of maintaining order. These accounts stated, correctly in my view, that the first appeal to use the Army against the Mataungans came from the Administration, as distinct from the Police. They also alleged reluctance on the part of Army Minister Peacock and Defence Minister Fraser to sanction such use. This reluctance was probably shared by Army officers in the Territory, if it did not in fact originate from them, for three reasons. First, to the men on the spot the situation had not deteriorated sufficiently to warrant the use of the Army. Second, such use would deal the reputation and popularity of the Army a shattering blow. Third, and no less important, the Army was not trained in the complex and delicate procedures which are required if effective aid is to be rendered to the civil power and the situation not made worse through use of military force.

However, the Cabinet meeting of 19 July resulted in no changes to the Defence Act and the laws governing military aid to the civil power. The direct outcome was a proclamation by the Governor-General, calling out the Army in the Territory to render aid to the Administration. Such a call out is essentially a stand-by order and neither initiates local Army action nor hands command of Army units to the Administrator. It merely creates a situation in which the Army commander

can use his troops to restore order, on a request from the Administrator, should he see fit to do so.

Full discretionary powers remain with the commander on the spot. For example, if a platoon patrol is called upon by a local administration official to restore order in a village, and the Army has been called out for such purposes, that platoon commander is in sole charge of the situation. If he is asked to burn down a hut and he does not think it necessary, he does not have to do so. His commanding officer or other superiors cannot order him to do so unless they fly to the spot and take charge personally. Of course the local commander will have to defend his actions before the almost inevitable court of inquiry, after the event, and he has to be very sure of his ground if he refuses specifically requested assistance to the Administration. However, this situation does not absolve him from complete personal responsibility for what happens, particularly if loss of life follows. In other words, while the Governor-General's proclamation is still in force, and it remains in force at this date (September 1970), the Commander bears the responsibility. Presumably there are links back to Canberra, both through the Department of External Territories and the Department of Defence, and, if time permits, Canberra will be able to exercise some control over the process of restoring order, but in the event of a sudden crisis, it is the Commander and not the Administrator who has to take the final decisions regarding the use of military force.

This situation in Papua-New Guinea is in contrast with the system which prevailed in British colonial administration, whereby the Governor was also the Commander-in-Chief of the military forces within the colony. It has come about largely because the Australian defence commitment to New Guinea has been made more for reasons of the security of the Australian mainland than for the protection of the civil administration and Australian commercial interests. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the functions of the PIR are becoming directed much more towards the needs of a future independent New Guinea than to those of Australian security. Furthermore, experience in the decolonisation of British territories has shown that the closer independence comes, the more awkward becomes a situation in which no local civilian officials control the armed forces.

#### THE TRAINING OF LOYAL, NON-POLITICAL SOLDIERS

The extensive program of civil education which the Army runs for its New Guinean soldiers indicates a serious approach to Australia's

responsibility for leaving to an independent New Guinean government a loyal Army. The likelihood of a military dictatorship after independence is discussed below (see pp. 26-7). Despite the fact that the early post-independence experience of many emerging nations, particularly in West Africa, offers only limited ground for hoping that the New Guinean Army will not attempt to use its weapons for its own advantage, the approach of the Australian Army is far from cynical, not least because of its own strongly apolitical tradition.

The education program is administered in two sections. The first, run by the Education Corps, is essentially an extension of the soldiers' secondary education and occupies nine weeks of the year on a full-time basis, together with individual study spread right through the year. Educational standards throughout the PIR are rising rapidly and it is now possible to insist that all recruits have had some secondary schooling and can speak English. Often it is discovered that soldiers who have had up to four years of secondary education have retained only enough knowledge to be classified as first or second year secondary students. However, the keenness of the soldiers to learn is marked and most are ambitious enough to wish to keep advancing their knowledge. This consideration applies particularly to the younger soldiers, but it is not unusual to see a 40-year-old sergeant taking fourth-year mathematics along with 18-year-old privates. In fact, such is the enthusiasm of the New Guineans for education that one wonders whether they are not going to be sadly disillusioned to discover that education alone is not going to secure their future as it appears to them to do for Australians in Australian society.

