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## 8 Winning hearts and mines

### The Bougainville crisis, 1988–90

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#### Introduction

In the early hours of the morning on 26 November 1988, the managing director of Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) received a phone call. Militant landowners, he was told, had begun a campaign of industrial sabotage directed towards shutting BCL's lucrative copper and gold mine in the Panguna region of central Bougainville, an island province over 500 km off the Papua New Guinea (PNG) mainland. Over the coming months, the mine would become the focus of a complex struggle in which the PNG state would undertake the first major counterinsurgency campaign in the nation's history, sponsored and encouraged by BCL and the regional hegemon Australia.

PNG security force tactics included the burning of villages, extra-judicial killings, the harassment and torture of villagers, journalists and politicians, as well as the progressive installation of a blockade around Bougainville that was 'tighter than that placed around Saddam Hussein's Iraq' (Spriggs 1992: 13). When this war formally ceased in 1998, between 5,000 and 20,000 people had died, the majority of whom were civilians.

Since the military tactics employed in this counterinsurgency campaign fit within the rubric of state terrorism – that is they involved the state directing extreme violence at particular categories of civilians, in order to communicate a general message to the civilian population as a whole – this chapter will focus on identifying and defining the basic social conditions in which state terrorism became a cogent political practice for state actors in PNG. To begin this task, I will provide a brief overview of PNG's historical development before shifting to a more condensed narrative that plots the key moments of the counterinsurgency campaign during 1988–90.

#### Uneven and combined development in PNG and Bougainville

In order to approximate the forces which fostered state terrorism's employment in the Bougainville crisis, we must familiarize ourselves with the basic social structures that frame life in PNG and the peculiar social tensions they excite. Given PNG's 'late development', this process must begin by considering the



to manipulate customary land tenure and cultural obligations, in pursuit of economic aims based increasingly on the logic of capital (Connell 1978: 230, 249–50; Ogan 1972: 180). Thus, we begin to see an important, incremental and uneven *process* of qualitative change in the social structures of villages, both in Bougainville and PNG generally; 'progressive' subjects, more intensely involved in the circuits of global capitalism, begin to act as agents of change, subordinating clan, custom and culture to private, accumulation strategies based on commodity production.

In 1963–64, indigenous smallholder production of cocoa totalled 174 tonnes. By 1969–70, this cocoa production had 'risen to 1,461; by 1979–80 to 10,151; and by 1988–89 to 13,841 tonnes' (Oliver 1991: 163). By 1980, only 19 per cent of Bougainville's population was engaged wholly in subsistence agriculture (Oliver 1991: 162). Thus, village households, whose access to land was mediated through the clan community, were involved increasingly in production for exchange; they were employing revenues to pay for goods and services essential both for the reproduction of the household (e.g. education, tinned fish, rice), and customary obligations (luxury items). In addition, these village households needed to purchase steel tools and labour power (in the case of expanding smallholdings). Consequently, clan, custom and culture became more widely subordinated to the accumulating strategies of private households.

With the expansion of commodity production in Bougainville, and the subordination of customary structures to the private, accumulation strategies of households, there began a process of social fracturing; households differentiated into new, social strata with distinct, accumulation strategies. Those able to expand production and diversify surplus into business/investment, accompanied on occasion by salaried labour, formed a rural bourgeoisie and rich peasantry. While households lacking access to essential resources, such as land, labour and finance, resorted to temporary participation in unskilled/semi-skilled wage labour. These disadvantaged villagers tended to form a new rural poor. As a result of the growing divisions in Bougainville, Tanis (2005: 457–8) claimed: 'the people started seeing each other not as brothers and sisters and clan mates with common ownership of wealth, but more as business competitors, with only the fittest to survive'.

Accompanying these social changes in PNG's predominantly rural population was a rapid process of political development, instigated by the Australian administration. When PNG was granted independence in 1975, there existed an elected parliament (which by 1977 contained 109 seats), a bureaucracy with more than 50,000 employees (40 per cent of formal sector employment), a judiciary, a defence force and a police constabulary. In addition, there was a provincial and local level of government (see Connell 1997; Dinnen 2001; Mapusia 1986; Turner 1990).

This structure placed enormous pecuniary pressures on the independent PNG state, whose size outweighed its revenue base; this demanded that the government pursue domestic policies focused on expanding the most promising national forms of commodity production, balanced with a pressing need to also attract foreign capital and foreign aid. The minerals industry, in particular,

became integral to the funding of the expanded state apparatus, a fact which manifested itself in a minerals tax regime that prioritized capturing rents (Wesley-Smith 1990: 6–7).

The national government's capacity to regulate the essential operating conditions for expanded commodity production, particularly in the mineral extraction industry, was however limited by the peculiar character of PNG's political system. The most fundamental social unit underpinning PNG's national polity was and remains the evolving clan community, which regulates most forms of everyday social metabolism in rural areas. As a political whole, the clan community tends to take the form of a unified bloc, composed increasingly of antagonistic, social groups, forming an alliance under the leadership of the social fraction, which successfully forges a popular definition of the community's general interest (usually based on notions of economic development, social progress and respect for tradition). Thus, the private practices of households in PNG are mediated through the structures of clan communities, whose character is itself the site of political struggle between fractured social groups.

