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'Time Is Against Us': Anti-Communism, Decolonisation, and Papua New Guinean Independence

JON PICCINI 

This article traces the importance of anti-communist organisations to the development of early Papua New Guinean political elites. Focusing on Oala Oala-Rarua (1934–80), it shows how his participation in activities organised by the spiritual group Moral Re-Armament and the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom provided avenues and platforms through which to articulate an increasingly nationalist politics. Both groups feared that radical nationalism in the Australian-administered Territory would serve communist purposes, and as such sought to cultivate a liberal political leadership. Following work on non-communist forms of anti-colonial worldmaking, this article shows how Oala-Rarua and his contemporaries saw much of value in the ideas on display and the connections they facilitated. While initially accepting of Australian tutelage, this article shows that, over time, emerging nationalist elites found the realities of slow progress and ongoing racial discrimination in the Territory to be at odds with even the most conservative post-colonial schema.

Introduction: 'The last colonial country'

On 27 October 1956, a Papuan 'native' named Oala Oala-Rarua wrote to Australian Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck. Only 22 years old, Oala-Rarua had been chosen to undertake a six-month tour of Europe and America with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), an anti-communist spiritual group active on Kwato Island, off the Australian Territory's far east coast. Oala-Rarua reported glowingly on his trip, which took him everywhere from a fabulous mansion in Caux, Switzerland, to the streets of American cities like Detroit, where he had 'learned new things every day from people of all races,

I thank Helen Gardner, Brad Underhill, and Jonathon Ritchie for inviting me to participate in the *Remembering Australian Colonialism in Papua New Guinea: Perceptions from both sides of the Coral Sea* symposium on 29–30 October 2022 at Deakin University, where this paper was first presented. My thanks are also due to *AHS*'s two anonymous reviewers, and editors Fiona Paisley and Tim Rowse. No potential conflict of interest reported by the author.

colours, classes and creeds'. His experiences had demonstrated that overcoming 'the hate and bitterness in the coloured man's heart' was vital to solving 'the disunity and the many problems in our country'. Oala-Rarua returned convinced that MRA's ideology of forgiveness, industriousness, and rejection of radicalism, which it opposed to the wave of supposedly communist-inspired nationalism sweeping the world, was vital to 'establishing unity between our two races'.¹

In 1967, almost eleven years later, Oala-Rarua delivered a very different message in the University of Sydney Labour Club's annual Herbert Evatt Memorial Lecture (Figure 1). By then a well-travelled trade union leader and aspiring politician, Oala-Rarua had served in senior positions within the Australian administration and was a founding member of the Pangu (Papua and New Guinea Union) Pati – which had just released a policy calling for immediate home rule. Titled 'Will New Guinea be the last colonial country?', Oala-Rarua's speech called 'deplorable' suggestions by Australia's then-Minister for Territories Charles Barnes that nationhood was still decades away. This was an 'expression of complete non-faith' in his people that reflected Australia's 'colonial fantasy'.² With the right policies, Oala-Rarua believed, 'independence could come as early as 1970'.³ While shocking to some, his prediction was not far off. Self-government would arrive in 1973, and formal independence two years later, and Oala-Rarua himself would go on to hold the new nation's most important overseas posting: High Commissioner in Canberra.⁴

These two statements seem to reflect entirely different political worlds. In the first, Oala-Rarua speaks a language that reflected the tutelary role Australia saw itself as performing in the Territory. Independence, if it would come at all, would be after decades of patient, slow development – and on Australian terms. The second occupies a completely different register: that of the anti-colonial nationalist. Australia's tutelage had become a straitjacket, stifling the aspirations of the Territory's peoples for freedom. On the face of it, Oala-Rarua's second set of comments repudiate the first. Drawing on disparate moments when Oala-Rarua appears in colonial archives, published seminar material and newspapers, I offer a more complicated reading. By tracing Oala-Rarua's political development over this period of a little more than a decade, this article demonstrates how he and other emerging nationalist elites of Papua New Guinea (PNG) articulated increasingly radical positions, while continuing to utilise the political language of anti-communism and the fears of racial disharmony it mobilised.

¹ Oala-Rarua to The Honourable Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, 27 October 1956, in National Archives Australia (hereafter NAA), A518: EP840/1/4.