The second section, civics, is conducted by individual units from their own resources. Most of this course is conducted in an informal atmosphere of discussion, requiring leaders who are well known to the soldiers, and pidgin is frequently used so that imperfect English speakers may express themselves more fully. Typical subjects discussed are: the qualities of a good soldier; what is a good army?; is the New Guinea Army a good army?; the soldier citizen; democratic rights and freedoms; the workings of democratic government; the structure of the Administration; threats to democracy, including an army coup; secessionism; political parties; culture and traditions within New Guinea; regional cultural and political studies; the problems facing New Guinea, including the loss of village culture and the drift to urban slums; social justice and racial prejudice; trade unions and workers' associations; nationalism; and leadership. The curricula set for these courses are what one would expect experienced civilian secondary teachers to draw up.

Most noticeable is the insistence on maintaining the principle of the supremacy of the civilian government over the military.

Apart from these classes on the more general topics, units also conduct more spontaneous discussion groups which touch individual problems and attitudes. These discussions are allowed free rein and there is no set conclusion to be reached. Rather they are simply an opportunity to raise questions, ventilate ideas, and generally to get people thinking. Typical topics would be: Why do I have to pay council tax and also government tax? I can't be bothered voting. Do I have to? Why aren't PI and Australian sergeants, who are doing the same work, paid the same money? A white man at a hotel called me a 'black kanaka bastard'. What should I have done?

The response of the PI soldiers to civics training seems very much as one would expect. Some are interested and others are not. It is difficult to detect any unusual interest in politics which would suggest that any soldiers are harbouring ideas of seizing power after independence, although if there were any such individuals they would scarcely make their ideas public. Generally, PI soldiers seem like most other soldiers in that they are interested first and foremost in their profession and have little real idea of what it takes to lead a political organisation or to run a government. They certainly have opinions on political subjects and these opinions can be quite sophisticated and balanced. A few senior NCOs about to retire told me that they would enter local government council politics when they got back to their villages. The Pangu Pati\* has significant support within the PIR, again as one would expect, although both the party and the Army deny the presence of any formal party members in the PIR.

Throughout the Army's educational programs one cannot help but be struck by the unique experience of seeing an army striving hard to talk itself out of a political future. Certainly correct attitudes are being imparted, but one cannot help wondering whether all this discussion might not be laying a foundation of political consciousness which could eventually lead to a throwing off of the old 'correct attitudes' in a future time of stress. This consideration is not an argument against civics training, for if the future is not unduly rough for the PIR, these are the ideas which will regulate it. At the same time, however, one ought not to lose sight of the fact that circumstances of

\*Pangu, at the time of writing, is the only political party with an organisation behind it, although it numbers only some 12 members of the 94-seat House of Assembly. It has achieved some influence through acting, on occasions, as a con-

stress could arise in New Guinea in which Australian political ideas appear very out of place.

## THE ARMY'S FUTURE ROLE

THE future role of the Army and of armed forces in New Guinea is a topic which is debated publicly within the country with some warmth by a few interested persons, mainly academics. Although the type of force which Australia will have built up by independence will in itself have some influence on New Guinean defence policy after independence, the opinions of the indigenous politicians will be of paramount importance in the long term. At the present, what little public discussion there is of the Army's future role is couched in bald terms with one side alleging that the PIR is bound to take over the government by coup and therefore it should be disbanded, and the other side affirming that New Guinea must have defence forces and be prepared to run the risk of a military coup.

As with most political matters concerning the Territory, leaders of the Pangu Pati have thought about foreign and defence policies in some depth. The party organisation is being skilfully nurtured and is expanding gradually. Membership exceeds 15,000. Although currently very weak in the Highlands, Pangu seems to have a fair chance of forming New Guinea's first independent government. While the party is still in its formative stages, it is difficult to establish its platform with precision in all aspects and very probably some of its current policies will change under the influence of the dramatic political progress which the next few years must bring. However, what follows appears to me, on the basis of interviews with Pangu leaders, to be the general line of Pangu thinking at the moment.

