

CHAPTER 3.

WEST PAPUAN NATIONALISM VERSUS INDONESIAN INCORPORATION.

Most of the problems in Irian Jaya can be attributed to the conflict created when one distinct group of people dominates another. Indonesians of Malay origin control Irian Jaya and the predominantly Melanesian population. These two groups vary in race, religion and culture. Fundamentally different views are held by each group over such issues as land ownership, "freedom", self-determination, individual rights, and what Irian Jaya / West Papua actually is.

3.1 THE INDONESIAN POINT OF VIEW.

Malay Indonesians view Irian Jaya as an integral part of the Indonesian state, wrested from the Dutch and finally liberated in 1963. Irian Jaya means 'victorious Irian' ¹ and Jayapura, the capital, is 'victory city'. These names indicate that Irian Jaya symbolises the complete ascendancy of the Republic over the colonial masters. The military operation in the early 1960s was under the control of General Suharto, with Benny Murdani, (later the defence chief) in charge of the 1500 paratroopers who dropped into Irian Jaya, forcing the Dutch to negotiate. Irian Jaya therefore has an important place in the mythology of the creation of Indonesia. Every nation cherishes its emotional history: that collection of myths and symbols that shape the national psyche, especially when liberation struggles are involved, and Indonesia is no exception. The land is Indonesian by both historical birthright and force of arms. Furthermore integration into Indonesia was recognised by the UN in 1969 – 26 years ago.

So, as part of the state of Indonesia, Irian Jaya's natural resources are felt to belong to all Indonesians to be used for the development of a huge nation with pressing needs and widespread poverty. In this view the Irianese are Indonesian subjects with all the rights and duties citizenship entails. They are perhaps a special group, both by being so "undeveloped and backward", and because of the irresponsible fostering of false hopes for independence by the Dutch. But, nonetheless, from the Indonesian point of view the Irianese are Indonesians and they must conform to the dictates of the state. This includes acceptance of the unwritten rules that govern Indonesia,

such as not criticising the state, the police or the military; not complaining too loudly of ill treatment and injustice, and not discussing politics, particularly the politics of succession, that could threaten the stability of the state itself.

The Irianese must learn to be good Indonesians. They must conform with *Pancasila*: the five guiding principles (the third of which is the indivisibility of the state) which form the basis of the national philosophy². The Irianese have rights as citizens, but they also have duties. If the business of Indonesia is the development of the nation and the improvement of living standards, then it is the duty of the Irianese not to impede this process. The lack of emphasis on human rights in Indonesia is reflected in the 1945 Constitution, where they are not fully entrenched. This circumstance arose from the opinions held by several of the most powerful founding fathers of Indonesia, including Supomo and Soekarno³. Supomo had long argued that duties to the state were much more important than the rights of the individual. His view, while not totally overriding the proponents of human rights, such as Mohammed Hatta and Mohammed Yamin, certainly led to a watering down of their importance⁴, as shown in the constitution. The notion of human duties is still a dominant feature of the Indonesian political landscape, with many people believing that such a notion is deeply rooted in the culture of Indonesia⁵.

The Irianese therefore have a human duty to the state to assist in its development, rather than acting as a hindrance to the authorities. They can hinder the state by either trying to claim resources for themselves that belong properly to all Indonesians, or by creating political instability by calling for an independent West Papuan state. The New Order government of President Suharto has always been adamant that political stability through repression of dissenting views is necessary for economic development to occur. This process has been called 'the Trade-Off Theory' where human rights are traded for economic development⁶. Such a theory postulates that people will be allowed to exercise their human rights once a certain (but unspecified) level of economic development has been achieved. Calls for the government to factor human rights into its development strategy by such groups as the Pesisir 50⁷, NGOs and human rights groups have elicited a minimal response from the Suharto Government⁸.

Indonesia is a country that incorporates many cultures and races over a vast area, so the threat of fragmentation is omnipresent and is treated very seriously. Calls for independence from disgruntled provinces such as Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya must be repressed if the Nation is to survive. The Indonesian Government will not, therefore, tolerate discussion of West Papuan nationalism because it is both a totally non-negotiable subject and because any debate on such a topic has the potential to divide the community and create political tensions and instability. So anyone promoting West Papuan nationalism is directly threatening the state and must be crushed.