This political foundation has two important consequences for the character of PNG's nation-state. First, with the state lacking a monopoly over the regulation of everyday social interaction, it relies on the structures and the lead social fractions of clan communities to produce the essential, operating conditions for expanded, commodity production (Jackson 1992: 81–2). In addition, as the state's relationship with its citizens is mediated through the clan structure, the state derives its legitimacy on the basis of its ability to promote the interests of the clan community, as defined by the hegemonic social fraction (Connell 1997: 303). National MPs, therefore, generally obtain their support base through circuits of patronage with clan networks, giving rise to a national polity where atomized, political representatives compete for positions in government to access the necessary resources to repay their local supporters.

In situations where the state must actively penetrate local communities to facilitate essential public infrastructure, or to promote economic development of national significance (such as mining), the leadership of local communities have tended to exploit this moment; employing their integral position in the regulation of social reproduction to obtain patronage outside of the electoral relation by impeding these developments. As the interruption of essential, national projects increased in the 1980s, a tension has developed between the need for political stability and PNG's particular form of indirect informal political rule. In lieu of either a developed, civil society through which consent may be forged at a local level, or of formal mechanisms to integrate effectively local clan structures into the state apparatus, agents of the state have turned to 'special policing operations (often with the Defence Force) ... with ... [a] para-military orientation' (Dinnen 1994: 107). In this instance, state violence becomes a mechanism for enforcing the stability necessary for particular national projects, while at the same time presenting the state generally as a credible force to PNG's clan communities. Bougainville was, and remains, the most extreme manifestation of this important, political dynamic.

### The Bougainville copper mine and the struggle for its closure

The Bougainville copper and gold mine developed on this changing social and political terrain. Beginning production in 1972 during its life (until 1989), the mine accounted for 17 per cent of the nation's internal revenue, 12 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 45 per cent of its export income (CRA 1990: 2–3). Being a large, open-cut mine, surrounding villages suffered from land appropriation, environmental damage, village relocation and social inconvenience. BCL attempted to ameliorate villagers' grievances through the payment of occupation fees and compensation to primary right holders, who were expected to distribute these cash sums to subsidiary right holders. While absolutely small, these payments were relatively significant, being 'the initial impetus to business development' as households sought to take advantage of opportunities opened by the mine (Applied Geology Associates 1989: 4.16). Consequently, compensation payments, mediated through custom, became another site of struggle for socially fractured households.

In 1980, certain landowners in the mine lease area created a formal organization to unite scattered landowners into a larger social bloc, initially led by the middle and rich peasantry, along with the rural bourgeoisie. Known as the Panguna Landowners Association (PLA), this organization impressed more intensely on BCL the landowners' social ability to mediate their access to the minerals. This effort won an improved compensation agreement, which included a provision for the setting up of the Road Mine Tailings Lease Trust Fund (RMTLTF). This fund would administer certain compensation payments, diversifying them into investments that would survive the mine's life. By 1983, the trust was chaired by prominent Bougainvillean businessman Severinus Ampaoi, who directed that the trust's investments be determined by rate of return, not local needs. This strategy intensified a wider perception among the poor peasantry, wage-labourers and the still largely 'traditional' clan communities in the mine lease area that the region's wealth was being monopolized by self-interested individuals and organizations, motivated by rates of profit rather than the needs of local households. Other organizations that would become subject to this charge included the Bougainville Development Corporation (BDC), as well as BCL and its associated benevolent organization, Bougainville Copper Foundation (BCF).

Consequently, as households in the mine lease area became more intensively affected by the process of social differentiation during the 1980s, those denied access to key economic resources (land, compensation, skilled jobs, business contracts, finance, agricultural extension services), found common ground in chastising the PLA, RMTLTF, BCL, BCF and BDC. This was particularly the case for a rapidly growing, youth population – lacking in land, education and finance – who were forced often into underemployment and unemployment. These groups, squeezed by the development process, found representation in a number of radical, young leaders, the most prominent of whom were Francis Ona, a truck driver at the mine, and his cousin, Perpetua Serero. These leaders

set about a forward-looking project, albeit dressed in traditionalist garb, of inverting the existing social balance by subordinating the production of profit to the needs of the clan community, viewed through the lens of egalitarianism.

These new, radical leaders became hegemonic within the PLA, with Ona and Serero elected to the organization's executive on 21 August 1987. Under their leadership, the PLA acquired a markedly different social character. No longer would the landowners' customary title be principally employed to extract increased compensation and benefits from BCL. Rather, the landowners' title would be directed towards the subordination of capital to the egalitarian clan community. On 12 April 1988, BCL was to learn of the PLA's new social character when the PLA executive delivered a letter to demand formally PGK 10 billion compensation (about USD 12 billion) from the company and 50 per cent of BCL's future profits. Also, the PLA called for the total transfer of company ownership to the landowners after five years (Panguna Landowners Association 1988a). Failure to meet these demands, it was warned, would lead to the mine's closure.

For the remainder of 1988, BCL attempted to encourage the new PLA to soften its demands, offering a public works programme valued at PGK 3 million (about USD 3.6 million). In addition, the national government ordered an official inquiry into the social and environmental effects of the mine. Yet Ona informed the company and national government that 'we are not worried about money. Money is something nothing'.<sup>1</sup> 'We are', Ona claimed, 'determined to close the mine' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1988a). The company found its interests and those of the new PLA in intense opposition. The social mechanisms that could placate the old PLA executive had little effect.

On 22 November 1988, Ona began to fulfil his promise to shut down the mine. The PLA entered what was described as 'stage 2' of its political project (Panguna Landowners Association 1988b). This new phase began with armed men forcing their way into BCL's explosives magazine to steal a considerable quantity of dynamite. In response, BCL organized crisis meetings with senior national government officials in Port Moresby, the nation's capital.