The framework of politics espoused by Pangu is a parliamentary system embracing several parties. The balance of opinion seems to be closer to the Westminster model than to the American Presidential system. The constitutional form preferred is centralist with limited regional autonomy, but it is realised that, in order to tap the strengths

---

certed opposition group. Pangu has trade union support and the sympathy of the Australian Labor Party. Party discipline and cohesion are not fully developed and the party is opposed by the numerically dominant and conservative Highlanders. However, Pangu representatives include some of the most articulate and politically sophisticated members of the House of Assembly.

of the Mataungan Association on New Britain and the Napidakoe Navitu on Bougainville, some further compromise with regional rights may have to be reached. In any event, Pangu sees itself as speaking for its supporters throughout the present extent of the Territory and will not lightly countenance secession by islands or mainland regions, maintaining that such secession would be in the interests of neither New Guinea as a whole nor any particular group which wishes to secede. It claims that a seceded Bougainville in thirty or forty years will be 'left a tiny, weak nation with the world's biggest empty hole'.<sup>5</sup>

Pangu is pressing for internal self-government to be granted as soon as possible. Tomorrow is not too soon, says party secretary Albert Maori Kiki. However, Pangu is not in a hurry to take over the conduct of foreign affairs and defence policy, preferring, if a suitable agreement can be made, to leave these matters in the hands of Australia for a few years. Greater urgency is attached to internal aspects, such as the economy, education, and local government, than to external matters, although one suspects that once the indigenous politicians feel that they are their own masters within their own house, they will be impatient to be in full charge of foreign affairs as soon as possible.

Apart from leaning towards Australia's foreign policy in most matters, except items contentious within the Third World such as Vietnam, Pangu attaches particular importance to Japan. It is hoped to sell increasing quantities of minerals to the Japanese and, with the foreign exchange earned, to import Japanese manufactured goods. Japanese businessmen are looking closely at other investment opportunities, such as the wood chip industry, and Pangu is prepared to permit the establishment of Japanese industries on the basis of a fifty-fifty sharing of profits. Pangu feels that fish caught locally by Japanese ought to be processed in New Guinea rather than in Japan. Japanese businessmen may not go along with these wishes entirely, but it would be surprising if they were to neglect the potential of a developing market of two million consumers, particularly since their only competition is provided by high-cost Australian goods. A non-discriminating tariff structure for New Guinean imports from Japan might well be worth a hard bargain over profit distribution.

Despite a basic foreign policy stance of friendship for all, particularly Australia, Pangu does not envisage facing the future without defence forces. However, Mr Kiki states flatly that New Guinea could afford nothing like its current military establishment if it had to find the

<sup>5</sup> *Pangu Pati Nius*, May 1970, p. 5.

necessary finance from its own resources. Preferably, Australia should foot the bill to maintain an army of about the present size, a small naval force of coastal patrol boats, and an air force capable of transporting and supplying the army. There are fears within Pangu that a large army would pose a danger to democracy, but there is also agreement that an army of less than two battalions would scarcely be worth having. In addition to financial support, it would be desirable for Australia to provide training and technical assistance. Kiki feels that unless soldiers train abroad, the Army will have no standards for comparison and its efficiency could quickly slip.

The tasks which Pangu sees for the Army are the usual ones of protection against external force and the preservation of internal law and order in a crisis. The second role is viewed as much the more important, due partly to lack of an obvious external enemy, and partly to the secessionist rumblings which emanate from Bougainville. However, it is realised that in situations of severe internal dissension, tribal loyalties may make the Army ineffective. Kiki in particular feels that despite the apparent success of integration within the Police and the Army, tribal loyalties will reassert themselves in the more intense political climate of independence. Integration may have denied use of the Police and the Army to any one particular tribal faction for furthering its own interests, but there might well be reluctance on the part of soldiers or police to take stern action against their kinsmen in certain situations. Regarding civic action, Kiki feels that if there has to be an army, it might as well spend some of its time on projects which will directly benefit the New Guinean people, and that civic action should continue, although under strict government control.

Apart from these specific tasks, Pangu desires a non-political army on the Australian model. Although it is realised that there are significant numbers of Pangu supporters within the PIR, the party claims no financial members amongst the soldiery and is not courting any overt military support. It will be interesting to see, if Pangu becomes the dominant party, whether this policy is maintained or whether the Army will become identified with the Party.

The skills of indigenous officers in the general field of administration are recognised by the Party, and it could be that some are transferred to civil administrative posts to meet shortcomings after independence. Such transfers would be to a full civilian capacity as Pangu does not favour direct military involvement in civil government. Industry will no doubt also be a strong competitor for the services of any officers. The management of Bougainville Copper Pty Ltd, is particularly

impressed with Army administration, training, and management techniques within the Territory and is looking for more men with PIR experience to add to their staffs. Obviously it will be difficult to provide conditions of service within the Army which will be sufficiently attractive to hold those men who will be most seriously missed should they leave.