Such people are traitors because they are Indonesians (whether they like it or not) who are fighting against Indonesia, fighting for the dismemberment of the nation. From this generalised Indonesian point of view any problems that exist in Irian Jaya will dissipate as the Melanesian people learn to accept their place in the world as Indonesians, with all that that entails. Working within the society they will be able to improve their own living standards, as well as play a part in the development of Indonesia - the emerging Asian tiger and fourth most populous nation on earth. The Irianese must accept their position, or face the consequences of opposing the government.

3.2 THE IRIANESE POINT OF VIEW.

The generalised Indonesian view outlined above sees the Irianese as fundamentally Indonesian citizens, albeit a minority in a large and disparate country. However many Irianese cannot accept that they are Indonesians and that Irian Jaya, West Papua, their land, is an integral part of Indonesia. It is not an economic argument but a question of identity. They are black with fuzzy hair, the Malays are brown skinned, straight haired foreigners, 'orang asin'. This sentiment is heard time and again in Irian Jaya. The Melanesians do not identify themselves as Indonesians and hence the assumptions that the Indonesians make, such as that Irian Jaya's natural resources are for the benefit of all Indonesians, that the Irianese as Indonesian citizens have duties to the state, etc. , do not hold. It is not a question of intellectual debate or financial compensation: once a person's identity is established by historical and cultural influences, it is nearly impossible to change, and many Irianese do not identify themselves as Indonesians, but as West Papuans ⁹.

Of course the strength of latent nationalism varies greatly between individuals. Many Irianese who are doing well in the booming economy of Irian Jaya accept that their futures depends on integrating themselves deeply into the contemporary state. They can accept the trade-offs which are necessary to get ahead in any society, and certainly for any Indonesian. This means not only accepting the strong state that intrudes into so much of what westerners would consider 'private life', but also promoting it. Actions such as hanging the President's portrait in your house, flying the national flag, etc., are not required by any law but are undertaken by all those who wish to be seen as loyal Indonesians. These people have given up the dream that West Papua will ever be an independent state and try and do the best they can in the current circumstances; yet they still fundamentally identify as Melanesians, not Asians.

The internal conflict between how people feel and the objective realities in Irian Jaya seems to be present to some extent or other in all Irianese. I make this observation on the basis of eight visits to Irian Jaya between 1988 and 1994, during which I had numerous discussions with Irianese from all walks of life. On the one hand there is the strong sense of identity as Papuan Irianese who somehow deserve their own nation on racial, geographic, historical and cultural grounds. On the other hand there is the knowledge that the overwhelmingly powerful state is totally opposed to this concept, that the Indonesian military will never be beaten by the OPM alone, and that no external backer has ever, or is ever likely, to oppose the Indonesians on the side of the Irianese. Even a glance will tell the rational observer that an independent West Papua is a remote possibility, which could only occur in the context of a collapse of the Indonesian state. Should this happen, an unlikely outcome viewing the situation in 1995, but not impossible, the entire region would be in such turmoil that any thing would be possible. Short of Indonesia collapsing (a regional disaster and certain bloodbath) Irian Jaya is set to remain part of Indonesia.

It would seem to follow that individuals should acknowledge this and work within the system as best as they can, to oppose the state, to promote (or even discuss) West Papuan nationalism bears a heavy cost. Thomas Wainggai was sentenced to 20 years jail for flying a West Papuan flag in 1989 and his Japanese wife to eight years for sewing it¹⁰. Dissent is not tolerated and dissenters can expect jail as well as discrimination in their employment, housing and educational prospects.

In many cases dissent has also resulted in torture and extrajudicial execution, as in the case of Arnold Ap. Ap was a prominent Papuan anthropologist who was killed by the security forces in 1984 after his involvement in the OPM became known ¹¹. Armed opposition through TEPENAL, the military wing of the OPM, results in standard military clashes as well as all the associated atrocities that accompany the suppression of guerilla forces ¹². This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

So the price of dissent is high, and the chances of achieving anything, particularly an independent West Papuan state, remote. Whatever the objective reality of the situation, people are burning with a sense of injustice. These feelings are exacerbated by the history of Indonesian rule, where an abstract injustice - the failure for West Papua to materialise as an independent state - has been compounded by the daily, ongoing injustices which one race, in dominating another, must perpetuate: dispossession of land and resources; the arrest, torture and killing of dissidents; an implicit apartheid system in employment and education; the absence of human rights, especially of free speech and association; and the maintenance of a society which is pervaded by fear of the arbitrary and omnipotent authorities.