Late in the night, after the first day of crisis talks (25 November), a campaign of industrial sabotage began that was directed against mine property, causing damage estimated at PGK 620,000 (about USD 750,000). BCL's managing director phoned senior ministers immediately to arrange a meeting the following morning to discuss their joint response. During the meeting, BCL's policy was made clear: this was an act of 'highly organised terrorism'. Consequently, the militant landowners must be arrested, the legitimacy of the PLA executive re-examined and, most importantly, the terrorists must not be 'given indication that increases their expectations and therefore vindicates their actions' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1988b).

BCL wanted the national government to employ the security apparatus to remove the radicals and restore the leadership of moderates from the old executive. The company requested that the Royal PNG Constabulary's (RPNGC) mobile squads be employed, arguing it 'was necessary to have at least two riot

groups and flight arrangements to get them to Bougainville' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1988b). Further reinforcements were requested by BCL's Managing Director on 2 December (Cornelius 1988).

A senior official from the RPNGC<sup>2</sup> explained to me, the mobile squads 'are semi-military, they are aggressive ... they go in there and they beat a few heads in ... burn a few houses down, shoot a few pigs ... the mobile squads operated with a modus operandi of frightening people' (Personal Communication, 10 July 2006). BCL was well aware of the mobile squads' character. A senior manager from BCL explained:

We knew the riot squads were heavy handed, that was well known in PNG ... If you threw a rock at them you would get ten rocks thrown back ... We knew that the heavy handed approach wouldn't work if they were there long term. It was a case, somebody has to come ... and put a lid on things before it gets out of hand.

(BCL Manager, Personal Communication, 26 October 2006)

Despite BCL's policy position, the National Executive Committee (NEC) – PNG's cabinet – restrained temporarily the mobile squads, preferring to negotiate a political solution. BCL's reaction was recorded in an internal memorandum of its chairman: 'The PM's priority was to "appease" the landowners. I expressed the view that CRA [BCL's parent company] would want to review its assessment of PNG as a place to invest' (Carruthers 1988). BCL had been presumptuous in assuming an identity of interests between mining capital and the national government. While both share a common interest in maintaining the operating conditions of mining production, perspectives on how this is to be achieved can differ as a result of BCL's preeminent concern with the security of tenure and profit rates, and the state's priority to balance fiscal liquidity, international reputation and domestic legitimacy. The chairman's reaction did little to ingratiate the company in Port Moresby.

A ministerial envoy arrived in Bougainville on 4 December 1988 and four days later, it was agreed that Ona would assist the police to find the remaining explosives. In return, the government promised to restrain the mobile squads and review the conditions of the company's mining agreement. BCL 'expressed amazement at [the] outcome of the Minister party's actions over the past week' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1988c) and so did the hard-talking Police Commissioner Paul Tohian. Like the company, Tohian believed it was a strategic failure on the government's part to 'appease' landowners, a decision that could reverberate elsewhere in the country. As a result, early on 9 December, the police commissioner 'pulled the rug from underneath' the national government (NEC Official, Personal Communication, 5 July 2006), ordering a raid on four landowner villages. Landowners were arrested, women harassed, villages burnt; however, Ona and other radicals escaped (BCL Manager, Personal Communication, 7 June 2006).

Heightened tensions necessitated that the mobile squads remained and this placed a considerable burden upon BCL. A senior BCL manager informed me:

There were absolutely no arrangements for accommodation, no arrangements for messing, or transportation, so it was expected that the company was going to feed, and house, and transport these guys ... [The mobile squads said:] 'If you want us to drive around give us some f\*\*\* vehicles [asterisks added]. We are not going to be very effective if we are dying from hunger, we need to be fed'. So what do you do?

(Personal Communication, 26 October 2006)

Consequently BCL became the de facto logistical network for PNG's security apparatus, who at the time were one of the few government organs openly sympathetic with the company's aims.

In January 1989, the rebels – who named themselves formally the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) – began attacking the property of local businessmen and murdered Matthew Kove, a prominent member of the old PLA and a relative of Ona. In late March, the murder of a Bougainvillean nursing sister by a Highlands labourer increased tensions.<sup>3</sup> In revenge, two Highlanders were killed and riots broke out in Toniva on the east coast of Bougainville. Government infrastructure was damaged and three militants were killed near Buin in south Bougainville in armed skirmishes with the mobile squads (Hiambohn 1989a).

The government characterized these events as a serious law and order breakdown, provoked by the rebels. In a joint statement, the police minister and police commissioner warned: 'Any person who steps out of line will ... bear the brunt of the law ... Give us a month and we will get everything in order' (quoted in Hiambohn, 1989b). This time, it would appear, the government was prepared to defer to PNG's security apparatus, hoping they could 'put a lid' on the situation via their trademark 'reactive', 'paramilitary' style of policing. These punitive methods had been employed with varying success in other law and order operations during the 1980s (Dinnen 2001; Mapusia 1986). To assist operations, the existing contingent of 250 mobile squad officers was supported by approximately 100 defence force soldiers. On 10 April 1989, 'a full-scale military operation against militant landowners' was launched (Rea 1989: 1). The prime minister argued: 'No responsible government can allow this to continue. Our nation depends upon the unity of all its people ... unity is strength' (quoted in Avei 1989: 2).