Radical views are frequently expressed, particularly around the University campus, where John Kasaipwaloua is the predominant radical spokesman. His views are dogmatically anti-military, couched in the language of the class struggle and opposition to U.S. imperialism and the CIA. He is intelligent, articulate, and knows how to stir an audience emotionally. In private he may not be quite the doctrinaire idealist he appears in public. In any event, he has a following amongst university students and is not dismissed out of hand by seasoned observers of Port Moresby politics. Kasaipwaloua is currently a member of Pangu and may be able to force a leftward shift of Pangu policies from inside the party. If he cannot, he may break away and lead a radical socialist group. Unless Kasaipwaloua moderates his views, he is unlikely to be a dominant figure in independent New Guinea, but he may still wield some influence on government policy simply because he is so active and articulate.

Radicalism does not appear to have swept the University of Papua-New Guinea by storm and generally student views are moderate if not conservative. Views regarding the role of the Army are neither well formed nor strongly held. There seems to be acceptance of the existence of the Army as both external protector and *ultima ratio* in internal politics, but this acceptance is not based on deep conviction and could easily be diminished, especially by the way in which the Army conducts itself during the next few years. In particular, fears of an Army coup are not widely held. A university platoon of the PNGVR was founded in 1966, and its building has not been sacked or occupied by hostile mobs.

The views of the Army regarding its future role seem to boil down to a continuance of present policies, with increasing emphasis on full indigenisation. It will be interesting to see whether there is any expansion to three or four battalions. It was widely rumoured in 1965 and 1966 that a third battalion was to be raised at Lae, but there have also been rumours of strong opposition to Army expansion from the Department of Territories. The ending of Confrontation with Indonesia has removed the immediate argument for expansion and there must

be serious hesitation to attempt to create a larger financial problem for an independent government to handle.

As the situation stands at the moment, particularly in view of probable Police expansion, it is difficult to make a case for an Army increase, unless it is expected that the internal situation is going to deteriorate very rapidly. No doubt there could be a use for more patrols and for more men with military training, but in view of the post-independence problems which threaten, these general needs do not carry sufficient force to warrant expansion. On the other hand, the operating capacities of two battalions are so limited that it would seem unwise to undo any of the work which has been put into training them, particularly since their barracks and equipment are already provided.

One particularly delicate problem may have to be faced, in that the passage of time may show that some of the indigenous officers are not up to standard. Because of the great investment which has been made in training these men, there must be considerable reluctance to dismiss any, particularly when they could become political trouble-makers. However, if an officer of poor quality is kept on, he might be given a position of considerable responsibility when all the Australian commanders go, and so could do a great deal of harm.

Conversion of the Army to a paramilitary police force has been advocated by some on grounds of economy, unification of control, and lack of an external threat. However, the Police already are armed so that such conversion of the Army would simply increase Police numbers rather than add a new capacity. Perhaps conversion would be more economical than the present system, but perhaps, also, most of the costs of New Guinea's armed forces might be borne by Australia, as is discussed below. Most important would be the loss of tactical skills which can be acquired only by units of men training together for years. Even if one discounts the external threat entirely, it would be unwise to dismiss the possibility of internal disorder reaching the level of guerrilla bands which require more than police to track down and break up. In essence, independent New Guinea will need an army of at least the present size, but will find it very difficult politically to increase the number of battalions, and so the PIR seems likely to remain as it is, provided Australia assists with finance.

The question of who is to provide future air support for Army operations is one of great importance. There seems to be little likelihood that New Guinea will be able to provide even the most basic form of air transport for some years after independence and, without

this transport, a battalion in Port Moresby and another in Wewak would be of limited use. It is conceivable that civilian air transport could be used to move troops between the major towns and settlements, but specialised military aircraft and pilots are essential for the support of patrols operating deep in the interior, if current tactical doctrines and standards of manpower utilisation are to be adhered to. If close helicopter and light aircraft support is not available, troops will have to re-learn former methods of greater self-reliance when on patrol. The other side of the coin is that much less can be expected of such patrols than at present, in terms of mobility, endurance, and striking power. To achieve the same operating capacity as the present two battalions with their current air support, a force of several battalions would be required. Rather than go to the trouble and expense which such an expansion would require, were Australian air support not maintained, a New Guinean government might prefer to enter into an arrangement with another power. Such a move might not be in Australia's interests. The wisest policy would seem to be for Australia to commence the development of an indigenous air force and to continue our present degree of air support until such time as New Guinea can provide its own.