² Oala Oala-Rarua, 'Will New Guinea Be the Last Colonial Country?', *The Australian Quarterly* (December 1967), 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴ For an overview of the politics of PNG independence, see Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2012).



Figure 1. Oala Oala-Rarua presents the H.V. Evatt Memorial Lecture, University of Sydney, July 1967. Image courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales and the SEARCH Foundation.

In this article, I engage with scholarship from the nascent “decolonizing” turn in Cold War studies.⁵ Partisans on both sides of the superpower divide

⁵ Thomas William Shillam, ‘Shattering the ‘Looking-Glass World’: The Congress for Cultural Freedom in South Asia, 1951–55’, *Cold War History* 20, no. 4 (2020): 444.

interpreted the end of empire in mechanical and reductionist ways. In reality, however, the Cold War was part of 'a broader moment of intertwined, if sometimes paradoxical, local and global change'.⁶ While groups like MRA did not share the same revolutionary zeal as the far left, or speak in the language of imperialism and its overthrow, they understood that empire's end needed to be carefully managed. As Australian anti-communist Richard Krygier remarked to an overseas counterpart: it was important to 'pre-empt the field before the Communists and their friends emerge on the scene'.⁷ In this article, I show how MRA and Krygier's Australian Association for Cultural Freedom (AACF) – the first a religious movement with an ideology of global harmony, the latter a secular body aimed at protecting intellectual liberty – conceptualised PNG as a battlefield in the global Cold War. Each projected their anxieties about global decolonisation onto the emerging nation and sought to cultivate pro-Western leaders.

Oala-Rarua, like countless other emerging leaders in the so-called 'Third World', took advantage of the opportunities the global anti-communist movement offered him.⁸ Both MRA and the AACF sought to 'curate transformational experiences' via staging gatherings, conferences, and seminars that united colonised and coloniser, black and white, on an (at least ostensibly) equal footing.⁹ While such engagement aimed to indoctrinate 'natives' into a particular way of thinking, the possibility of international travel and public platforms opened new vistas and audiences to Oala-Rarua and other Papua New Guineans. Perhaps most importantly, these encounters expose the power and pliability of Cold War language. By tracing Oala-Rarua's ongoing engagement with MRA, and his participation in an AACF seminar in Port Moresby in January 1965, I explore how his emerging nationalist vernacular shifted in line with both global events, and the actions of the Australian administration.

This article focuses on three phases in Oala-Rarua's political development. Firstly, I look to MRA's Kwato mission, where he worked as a teacher, focusing on how the group's anti-communism was 'translated' into the PNG context, and their agenda of producing a Papuan elite. I show that Oala-Rarua's overseas experiences were shared by other leading Papuans at Kwato, and how this strengthened their anti-communist spiritualism. Secondly, Oala-Rarua's role as a trade union leader is analysed, exploring how MRA's philosophy was foundational to the work of the Port Moresby Workers Association that he headed from 1962. Oala-Rarua's participation in the AACF's Port Moresby seminar, on the fate of 'free institutions' in the Territory, provided a stage to protest the racialised

⁶ Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, eds., *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 2.

⁷ Richard Krygier to Ivan Kats, 31 May 1965, in Records of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom (AACF), MS 2031, Box 12, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA).

⁸ On the 'third world' see Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

⁹ Ismay Milford, 'A New World in the Swiss Alps: Moral Re-Armament, Religious Internationalism and African Decolonisation', *Cultural and Social History* 19, no. 5 (2022): 590.

pay structure Australia sought to impose on its public service. His remarks show how the highly controversial move forced a dramatic speeding up of Papuans' own timelines for independence. No longer able to wait patiently, Australia needed to begin devolving responsibilities to locals in earnest. As Oala-Rarua warned his audience, 'time is against us'.¹⁰

Lastly, I return to Oala-Rarua's impassioned speech in Sydney, and the role of MRA alumni in the formation of the Pangu Pati. Without abandoning dreams for a Christian, multi-racial and pro-Western nation, Oala-Rarua and his co-thinkers deployed 'forms of liberal universalism that enabled critical commentary on prolonged tutelage'.¹¹ In so doing, Oala-Rarua made the failings of Australian administrators to deliver on their own promises, and in particular their inability to overcome enduring racial attitudes, into a rationale for independence.