The operation employed a number of well-established tactics. First, 'villages were burnt as a form of punishment and in retaliation for ambushes or simply on suspicion of harbouring rebels. Soldiers believed that all Bougainvilleans should be made to suffer for the actions of those few militants' (Rogers 2002: 252). A BCL official, who surveyed the damage, reported that 'forty, fifty villages, and the crops [were destroyed]. Villages were varying from five or six houses to twenty or thirty houses' (BCL Manager, Personal Communication, 31 May 2006). Those left homeless were placed into government 'care centres'. A witness from this period recalled: 'we were not allowed any contact [with people in the "care centres"] ... even priests going in trying to minister to the people were beaten up' (Havini 1997: 31).

The security forces also engaged in the harassment, torture and execution of suspected BRA supporters. The predominant victims of these attacks were young Bougainvillean men, provincial politicians, young women, as well as national and international journalists, perceived to be either supporting the BRA or undermining the national government by reporting atrocities (Amnesty International 1990; Layton 1992). Indeed, on 21 March 1989, journalists and diplomats were banned officially from entering the island.

Commentators often characterized these atrocities as examples of undisciplined behaviour. Poor discipline may have exacerbated the brutality of these operations; however, the general tactics were by then institutionalized and had been employed systematically in reactive law and order operations throughout the 1980s. State violence had become an 'ongoing ... instrument of state rule' (Gurr 1986: 50) for a government that lacked a monopoly over social regulation on the ground. In the specific case of Bougainville, the destruction of villages served to demoralize and reduce the BRA's support network while its arbitrary character, often based quite simply on village proximity to militant operations, sent a message to the surrounding communities: 'control your young men, or we will destroy you'. Additionally, the detention, torture and execution of individuals from specific social groups made clear to all those of a similar social identity that they were under suspicion. Facing an elusive enemy, violence against civilians became one of the few mechanisms available to the underprepared and poorly equipped security forces to pressure the militants.

As stories and rumours surrounding the state's terrorist campaign began to disperse around and beyond central Bougainville, it had the ontological effect of creating a social vacuum. That is, villagers' immediate fear of personal destruction transcended temporally their socially generated interests; so that households and communities were guided for a period by a natural desire to secure their existence as organic beings. Under these conditions, the space was opened for the state to assert its hegemony through forging a definition of the community's social interests which also promised to secure villagers' personal safety.

In this instance, however, the social vacuum created by the climate of fear was harnessed initially by the BRA, who emphasized ethnic solidarity and secessionism as the means through which to protect Bougainville from the 'marauding' security forces. Ethnicity and secessionism are phenomena that have a complex lineage in Bougainville. In the immediate term, ethnicity and secessionism allowed the BRA to forge a definition of the community's general interests in areas beyond their immediate zone of influence in central Bougainville, creating alliances with leaders who, under normal conditions, would be opposed to the BRA's anti-capitalist ideology.

This ability of the BRA to exploit the social vacuum created by the state's terror campaign was a new phenomenon in PNG. Ordinarily, these types of security operations were directed at tribal fighting in the Highlands and rascal gangs situated in urban centres. Unlike the latter two scenarios, the Bougainville crisis featured the BRA, who was organized around an ideology that mixed forms of proto-socialism and Melanesian communalism. These basic elements of

BRA's ideology – when mediated through the lens of Bougainvillean nationalism and a respect for tradition – had popular appeal, allowing the BRA to turn the ontological effect of state terrorism in its favour.

Nevertheless, the BRA was still manoeuvring within difficult social terrain. Given that Bougainville was an island made up of hundreds of tightly bound clan communities, which collaborated in regional and provincial organizations of a more tenuous nature, it was difficult for any one social fraction to create a new national unity under their leadership. While the BRA could obtain support temporarily through ethnic solidarity, its anti-capitalist stance and radical practice were inconsistent with the general interests of most scattered clan communities, defined as they tended to be by the middle and upper peasantry. This tension could be exploited by the national government through encouraging community leaders to break any alliance with the rebels. If this could be achieved, then the disenfranchised young men who had joined the hardcore element of the BRA could be persuaded to desist by clan-mates.

Accordingly in late April 1989, the national government attempted to exploit this fractured, political fabric by offering a substantial peace package, which provided landowners with increased royalties, compensation, employment, business contracts, public works, business advisory assistance and investment opportunities. When the package was presented to moderate members of the old and new PLA on 25 April, the minister for minerals and energy made clear his desire that this would enable a new, unified PLA to be formed, under the leadership of moderates. It was anticipated that these moderates could employ the patronage from the peace package to reclaim community support, thus creating the conditions under which local pressure could be brought to bear on the disenfranchised, young men who had fled with Ona into the dense, mountain regions of central Bougainville (PNG 1989). It was hoped this loss of local support would persuade the BRA to engage in dialogue with the national government.

Instead, the BRA responded to this initiative by refocusing its attacks on the mine. On 15 May, the mine unions decided to withdraw their labour while several days later, BCL management resolved that until operating conditions were safe, the mine would remain closed. The company informed the national government that 'protection for such a diverse operations as ours is virtually impossible against a determined militant effort' (Cornelius 1989). BCL hoped that the increased, pecuniary pressure from the mine's closure – in conjunction with the negative impact it was having on PNG's international reputation (which BCL was keen to highlight publicly) – would encourage the national government to adopt the only strategy that could restore stability: to neutralize the militants.