Significant and growing differences between the operating procedures of PIR battalions and Australian infantry battalions turn on the question of air support. While the PIR might have to face the prospect of less air support, the experience of the war in Vietnam has led to a growing increase in the air support available to Australian troops. Consequently, operating procedures and organisations which have been developed recently by the Australian Army may have decreasing relevance to the PIR. Should Australian battalions ever have to operate in New Guinea in a counter-insurgency role, without the lavish air support provided by the USA in Vietnam, there could be a period of difficult re-acquiring of some of the skills of the Second AIF, particularly in terms of the treatment of battle casualties.

## THE PROBLEM OF A MILITARY ELITE

IN common with many developing countries, New Guinea will enter independence with a military elite. If one travels around the Territory, relying simply on visual impressions, the Army stands out as an elite above all others. Not that the others are many—the graduates, the officials, and the Police—but of these, it is the Army which has the most impressive buildings, the best laid out gardens and houses, the newest cars, and the smartest off-duty clothing. To what extent is this

indication typical? Does Army elitism go beyond environment, equipment, and dress?

Despite appearances, quite a deal of effort has been applied by both the Administration and the Army to reduce this problem to a bare minimum and liaison committees have been established to ensure as much standardisation of pay and conditions as can be achieved between police, civil servants, and soldiers. A recruit private starts on a wage of around \$12 per fortnight. If he rises to WO I, which may take twenty years, his pay will increase to \$70 per fortnight. Currently the senior indigenous officers earn close to \$84 per fortnight as captains. If the men are living out in married quarters, they get extra allowances which bring them into line with police pay. Police basic rates are slightly higher than for the Army because policemen generally are not housed in barracks with food provided. Civil service salaries are also carefully structured for equivalence.

The degree to which any of these three groups is elite is illustrated by the fact that the basic weekly wage for indigenous labour in Port Moresby is \$6 per week. In addition to this sum, a recruit soldier receives food, clothing, and shelter and has expectations of steady increases for years of service and promotions. Soldiers point out that the Police earn much more money because the Police are eligible for overtime rates, which at the moment they are earning copiously, while soldiers are not eligible. However, the Police can counter that soldiers live in better housing which is more recently built and better maintained than Police quarters. Here again there have been attempts at standardisation, including civil service quarters. A particularly vexed issue is that of fly-wire screening on windows. For all Army buildings, including the barrack blocks of single soldiers, such protection is mandatory, except in the case of the PI married quarters. The Army would like to install fly-wire but cannot because the Administration does not provide fly-wire for its indigenous quarters. Similarly, the Army is prevented from installing gas or electric stoves and refrigerators in PI houses when normally these items are provided in Army houses. Such bureaucratic restrictions are probably necessary in the interests of controlling elitism, but the soldiers know that the reasons why they cannot have these amenities depend on the Administration rather than the Army and so the popularity of the Administration inevitably suffers.

Once indigenous soldiers became officers, a particularly difficult problem arose. If administration standards were to be adhered to rigidly, PI officers would have lived in accommodation vastly inferior to white officers and such discrimination would have made the indigenous officers.

look small in the eyes of their troops. After much negotiation, the Administration agreed to the PI officers living in European houses. At present there is a very unsatisfactory disparity and huge differences between the living accommodation provided for senior warrant officers with twenty years' service and that given to junior commissioned officers with only a few years' service. As European officers are phased out, there arises the problem of what to do with the empty houses which are surplus. At the moment, the Administration forbids WOs to live in them, so they will probably stand empty, while sergeant majors and their wives grit their teeth. No doubt many of them would agree with the sign above the doorway to Albert Maori Kiki's house: 'God is not dead—he lives in Konedobu'.\*

One factor which cannot be standardised out of existence is the Army's general superiority in administration and training, by comparison with the Police and the civil service. To some extent this high standard is due to operational factors. An Army must be well trained, quartered and fed if it is to reach any proficiency with sophisticated equipment and tactics. The Army is relatively concentrated and has time for training, while the Police and the civil servants are dispersed, constantly engaged on their normal administrative duties, and have to rely on training on the job to some extent. However, there is one special factor. The PIR is part of the Australian Army and is officered by carefully selected men who are not committed to the rigours of a permanent career in the Territory. A large number of Australian officers see service in Papua-New Guinea as a challenge and regard selection for duty with the PIR as a feather in their caps. They go north, knowing that their stay will be of two to three years, under reasonably good conditions by comparison with the frequently short duration and unspectacular nature of mainland postings. There are special hardships but there are also special compensations. No other agency working in the Territory could find qualified staff quite so easily.

