

2

**G Material Concerning the Australian-Indonesian Border**

## G1 West Irian/Papua and New Guinea border<sup>1</sup>

7

On 4th August, the Department of External Affairs released the following statement issued by the Indonesian Foreign Ministry and the Australian Embassy, Djakarta, at the conclusion of talks on the demarcation of the border between West Irian and the Territory of Papua and New Guinea--

"As a follow-up to recent talks between the Indonesian and Australian Foreign Ministers, discussions took place in Djakarta from 31st July to 4th August between Indonesian and Australian survey experts.

The Indonesian delegation was led by Brigadier-General Soerjosoemarno, Director of Army Topography, and the Australian Delegation by Mr B.P. Lambert, Director of the Division of National Mapping, Department of National Development. The purpose of the discussions was to exchange information and views on the surveying and permanent demarcation of the border between West Irian and the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

The experts agreed on a series of recommendations to be submitted for the approval of the Indonesian and Australian governments. These recommendations covered both the overall programme which should be adopted and early measures to implement this programme. Specifically, they agreed that a joint Indonesian/Australian reconnaissance team should visit the border as soon as practicable to prepare the way for subsequent concurrent astronomical surveys by both countries. Correlation of the results of these surveys would clear the way for the permanent marking of the border."

---

<sup>1</sup> Current Notes on International Affairs, Vol. XXXV (Aug. 1964), p.28.

G2 Parliamentary Question and Reply concerning the Irian boundary<sup>1</sup>

[22 September 1965]

WEST IRIAN.

Mr. DRURY.--- Will the Minister for External Affairs inform the House of the present position regarding the establishment of an official border between West Irian and Papua and New Guinea?

Mr. HASLUCK.--- The border between the Territory of New Guinea and Papua, under Australian administration, and the territory now under Indonesian administration is quite clear. There are international instruments which describe the border in exact terms and these international instruments are accepted by all governments concerned.<sup>2</sup> On the Australian side, mapping of the border area has been completed, and the border is defined on maps. One action that needs to be completed is the marking of the border on the ground by modern survey methods and the checking of existing markers that have been there for some time. We have been in discussion with the Indonesian Government and the Indonesians have agreed to take part with Australian survey teams in the marking of the border on the ground and the checking of the existing markers. We expect that the first action along these lines will take place round about November or December of this year and that the actual survey on the ground will commence early in 1966.

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, No. 14 (22 Sept. 1965), p. 1118.

<sup>2</sup> For a comment on this statement see S.N.G.B., p. 133.

G3 Parliamentary Questions and Replies concerning the free navigation on the Fly River<sup>1</sup>

[28 September 1965]

WEST IRIAN.

Dr. MACKAY.--- I direct a question to the Minister for External Affairs. Is it a fact that a longstanding agreement, possibly going back to before the First World War, exists whereby the Dutch were ensured access to the navigation of the Fly River, which extends a considerable distance into Papua? Does this condition now apply to Indonesia? Have the Indonesians ever availed themselves of it? As the border between the two territories concerned is currently being clarified, and as Indonesia shows every sign of repudiating more recent agreements relating to West New Guinea, will the Minister take steps to see that this outdated provision is no longer accorded to Indonesia?

Mr. HASLUCK.--- For the greater part of its course the Fly River is wholly within Australian territory, but at one point the Fly River becomes the boundary between West New Guinea and Papua. A curve of the river becomes the boundary. I think it was in 1895 that an agreement was made between the Netherlands and the British Government--it was before the Australian administration--that there should be access to navigation of the waters of the Fly River subject to the condition that no arms should be carried. That agreement was never operative; it was never invoked.<sup>2</sup> There was never any occasion to invoke it. At present the exact effect of the agreement is under study by our own legal officers, first of all to see whether the agreement is still extant and secondly to see to what extent it applies to present day conditions. For the moment I am unable to say how effective the agreement is, but I would say that up to date the behaviour of the Indonesian Government in respect of the border between West New Guinea and Australian-administered New Guinea has been quite correct. We have had no occasion to find fault in any way with the conduct of the Indonesian Government.

[29 September 1965]

WEST IRIAN.

Dr. MACKAY.--- My question, which is to the Minister for External Affairs, relates to a statement made by the "Australian" of today's date purporting to answer a question I put to the Minister yesterday as to whether Indonesia had the right of free navigation of the Fly River.<sup>3</sup> Is this statement based on facts supplied by the Minister, or is it a gratuitous

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, No. 15 (28 and 29 Sept. 1965), pp. 1298 and 1373-4.

<sup>2</sup> The Minister was mistaken. See S.N.G.B., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> The article 'NG River Row Likely', appeared in the Australian of 29 September 1965.

interpretation by that journal? Is there any substance in the further observation by this newspaper that this matter brings into question the definition of the border between West Irian and Papua-New Guinea? Is this likely to bring a sharp reaction from Indonesia?

Mr. HASLUCK.-- Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question asked by the honorable gentleman because it gives me the opportunity to remove the possibility of an international misunderstanding on this matter. I must say I was amazed to read in the "Australian" this morning an account of the answer that I gave to the question yesterday because that account was certainly not a report of anything that I said. It was from first to last an interpretation of what I said. The interpretation was not justified by any words that I used.<sup>4</sup> The interpretation gave a wholly false impression of what the views of the Government are. Worse still, this interpretation is such as is likely to lead to international misunderstanding. I think it is to be very much regretted.

The answer that I gave yesterday referred to an agreement relating to navigation on the Fly River. That agreement was in these terms--

Navigation on the Fly River is free for the subjects of both contracting powers excepting as regards the carriage of warlike stores, and no duty shall be imposed on other goods conveyed by that river.

That agreement dates back to 1895. In my answer, I said that, in effect, the agreement had never been tested and that the exact meaning of it was being studied by our own legal advisers so that a correct interpretation of the effect of the agreement would be arrived at. Certainly, nothing that I said conveyed or even implied that there was any dissatisfaction on our part regarding the definition of the Papua-New Guinea border or any lack of expectation on our part that, in respect of the border, the Government of Indonesia would do other than respect that definition. This item in the "Australian" put up the heading "New Guinea River Row Likely". It also suggested that the definition of the border between West Irian and Papua-New Guinea was brought into question. By making those statements, the report gave a wholly false impression. I wish to remove any misunderstanding that it may have created either in the minds of honorable members or in the mind of the Indonesian Government.

---

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the Minister's statement see S.N.G.B., pp.133-4.