Initially, the national government persisted with its political project of isolating the BRA. However, by the beginning of June, a NEC reshuffle had placed a number of capable and highly influential 'hawks' into key ministerial positions. The company's request for more decisive action was now being supported actively in the cabinet room. The hawks' position was strengthened as the mine's closure began to undermine political stability. BCL's contribution to PNG's

internal revenue, according to its parent company CRA, fell from 17 per cent in 1988 to 6 per cent in 1989 (CRA 1990: 2). In response, the government initially made a number of smaller adjustments to the national budget, including a PGK 25 million reduction in government expenditure. By January 1990, this amount was increased to PGK 100 million (about USD 120 million), supplemented by a number of other serious austerity measures (Weisman 1990: 49).

Consequently on 8 June 1989, BCL was told by the newly appointed Minister of State, Ted Diro, that the government was prepared to 'neutralize' the BRA, employing 'brutal firepower' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1989a). Diro noted more ominously, 'it will take time, democracy'. The reasoning behind this shift in strategy was articulated in parliament soon after the government declared a state of emergency on 26 June. The newly appointed Defence Minister, Benias Sabumei, claimed:

For the first time in the history of PNG, we are witnessing a well organised group of landowners, supporters, and other Papua New Guineans using arms and opting for violence as a primary bargaining power to achieve their objectives. Objectives they all know will destroy the economic and political unity in our country.

(Hansard 11 July 1989)

The Foreign Minister, Michael Somare, elaborated on this point:

We are faced with huge compensation claims today. You cannot build a teachers' college, you cannot build a hospital or improve the highway from Watabung to Chuave because the people are calling for compensation. We must think seriously when dealing with the Bougainville situation because similar problems will arise when other mines go into operations in the future.

(Hansard 11 July 1989)

Consequently, in order to restore the operating conditions of mining capital and deter radical forms of landowner practice, it was announced that the BRA would be isolated from its civilian support base and militarily harassed, showing Ona the 'hopelessness of the situation that he is facing' (Hansard 11 July 1989). The minister for police warned that 'people who obstruct, hinder, assist rebels and who disobey lawful orders are bound to be assaulted and harassed' (Hansard 12 July 1989). BCL was broadly supportive of this new offensive strategy. One senior manager informed me:

We did everything they [the security forces] asked of us to make their life more comfortable, and better able to manage through, with transport, communications, provisions, whatever, fuel ... as far as we saw it we were hoping that they were going to solve the situation, so we could start operating again.

(BCL Manager, Personal Communication, 26 October 2006)

As the conflict escalated in seriousness, another party became active in making its presence felt: the Australian state.<sup>4</sup>

Publicly the Australian government was reserved, with the foreign minister stating the Bougainville crisis was an 'internal matter' for PNG, which he hoped would be resolved through a 'peaceful solution' (see for example, Hansard 8 November 1990). This official position was a predictable one for a regional hegemon aware that its 'otherness' demanded that particularly sensitive diplomatic issues be handled on an 'informal' and 'discrete' basis (Evans 1989: 43). Nevertheless, given that Australia's highest foreign policy concern was the security of its immediate region (Evans 1989:1), Bougainville in fact became a 'fairly big part' of the Australian government's life (Department of Defence Official, Personal Communication, 31 August 2006).

It was generally felt within the Australian government that the escalating crisis on Bougainville could 'rip the fabric of PNG in ways where the repercussions would simply be unpredictable' (Department of Defence Official, Personal Communication, 28 August 2006). Would secessionism spread to other parts of PNG? Would this legitimize landowner violence in other provinces? Would the security forces crack under the pressure? Would the state collapse? All of these contingencies were discussed, with a general conclusion drawn that any of these outcomes would be potentially deleterious for Australia's regional security, mining companies and its credibility as an international actor.

Consequently, Australia's *actual* position during 1989–90 was that it supported an expanded counterinsurgency campaign and would do everything it could to assist the PNG security forces, short of sending its own infantry. Thus, as a senior official from Australia's High Commission informed me:

We were, early on, supporting a stronger PNGDF role than they actually played ... we were ... pushing them to get more troops over there ... Ben Sabumei was the Minister, and I use to see him all the time saying get your people over there.

(Personal Communication, 25 August 2006)

To facilitate this policy directive, Australia played an enhanced, logistical role in supporting the counterinsurgency, both through its defence cooperation programme and High Commission presence. A senior defence staff official stationed in the High Commission at the time informed me that during the 1989–90 period:

Without our support they couldn't have done what they did ... we'd be training them at training camps, we'd be supplying them with weapons, we'd be supplying them with uniforms, everything. And then we'd say these companies are now fit to be used, let's send them now to Bougainville. We'd even fly them to Bougainville for God's sake.

(Personal Communication, 1 September 2006)

This intensive support of the PNG security apparatus presented Australia with a particular moral dilemma. The aforementioned Australian defence staff official explained:

We had good knowledge about what was going on ... they [the PNG security forces] were involved in some pretty awkward situations where there was large losses of life ... [Yet] to step back completely and let them just sink was not really a palatable option.

(Personal Communication, 1 September 2006)

As Australia's support for PNG in this instance served to consciously reinforce the state's capacity to continue and intensify its campaign of terrorism, it may be characterized as an instance of 'surrogate' state terrorism.<sup>5</sup>

With BCL and Australia providing logistical and moral support for an expanded counter-insurgency operation, and the NEC now increasingly influenced by the 'hawk' faction, the PNG security apparatus would proceed to engage in three major military offensives during 1989 and 1990. The first offensive began in July 1989. Employing 500 soldiers and 200 mobile squad officers (Oliver 1991: 219), the offensive aimed to clear the strategically important port mine access road, as well as the mine operations area (Rogers 2002: 224–9). In doing so, it was hoped the security forces would create the stability necessary for the mine to reopen; at the same time, they would neutralize key BRA members, as well as demoralize and remove their civilian support base.