This form of "total" colonisation varies from the "detached" European colonisation that controlled much of the world prior to the second world war ¹³. In detached colonialism the generally European metropolitan power ruled with the divide between themselves and the subject race being explicitly delineated. The colonists were outnumbered by the subject populations but controlled them with their superior organisational skills and technical resources. The colonial society was an essentially foreign system that was imposed upon weaker nations. As the world changed after 1945 detached colonialism became anachronistic and former colonies became independent in a relatively short space of time. But countries that had been colonised 'totally' emerged as very different nations from those that had been detached colonies. Countries such as Australia, the United States and the South American states became independent with the colonists outnumbering the original inhabitants. So the colonists did not go 'home'; they stayed to continue their domination of the original inhabitants. They were 'total' colonies because the primary features of the 'independent' countries derived from the metropole, rather than indigenous institutions.

Furthermore the racial divide that had marked colonial times continued. This inevitably led to the decline and suffering of the indigenous peoples as the new society reflected the opinions, beliefs and religion of the dominant, non-indigenous majority. The poor conditions of the Australian aborigines and native Americans are a consequence of this process. So it is not possible for an Irianese to simply forget the past and go forward into an integrated, multi-cultural society because reminders of the Asian domination are everywhere.

Ironically Indonesia's fascination with its own triumph over the Dutch heightens these feelings. Looking into the eyes of the Irianese as they mumble the Indonesian national anthem at the many *Merdekaan* (independence) celebrations held each August, it is clear that they are not rejoicing at their own freedom. They do not consider themselves 'free', yet what can they do? Take on the state and destroy their own lives in a largely pointless gesture, or submit? What each person does depends on the relative strength of the feelings they hold, whether the emotions of the heart are stronger than the cold headed rationality of the brain calling for acceptance, compromise, submission.

These internal dilemmas do not ease with success in the Indonesian system. Both Waingai and Ap held important positions in Irian Jaya but could not reject their identities as Papuans. When they asserted this through their actions, their lives, and those of their families, were destroyed. They had reached a point where their sense of self respect, of dignity, could no longer be bought off by the trappings of success within the Indonesian state, and they committed metaphoric suicide.

Of course most Irianese are under much less pressure than Ap or Waingai to take a stand as they are not in the public eye and are not subject to the unspoken charge of collaboration. They are preoccupied with the difficulties of day-to-day survival, having little opportunity for dramatic gestures. While grumbling about the crosses they must bear, life goes on. The strength of people's feelings of attachment to a West Papuan nation varies. While some people hold it as a latent hope for a perfect world, others actively promote the concept through support for the OPM.

The OPM seems to be an amorphous organisation within those areas of Irian Jaya completely under the control of the state, such as all the urban centres, the western regions and the islands. In the border regions and rugged jungle areas the OPM has a standard hierarchical military structure, but this cannot extend to the settled areas. The urban OPM is more like a support group and underground community rather than an integral part of the military conflict. Communication with the OPM leaders in the bush is very difficult, and any formal organisational structure too dangerous to maintain. People talk and commiserate but are drawn into the conflict only when some crisis occurs, such as the aborted uprising of 1984. The resulting police actions caused thousands of refugees, include many urban dwellers, to flee across the border to PNG.

Urban Irianese are under constant police surveillance and must be careful to avoid doing anything that can be officially construed as seditious. There is an unwritten understanding in Irian Jaya. While everybody, Malay and Melanesian alike, knows that there is considerable resentment by the Irianese of the Malays, it cannot be expressed. If a person lives their life apolitically and abides by the law, they will be left alone, with access to the schools, hospitals and any other benefits of the state. But if opposition is voiced, if the line is crossed, the flag flown, the state will come down on that person with the full force of a military regime. An Irianese can be an OPM sympathiser (as many, if not most, are) and continue existing in the community, but as soon as that person translates those sympathies into actions they are in great danger. So the urban OPM remains a loose-knit community of sympathisers, with a small hard core of activists. It is, as previously noted, 'a state of mind'.