Armies the world over, the Australian included, lend themselves to lampooning for administrative red tape and legendary bungling. This sort of image is scarcely applicable to the Army in Papua-New Guinea. In many ways, it is an elite by comparison with the Australian Army on the mainland. Even if standardisation with the civil service and Police has been achieved in terms of pay and conditions for indigenous members, the soldiers must still be conscious of belonging to something special. The coming of independence and the gradual with-

\*Konedobu is the area in which Administration offices in Port Moresby are located.

drawal of Australian officers will have an effect in itself. It seems likely that present standards of administrative efficiency within the PIR will decline. Should an indigenous government accentuate this trend through other policies, New Guinea will be faced with the problem of a discontented elite presented in formidable dimensions.

## THE ARMY AND POLITICS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

It is all too easy to jump to the conclusion that a decline in the status of the Army will lead to the establishment of a military dictatorship in New Guinea. However, this leap does not take account of three intervening factors which make a simple military coup to secure military interests unlikely. First, the men of the PIR have been taught discipline and are not unaware that their future may be troubled. Second, the whole Army is built around the concept of supporting the national interest, even if this involves sacrifice. It will not be easy for any individual commander to use the Army in a blatantly illegal way because a large number of his troops may not follow him. Third, two battalions of soldiers by themselves, equipped only with light weapons and lacking logistical support, scarcely amount to an effective force for taking the country over.

Countervailing arguments may be put, claiming that, due to the absence of other physical force, any attempted PIR coup must succeed. However, unless a projected coup was broadened to include the Police, the Army could be confronting a larger if not so well armed force which could simply make Army rule impossible. Even if the Police did not offer opposition, what could two battalions do? One at least would be needed to seize and maintain control over Port Moresby while the companies of the second would be extended to control say Lae, Madang, and Wewak. The rest of the country and 95 per cent of the population would be beyond the Army's control. If there was any significant opposition to the Army, it could simply contain Army rule to the four major coastal towns and then undermine them politically. The present complete logistical dependence of the PIR on Australia, which is likely to continue, places a ready tool in Canberra's hand which could cripple the power of the military in a short space of time if such action was thought necessary.

However, there are other more indirect and no less effective methods by which the Army might interfere in politics for its own ends, besides the *coup d'état*. The role of the Army in maintaining internal law and order in a time of crisis gives its leaders a good deal of leverage with the ruling party. If the Army is to save the government, it could well exact

its own price in terms of privileges. In the event of a political clash between forces of comparable magnitude, the Army could throw its weight into the balance and decide the issue, opting for the party which makes the better offer.

What seems the most likely and least insidious Army avenue to political influence, if not power, would be for the PIR to lend its weight to other sizeable forces which were already moving for change. If after independence New Guinea should be ruled by an incompetent and corrupt government so that the affairs of the nation go from bad to worse, if there is appreciable popular discontent and desire for change, if the Police and the civil administration officials are also alienated from the government, then the Army could feasibly spearhead a seizure of power and proceed to rule in co-operation with the Police and civil service. In some circumstances, such a change could be a change for the worse, but it need not necessarily be so. In the words of the editor of *New Guinea*, the Indonesian Army

is a prime example of the stabilising force of an army in a situation where civil politics are weak and at times dangerously ineffective.

This may imply a pessimistic view of the future. In actual fact it is merely cautious. There is nothing to lose by having a careful look at the probable weaknesses of politics and government in an independent New Guinea of the future. Nor is there anything to lose by considering what constructive role the Army may play not only in New Guinea's defence and internal security but may have to play in stabilising politics.<sup>6</sup>

If the Army has a role to play in New Guinea after independence, it would seem most likely that it will be as a spearhead of a wider political force and as a stabiliser.