The clearing of these key strategic zones was facilitated by the threat of force by the deputy controller Colonel Dotaona. Havini observed:

They [villagers] were actually invited to come down but the invitation is 'if you don't come down, you cop what you get'. We are going in there on a military operation. If you are not down there in care centres you are fair game.

(Havini 1997: 31)

Those who remained were indeed subject to the sort of violent destruction witnessed during the April operations. For example, Irenaeus Ivomei of Puempe village reported that on 18 July 1989, soldiers had been observing his village, which consisted of 18 adults and 40 children. At around 1 p.m. these soldiers opened fire abruptly 'with automatic weapons, destroying our houses'. Then, according to Ivomei: 'A helicopter appeared which also rained automatic fire down onto the village ... all food gardens [were] destroyed, and the air was foul with the smell of dead pigs, dogs, cats and chickens' (Quoted in Havini 1990: 35–7). Furthermore, as with the April operations, young men in the area were tortured and murdered by the security forces. One example cited by Amnesty International is particularly gruesome:

The body of Ambrose Leo of Guava village arrived at Arawa General Hospital on 18 July 1989 with a note attached to it which read: 'this is the first

billion of your ten billion' ... Ambrose Leo had been beaten, kicked and stabbed in the ear before being shot at close range.

(Amnesty International 1990: 23)

Symbolic forms of violence such as the above example linked the extra-judicial killings to the landowners' radical demands in the minds of villagers. Indeed, the fact that 'body after body' was reported to have been dumped at the Arawa General Hospital (*Four Corners* 1991), rather than being disposed of quietly, indicated there was a definite, instrumental dimension to the security forces' brutality; that is, to terrorize the general civilian population of Bougainville into abandoning their support of the BRA and its radical demands.

While the operations were not successful in neutralizing key BRA personnel, BCL felt the security environment in the mine area was safe enough to begin repair work in August 1989. In this same period, the national government withdrew the security forces from offensive operations. The conciliators in cabinet hoped that because the BRA was faced with a unified PLA, dwindling civilian support and military demoralization, the organization may be prepared to join the peace process.

During late August and early September, it was announced publicly that the mine would reopen on 5 September while the peace package would be signed on 11 September, with or without BRA support. In response, the BRA shut down the mine successfully only a day after reopening, while on the morning of 11 September, the peace package signing was derailed after the BRA assassinated John Bika, a provincial minister who was involved in its negotiation. The conciliators in PNG's cabinet were disillusioned, strengthening the standing of the 'hawks', whose preferred solution was the annihilation of the BRA's core element. This new complexion in cabinet manifested itself in October with the replacement of the operation's deputy controller, Colonel Dotaona, with Colonel Nuia. It was believed that Dotaona was not aggressive enough in pursuing the BRA, whereas Nuia had a reputation for being a 'hard man', with a 'punitive' approach to military operations (RPNGC Official, Personal Communication, 10 July 2006).

While building his offensive capacity, Nuia attempted to isolate the BRA strategically by placing a goods and services embargo on areas known to be under BRA influence. It was hoped that 'when people start to feel the hardships in education and health they might start to turn against the militants', particularly in those areas where the alliance with the BRA was most tenuous (Bougainville Copper Limited 1989b). To assist this process of subversion, the security forces and provincial government opened a dialogue with community leaders, encouraging them to turn over the young men in their area suspected of supporting the BRA. By late December, the provincial administrative secretary Peter Tsiamalili reported that in Boku 'the leaders ... are identifying the hardcore and turning them into the authorities. A similar thing is happening down in Buin' (Bougainville Copper Limited 1989c). Thus, the perception grew that by placing pressure on clan communities through a goods and services blockade while establishing

communications with local leaders, moderates in regions of weak BRA penetration could be encouraged to break their alliance with the BRA and reassert their leadership. It was hoped this government policy would allow the security forces to concentrate their limited offensive capacity on the most hardcore BRA region, Kongara, in central Bougainville.

Nuia's much-awaited military offensive began on 11 January 1989. It involved 500 soldiers, supported by 300 police officers and 100 correctional services staff (Hansard 14 March 1990). Rogers (2002: 241–2) observed that, 'the operation had two phases; phase 1 would force the rebels onto the run while phase 2 would see the rebels rounded up'. Phase 1 was enacted by a surprise aerial bombardment of villages in the Kongara region, employing Iroquois helicopters, grenades and mortars supplied by the Australian government (including white phosphorous mortar rounds). Rogers (2002: 228–9) noted that 'mortar rounds often fell indiscriminately, wounding civilians and terrorising the local population'. Indeed, Amnesty International (1990: 35) received reports that at least 27 villagers, 'including elderly people and children, were killed between mid-January and mid-February as a result of heavy mortar fire and aerial bombing into areas of suspected rebel activity'. As with previous operations, the security forces implemented 'destructions' while arresting, torturing and, in some cases, killing young Bougainvillean men, often simply on the justification they had 'dreadlocks, a hairstyle worn by some BRA members' (Amnesty International 1990: 26).