The OPM in the bush is a different story. It is a classic guerilla organisation operating with few resources in a vast expanse of heavy jungle. Its members have crossed the pale and are outside Indonesian government control. They operate and live in areas that are inaccessible inside Irian Jaya, as well as across the border in PNG. This border is approximately 800 kilometres long, crossing the flood plains in the south, over the central cordillera of high mountains in the middle of the island, to the smaller hills and plains running down to the northern coast. The border has two sets of "twin towns": Jayapura and Vanimo (PNG) in the north; and Daru (PNG) and Merauke

in the south. These four towns and their associated areas are the only settlements of any size near the border. Indonesia has established transmigration camps in the north between Jayapura and the border, and in the south extending north from Merauke towards the central mountains. On the PNG side there is very little development in the border region except for the township of Kiunga, which supports the Ok Tedi mine. For both countries the border regions are their most undeveloped, with light populations and, in Irian Jaya, virtually no roads outside of the Jayapura and Merauke areas.

Construction of the Trans Irian Highway, between Jayapura and Merauke is well under way, though still many years from completion. This road will pass through Wamena in the central highlands, a considerable distance from the border. In the south the highway initially follows the border on the flat country before veering west towards Wamena, leaving the middle section of the border inaccessible. This remoteness allows the OPM to operate freely because a lightly equipped and highly mobile guerilla force makes the heavy jungle an ally. Standard military patrols conducted by ABRI are at a disadvantage due to logistical problems in maintaining supplies; unfamiliarity with the terrain; an unhelpful local population (who provide food and shelter to the OPM); vulnerability to ambush, and an inability to actually catch the OPM. This results in a general lack of enthusiasm on the part of the ABRI to patrol the heavy bush regions by foot ¹⁴. Individual soldiers and guerillas do not want to die needlessly, so there seems to be a reticence to engage in skirmishes.

The OPM conduct long patrols lasting for several months where small groups (typically five men) walk vast distances, avoiding the ABRI, but talking with village people and spreading information about the OPM. The goal is to heighten political awareness amongst the Irianese as the foundation for the struggle against the Indonesians.

The important thing for the OPM is that it can function totally independently of the Indonesian state. They are living in the bush, off the bush, with an alternate political structure that claims sovereignty for the state of West Papua. For 30 years people have lived in the bush under the banner of the Morning Star ¹⁵ in open defiance of the government. Though they have never

been a serious threat to the state in the sense of actually being in a position to seize power, they are a potent ideological threat. The individuals in the OPM are in the bush because they have rejected Indonesia and all it stands for, and because they are compelled by their sense of identity as Papuans to resist the waves of change that are crashing down upon their land.

It is not a logical process whereby everybody believes that independence will be achieved overnight, and some must doubt if it will ever be achieved. But by being in the bush, outside the Indonesian state, the OPM have already achieved a form of independence. They are free to live under their own decisions. In doing so they live with a sense of history and destiny, that the struggle will be long but that they will persevere. To many of the Irianese who live under Indonesian control the OPM in the bush are a source of pride that the Irianese people have not totally submitted but are fighting back, or at least refusing to give in.

This irritates the government because the terminology of the OPM, its "liberation struggle" against the "colonialist oppressors" (Indonesia) in the quest for "freedom", is the same as Indonesia uses in extolling their own victory over the Dutch. How can the OPM claim to be fighting for independence when according to the state they already are independent, as Indonesians? This threatens the state ideology and its motto of 'unity in diversity'.

But realistically the Indonesian government can do little other than it is currently doing. There is no point in negotiating with the OPM because the main area of disagreement - the political status of west New Guinea - is not a matter open for debate. They cannot destroy the OPM as a military force because of the logistical problems of operating in such terrain, and given the OPM's relative safe-haven in PNG. Indonesia is also careful not to escalate the conflict to the extent that another flood of refugees pours into PNG. Such an event would generate much adverse international publicity and expose Indonesia's oft repeated claims that the OPM is a spent force¹⁶, and all of Irian Jaya's problems are in the past. The OPM is not a "spent force" but, rather, surprisingly large and well organised.