After independence, Australia's direct concern with the PIR will lessen, as command is passed over to New Guineans. However, we must ask ourselves how far and how fast we wish to let this lessening of concern proceed. As independence approaches, serious consideration ought to be given to the re-structuring of political-military relations so that soldiers come to think of their prime loyalty being directed towards the New Guinean Government, rather than the Australian. Such a change might involve the placing of the Area Commander at least partially under the authority of the Administrator as an initial step. This stage could then be followed by a transitory phase in which some control was given to an indigenous Minister for Defence, to ease the passage to

<sup>6</sup> Editorial comment following P. R. Lynch, 'The Coming Army', *New Guinea*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March-April 1969, p. 25.

full independence for both indigenous politicians and soldiers. There are obviously many difficulties in such a course. The Australian Departments of Defence and of the Army are not going to relish any diminution of their authority over the forces in the Territory. The Administration is inexperienced in handling the problems which would accompany the acquisition of authority over the armed forces and there would be many local frictions between officials and service officers as a result. However, in the long term, all of these difficulties must be faced if New Guinea is to achieve full independence, and they will be exacerbated if they are suddenly presented to New Guinean politicians and soldiers without careful introduction. During the period between the granting of internal self-government and full independence, a New Guinean Defence Department must be built up and some functions now in the hands of Australian departments transferred to it. The most appropriate functions for early transfer might be those associated with the administration of indigenous personnel and the maintenance of buildings. The more technical military functions, such as training and planning, could then be transferred, and finally financial control.

The granting of full financial control over New Guinea defence forces presents some special problems. Obviously independent New Guinea will need an army for the reasons given above and even at its present modest size it will cost a great deal of the national budget. Unless a separate and tied Australian grant is made to maintain the Army, the New Guinean Government will probably allocate less money to it than before, because of other more pressing priorities. Not only would such restriction of the Army's funds make it less capable of playing a helpful role in terms of internal law and order and political stability, but also it would accentuate the problem of a declining elite becoming disaffected with the government. Pangu leaders have already expressed the desire that Australia should continue to pay for New Guinea's defence force, although such a tied grant does imply some limitation of sovereignty. This arrangement might work effectively during the period of internal self-government, but it would need modification after full independence. The experience of decolonisation in other parts of the world indicates that the whole of a newly independent nation's defence budget cannot be left in the hands of another nation, if the new nation's independence is to be taken seriously in the international community. However, it is tolerable for richer nations to give defence assistance to poorer ones on a large scale. Clearly it is in New Guinea's interests for Australia to maintain her defence support for some considerable time, but what of Australia's interests in the

matter and what are the chances that the Australian electorate might favour such a burden?

## AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE DEFENCE INTERESTS IN NEW GUINEA

THE current debate regarding Australia's defence interests in New Guinea covers a wide range of policies, but two stand out in clear opposition. The one looks back to our situation in 1942 and argues the importance of New Guinea as a shield against invaders and as a forward base from which military operations may be conducted, well to our north. The other holds that such a situation as 1942 will never recur and that New Guinea strategically is a net loss to us. Rather we would be better off to sever all defence links and leave it to fend for itself in security terms. Furthermore, the Vietnam war has shown that we ought to be particularly wary of the dangers of being sucked into a counter-insurgency operation in New Guinea.

Certainly it seems difficult to imagine circumstances by which we could be repelling a massive sea-borne invasion by conventional means as in 1942, but this is not to say that New Guinea is a net strategic loss to Australia. Shipping and air routes pass close by and our commerce could be inconvenienced if use of New Guinean waters and air space were denied us. The RAN will have a use for refuelling facilities at Manus Island for some time to come. Other powers also have interests in New Guinea. Japan could come to be New Guinea's major trading partner and will doubtless use skilful diplomacy to advance her commercial interests there. Indonesia's interests are unlikely to go beyond preserving harmony along the border and in West Irian, but it is not inconceivable that some future Indonesian government might try to preserve this harmony by more overt political pressures on New Guinea. The Russians might seek port facilities for their trawlers and other ships which ply the waters of the south-west Pacific.

Each of these three powers could apply pressure or inducement to New Guinea to obtain ends which are slightly detrimental to Australia's commercial or strategic interests, but, provided that independent New Guinea has a stable government, it ought to be able to withstand subtle pressures. Overt pressures could elicit Australian diplomatic support, provided our relations with New Guinea remain close, but none of these considerations adds up to give Australia a defence interest there which is of vital importance for mainland security.

If the development of Papua-New Guinea had been the responsibility of some other nation, say Holland or France, there the story might end.