Australia, decolonisation and the Cold War in the South Pacific

Odd Arne Westad argues that the Cold War was in many ways a continuation of earlier colonial designs and anxieties.¹² Australia's claim to the Territory of Papua in 1906 and its 1920 League of Nations Mandate (later United Nations Trusteeship) over formerly German New Guinea, which were joined as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in 1949, were part of an Australasian 'Monroe doctrine'.¹³ These anxieties became transposed onto a new mental map as the post-war superpower conflict between East and West solidified, and particularly after the Communist victory in China.¹⁴ It is unsurprising, then, that such paranoia inflected how Australians responded to the end of European empires in the post-war period. What began as a trickle in the 1940s – India in 1947, Indonesia

¹⁰ Oala Oala-Rarua, 'The Development of Public Service in Papua New Guinea and the Role of Public Servants', *The Future of Free Institutions in Papua New Guinea: Second Seminar, 11–16th January, 1965. Port Moresby* (Sydney: Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, 1965), 5.

¹¹ Tim Rowse, 'The Indigenous Redemption of Liberal Universalism', *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 3 (2015): 579–603.

¹² Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

¹³ On Australia's Pacific ambitions see Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970); Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980); and Marilyn Lake, 'The Australian Dream of an Island Empire: Race, Reputation and Resistance', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015): 410–24. On the history of Australia's administration of PNG see J.D. Legge, *Australian Colonial Policy: A Survey of Native Administration and European Development in Papua* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1956); and Ian Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship: Papua New Guinea, 1945–75* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980). On Australia's role in the negotiations at the League of Nations which established the Mandates system see Cait Storr, *International Status in the Shadow of Empire: Nauru and the Histories of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). On the Australasian Monroe Doctrine see Merze Tate, 'The Australasian Monroe Doctrine', *Political Science Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (June 1961): 264–84; and Patricia O'Brien, 'Remaking Australia's Colonial Culture? White Australia and Its Papuan Frontier 1901–1940', *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 97.

¹⁴ On Australia's response to post-war Asian nationalism and communism see John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

in 1949 – gained momentum in the 1960s, as dozens of Asian and African nations gained independence from the British, French, and Dutch empires.¹⁵ While a handful of post-independence leaders of the Third World adopted communist principles, or worked closely with communists – Sukarno's Indonesia was a stand-out for Australians – Australians' fears reflected racialised assumptions about the susceptibility of 'under-developed' peoples to communist propaganda.

There were of course substantial real links between national liberation struggles and communism. In Lenin's terminology, imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism, and it was imperative for communists everywhere to stand with the colonised against their oppressors.¹⁶ Australian adherents were aware from the mid-1920s of Australia's violent colonialism in the Pacific, and publicised this via Comintern and other networks.¹⁷ Recent scholarship has focused on the rise of anti-colonial ideologies and movements, noting that while these endeavours often received substantial support from communist powers, this did not equal subservience.¹⁸ Communist powers might have made substantial gestures of solidarity with the Third World, but their agendas were often transparent to the colonised themselves.

The Cold War was a contest of hearts and minds. While communism's promise of rapid development and anti-racism was powerful for some, many other emerging Third World leaders were drawn to anti-communist movements. Lebanon's Charles Malik and Carlos Romulo of the Philippines, for example, were powerful pro-Western voices in the early United Nations (UN) and Non-Aligned Movement.¹⁹ Increasingly, the Western political right came to understand that the transition to self-government in decolonising nations needed to be managed through ensuring adherence to Western notions of 'freedom' and protection of vital economic interests.²⁰ International networks of 'soft power' such as those cultivated by MRA and the AACF's parent organisation, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), were vital here: possession of the minds of emerging post-colonial elites was as important as physical territory.²¹

¹⁵ Andrea Benvenuti, *Cold War and Decolonisation: Australia's Policy towards Britain's End of Empire in South East Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017).

¹⁶ V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline, 1917*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/> (accessed 15 August 2023).

¹⁷ 'Help those Fighting Miners: Machine Guns for Natives: How We Rule New Guinea', *The Workers' Weekly*, 17 December 1926, 1.