The BRA counterattacked successfully and an increasingly frustrated security force responded by summarily executing six civilians, throwing five of the corpses into the sea from an Iroquois helicopter. Knowledge of these desperate acts of state terrorism filtered throughout the island and the BRA earned pan-Bougainville influence (see Spriggs 1990). As early as 6 February 1990, the chairman of BCL warned the PNG prime minister:

I am alarmed at the rate at which the situation in Bougainville has deteriorated in the last month. To the best of my knowledge the militants now appear to be in control of virtually the entire Province with the principal exception of the area around Arawa, Panguna, Kieta and Aropa.

(Carruthers 1990)

The national government, realizing they 'could not control it [the island] anymore', negotiated a cease fire with the BRA (NEC Official, Personal Communication, 8 July 2006). It was agreed that the security forces would leave the island, to be replaced by an international, peace-monitoring group. By the end of March, the island was completely abandoned by the PNG state and by BCL. In May 1990, the BRA declared independence and formed an interim government.

Neither PNG, nor Australia nor BCL were prepared to see the island abandoned. Indeed, PNG and BCL still shared the sincere hope that the mine would re-open. The NEC was also particularly wary of the strategic implications an

independent Bougainville would have for an already fragile national polity. Similarly, Australia saw no particular advantage in having yet another non-viable micro-state in the region, which they speculated would only further undermine an increasingly hazardous regional security environment. Thus, while initiatives aimed at opening dialogue with the BRA were pursued, the Defence Intelligence Branch (DIB) of PNG's Department of Defence, in conjunction with Australian Defence Force officers stationed both in the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and the Australian High Commission, began to develop a strategy to retake the island, known as Operation *Bung Wantaim*.

The first pillar of the operation was a full military blockade of the island (including Buka just off its northern tip). Officially beginning on 6 May 1990, it aimed to prevent all goods and services, including humanitarian assistance, from reaching Bougainville's general population. The DIB (1990: 10) observed 'the people have been waiting for S. Kauona [a BRA leader] to bring in the assistance of four foreign nations to provide goods and services', the denial of which will be 'detrimental for the NSP [North Solomons Province] population's well being and good for the government'. The DIB (1990: 11) claimed that these hardships would create the conditions for carefully 'planned and executed psychological warfare', aimed at turning areas of weak BRA influence against the militants. This tactic – as we know from similar, smaller-scale blockades in late 1989 – aimed to strengthen the influence of moderate community leaders, who could utilize customary relations to encourage support for the security forces, with promises of restored services and increased forms of patronage.

The effect of the blockade on the civilian population was enormous. An observer from the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, who visited the island in March 1991, claimed the blockade had created 'an emergency situation', with medical experts on the island suggesting 'over 3,000 people have died as a direct consequence of the blockade' (Evans 1992: 45–6). This general finding was supported by Médecins Sans Frontières, who observed in 1993 'elevated death rates in the population, and most especially among the most vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women' (Médecins Sans Frontières 1993). Despite reports of the suffering being made public on numerous occasions in 1990, BCL in December lent its moral support to maintaining the blockade, telling the government to 'starve the bastards out' (Somare 2001). While the Australian government 'did everything it could' to support the embargo in terms of logistics (High Commission Official, Personal Communication, 25 August 2006).

The second and third pillars of Operation *Bung Wantaim* were enacted in September 1990 when the security forces re-entered the island, with the support of a Bougainvillean paramilitary force, known as the Buka Liberation Front (BLF). The BLF was led by prominent politicians and businessmen from north Bougainville and equipped by the national government. This had been pre-planned by the DIB (1990: 14), who hoped that the 'hardships' caused by the blockade would create an environment where Bougainvillean leaders, loyal to the national government, could turn BRA members in the north and south of

Bougainville through the provision of patronage and cash bribes (DIB 1990: 14; PNG Department of Foreign Affairs Official, Personal Communication, 11 July 2006). If successful, the DIB (1990: 13) claimed, the BRA's expanded opposition could be militarized, creating a 'civil war' situation where central Bougainville would be pitted against north and south Bougainville. Under these general conditions, the security forces could retake the island and surround the militants in central Bougainville. This latter aspect of the operation was given particular attention by Australian Defence Force officers in the PNGDF and the Australian High Commission, who:

Started to devise an operation to win back Bougainville. Which was to start by getting back Buka, getting Buka, and then working into expanding your basis and thereby winning it back in a military sense, when it was in total darkness, the case was totally hopeless.

(High Commission Official, Personal Communication, 1 September 2006)

By the end of 1990, the security forces had successfully recaptured Buka. BRA suspects were reportedly executed at escalated rates, while those villages in Buka that were accused of supporting the BRA were subject to brutal reprisals by the BLF (Spriggs 1992: 11–13). Thus, by 1991, the security forces had been successful in militarizing the social tensions on Bougainville, cultivating a 'civil war' which eased its military reengagement. This military reengagement proceeded in 1991, in close liaison with community leaders. Furthermore, additional anti-BRA forces were militarized. By 1992, government control had been established over north and south-west Bougainville, setting the conditions for a long and complex civil war that would not formally cease until 1998.

## Conclusion

In this case study, we have seen that the traditional clan communities of PNG were exposed to the structures of global capitalism under the guidance of a conservative, colonial administration. Consequently, a unique trajectory of historical development was created, wherein households, bound together by clan relations, became increasingly differentiated as a result of their uneven access to essential social resources such as land, credit, labour and compensation. It was on this social base that radicalized youth, squeezed by the development process into underemployment and unemployment, squared off against capital in an intensive form, corresponding to the intensive penetration of capital in central Bougainville. This struggle absorbed the PNG state, whose carrot-and-stick approach symbolized the tension between political legitimacy and political stability in PNG.