However, because New Guinea is our responsibility, we are going to be judged both by our own consciences and in the eyes of the world by her progress and development through independence and in the years beyond. The New Guinean Government will scarcely be master in its own house without the backing of a small, efficient, and loyal defence force, and indigenous political leaders realise this fact. If left to New Guinean financial support, this defence force might be neither efficient nor loyal. The New Guineans will look to Australia to support their armed forces and, if we do not, internal chaos could result and we would be accused, with some justification, of abdication of our responsibilities. Also it goes without saying that a state of civil chaos in New Guinea can hardly be in Australia's defence interests, and if such a state occurs there would be little that we could do about it.

In addition to direct financial support for the defence force, we would also need to give technical, administrative, logistical, and training support. So far we have done nothing to establish an indigenous air transport capacity within the Territory and this ought to be given priority as independence approaches. A flight of Caribou aircraft would seem a realistic, useful and economical target at which to aim, together with air and ground crews. It will be politically difficult in the post-independence climate for Australia to station units of her own armed forces in New Guinea, including the RAAF, but without such air transport the New Guinean Army will be hamstrung. The RAAF might still need to assist with Hercules heavy transports for special purposes such as moving troops to keep order in the islands. In this way Australia can still exercise some degree of control in a New Guinea crisis, but to remain intimately involved with the air support of New Guinean troops after independence would seem to be both unrewarding and interfering. In some circumstances, it could be very embarrassing for the Australian Government to be so directly involved. Naval development is still at a low level, but it is proceeding and New Guinea will at least have a small coastal patrol force on independence.

The amount of Australian support needed is difficult to estimate but it might be approximately \$30 million per annum. It is a considerable amount, and like our general grant will need to be 'sold' carefully to the Australian electorate. As independence draws closer, political tensions between New Guineans and the Administration seem bound to mount. Consequently, there will be a tendency for some Australians after New Guinean independence to heave a sigh of relief and to imagine that our responsibilities and burdens there are at an end. If Australian governments are to fulfil their responsibilities to New Guinea,

there will need to be a conscious effort to keep these responsibilities before the public. We have in the past shown considerable indifference to the Territory and a reversion to this attitude could occur as we become more immersed in Australia's internal problems. However, the world will not forgive us our indifference, and critical eyes have been on us for some time. Never before have we taken the stage quite so alone and we are going to be before the audience for a long time to come. Three or even five per cent of our current defence vote does not seem an unduly high price to pay to help both two million New Guineans and ourselves through some difficult days ahead.

### READING LIST

For further information on the role of the Army in New Guinea see the following articles in *New Guinea*:

T. B. Millar, 'The Defence of New Guinea', Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April 1965, pp. 68-75.

J. R. Kerr, 'From the Defence Angle', Vol. 1, No. 8, December 1966-January 1967, pp. 25-32.

Harry Bell, 'Goodbye to All That—Integration in the PIR', Vol. 2, No. 2, June-July 1967, pp. 49-58.

Basita Heatu, 'New Guinea's Coming Army—To Prevent a Coup or Lead One?' Vol. 2, No. 3, September-October 1967, pp. 32-3.

Kokou Warubu, 'That Army Again!' Vol. 3, No. 2, June-July 1968, pp. 8-10.

P. R. Lynch, 'The Coming Army' and accompanying editorial comment, Vol. 4, No. 1, March-April 1969, pp. 21-5.

F. A. Mediansky, 'New Guinea's Coming Army', Vol. 5, No. 2, June-July 1970, pp. 37-42.

See also:

R. V. Bowmer, 'The University Regiment', *U.P.N.G. News*, No. 17, November 1969, pp. 9-11.

For general background reading related to questions of New Guinea politics and defence see:

Peter Hastings, *New Guinea: Problems and Prospects*, Cheshire, Melbourne, for the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1969.

T. B. Millar, *Australia's Defence*, 2nd ed., Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969.

O'Neill - author blue b

Dr O'Neill is a Senior Fellow in the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College of Australia and of the Universities of Melbourne and Oxford. He served as an intelligence officer in Vietnam with the Australian Army, 1966-7 and was a Senior Lecturer in History at the Royal Military College of Australia, 1968-9, after leaving the Army.

His publications include ~~The German Army and the Nazi Party, 1933-39~~, *Vietnam Task*, which describes his own experiences in Vietnam, *Indo China Tragedy 1945-54*, an account of the first Indo China war, *General Giap—Politician and Strategist*, *The Strategy of General Giap since 1964* (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 6), and numerous articles.