In these circumstances, state terrorism first became a tool utilized by the national government to restore the hegemony of moderates in the PLA, an organization which mediated capital's access to the conditions of production. Once the BRA attempted to unify Bougainville in a class alliance under its own leader-

ship, state terrorism became a tool which could exploit the fragmented social fabric of the island, encouraging local leaders to reassert their authority and regulate the activities of the hardcore youth. In both instances, state terrorism's cogency arose from the elusiveness of the militants, which made the targeting of civilians a practical way in which the state could induce the BRA to abandon its hard-line position and join the peace process.

Australia, as the regional hegemon, brought its weight to bear on the crisis at a subtle level, employing discrete political connections at cabinet, High Commission and defence force levels to encourage a more militarized approach to the conflict. With enhanced defence cooperation assistance, Australia proved to be a surrogate agency of state terrorism.

BCL lacked the continuity, depth and form of connection that Australia possessed with PNG's political rulers. Therefore, BCL found its support for offensive operations was less persuasive in Port Moresby than hoped. Nevertheless, BCL's decisive position in the economic fabric of PNG – and direct support of the military apparatus – entailed that in the absence of an ability to forge a genuine, strategic consensus with the PNG state, it could at least manoeuvre in a way that added moral weight to existing national political forces that were sympathetic to its position. BCL was assisted in this aim by Australia's strategic position, illustrating how the geopolitical interests to arise out of a world economy, organized around a system of nation states, can create international, political forces which attempt to assist capital's secure movement across spatial barriers.

## Notes

- 1 Ona's idiosyncratic mode of expression captures how money, as the higher object of the private household's accumulation strategy, has corroded increasingly the kinship structures through which this drive has been mediated, and placed definite limits on the ability of poorer households to realize the new commodified use values that have become available through integration into the world economy. Hence money is certainly 'something', but for the radicalized subjectivities of the PLA, it is also 'nothing'; in other words, it is symbolic of new, destructive relationships that inhibit households from evenly realising the universal, historically generated, social forces of humanity (e.g. use-values of all varieties, forms of knowledge, cultural media, health services etc.), that were becoming available through integration into a global society.
- 2 The identities of the informants cannot be disclosed for confidentiality reasons.
- 3 The Highlands are a densely populated mountainous inland region of mainland PNG. Significant historical tensions exist between Bougainvilleans and migrant Highlands labourers.
- 4 PNG's stability was a major strategic concern for the Australian government, given its geographical proximity to Australia's northern coastline and sea-lanes. Australian capital also had significant investments in PNG (AUD 1.8 billion in 1989 or the equivalent of USD 1.4 billion), with a large, expatriate population living throughout the country. Accordingly, after granting PNG independence, Australia continued to provide untied budget support for the PNG state (15 per cent of PNG's revenue in 1989). Australia assisted PNG's security forces through a significant, defence aid programme. This programme accounted for 51.1 per cent of Australia's total defence aid of AUD 72.2 million (about USD 56 million) in 1989–90.

- 5 When a government sells, grants, and in other procedures provides favorable terms by which a coalition partner, ally, friend, or client state ... obtain equipment that a 'reasonable person' should perceive would likely be used to *continue* practices of repression and terrorism ... [or] when governments train the personnel that conduct the terror operations, consult with and advise (for 'reasons of state') the security services of a 'friendly' state in its use of terrorism ... [these are forms] of surrogate terrorism.

(Stohl 1984: 53-4)

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## 9 Paramilitarism and state terror in Colombia

Sam Raphael<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The strategically important Republic of Colombia, located in the north west region of continental South America, has been rocked by sustained civil violence for several decades. With substantial natural resources (including significant oil reserves), vast cocoa-producing regions, and Pacific and Caribbean coastlines, the country has been the site for ongoing political struggle to an extent not seen elsewhere in the region. For decades, ruling elites have governed through two political parties (Conservative and Liberal), and successive administrations have worked to open the Colombian economy to foreign capital, and to ensure a healthy investment climate. Through this, elites have both garnered extensive support from the United States, which has provided billions of dollars in economic and military aid to the government, and have entrenched their domestic rule.<sup>2</sup> Colombian society remains deeply inequitable, with vast wealth differentials between the landowning oligarchy and the wider population sustained by the continuing consolidation of capitalist social relations.

Despite relative consensus across the ruling elite regarding the desired structure of the economy, there exists a set of significant political forces in Colombia who remain deeply opposed to the prevailing socioeconomic order. A wide range of people from within Colombian civil society have adopted a position of confrontation against the state, either through taking up armed struggle or through peaceful political organization. Such opposition manifests itself in a varied and complex way, with a myriad of groups who seek to modify or even overturn existing distributions of power and wealth. In response, the Colombian elite, acting through both the state and allied institutions of social, economic and military control, have led a concerted effort to disrupt, dismantle and destroy all viable opposition. As a central strategy within this effort, these elites have undertaken a coordinated campaign of violence against Colombian civilians, specifically in order to instil fear and dissuade political organization from below. As a discrete element within the wider civil conflict, ongoing since the 1960s, tens of thousands of civilians have been victims of violence from a complex network of rightwing paramilitary groups tied to core elements of the state security forces, and to the ruling class. Through the use of unrestrained violence delivered