¹⁸ See, for example, Holger Weiss, ed., *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements, and Global Politics, 1919–1939* (Boston: Brill, 2016) and Oleksa Drachewych, *The Communist International, Anti-Imperialism and Racial Equality in British Dominions* (London: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁹ Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

²⁰ Luc Van Dongen, Stephanie Roulin, and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave, 2014); Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Colleen Woods, *Freedom Incorporated: Anticommunism and Philippine Independence in the Age of Decolonization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

²¹ Ismay Milford et al., 'Another World? East Africa, Decolonisation, and the Global History of the Mid-Twentieth Century', *The Journal of African History* 62, no. 3 (2021): 394–410.

The Pacific has only rarely been centred within this scholarship on the ‘cultural Cold War’, or of decolonisation in general.²² Tracey Banivanua-Mar bemoaned that a focus on the timeline of decolonisation in Asia and Africa has meant that, to many scholars, the winds of change did not arrive in the Pacific until the independence wave had crested and broken.²³ While an emerging literature covers the place of West Papua in the Cold War – owing to its controversial incorporation into Indonesia via a UN-mandated ‘act of free choice’ – focus on the far less dramatic example of PNG has been more patchy.²⁴ In bringing to light the ways two distinct anti-communist movements understood PNG’s place in the global Cold War, and the responses of emerging PNG elites, this article shows how ideas and practices crossed borders in an oft-neglected corner of the world.

A journey ‘to the heart of Asia’: Moral Re-Armament and Kwato mission in the 1950s

MRA, an evangelical church founded by American Frank Buchman, had a presence in PNG even prior to its official formation in 1938. Cecil Abel, who had come under Buchman’s influence at Oxford University in the 1920s, took over operations at Kwato mission after his father Charles’ death in 1930. MRA’s evangelism was prefaced on the belief that ‘human nature can be changed through a personal experience of god’, something Buchman believed was possible by observing his ‘four absolutes’ – honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.²⁵ David Wetherell and Charlotte Carr-Gregg claim that the ‘simplicity of its message’ and rejection of the hierarchies of other Christian denominations meant MRA ‘appealed to the Papuans, who could seemingly adapt its concepts more easily than the traditional observances of [Christianity]’.²⁶ MRA’s Millennialism – ‘the belief that God can and will create a perfected world, possibly through human actions’ – also chimed with Papuan traditions.²⁷

²² Prominent exceptions include articles in the ‘Decolonisation in Melanesia’ special issue of the *Journal of Pacific History* (2013), and David Lowe, ed., *Australia and the End of Empires: The Impact of Decolonisation in Australia’s Near North, 1945–65* (Geelong: Deakin University, 1996).

²³ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisations and the End of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²⁴ On West Papua see Emma Kluge, ‘West Papua and the International History of Decolonisation, 1961–9’, *The International History Review* 42, no. 6 (2020): 1155–72. On PNG and the Cold War see Geoffrey Gray, ‘“A Great Deal of Mischief Can Be Done”: Peter Worsley, the Australian National University, the Cold War and Academic Freedom, 1952–1954’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 101, no. 1 (2015): 25–44; Rhys Crawley, ‘Australia’s Cold War Frontline: ASIO in Papua New Guinea, 1962–75’, in *The Protest Years: The Official History of ASIO, Vol II: 1963–1975*, ed. John Blaxland (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2016), 289–314; and Tristan Moss, ‘Defending Australia’s Land Border: the Australian Military in Papua New Guinea’, in *Fighting Australia’s Cold War*, eds. Peter Dean and Tristan Moss (Canberra, ANU E-Press, 2021), 157–72.

²⁵ Daniel Sack, *Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 3.

²⁶ David Wetherell and Charlotte Carr-Gregg, ‘Moral Re-Armament in Papua, 1931–42’, *Oceania* 54, no. 3 (1984): 177–203, 185–6.

²⁷ Sack, 4.

Buchman's movement underwent a political transformation in the late 1930s. Philip Boobbyer describes how MRA reinvented itself as an 'ideology' rather than a religion: '[W]hereas communism and fascism were essentially negative forces, built on "divisive materialism and confusion", MRA had the positive message of restoring God's leadership in national life'.²⁸ Vital to MRA's pro-Western mission was reconciliation – introducing 'a dynamic of repentance and forgiveness into international affairs'.²⁹ After World War II, with the era of decolonisation underway, MRA began hosting meetings of emerging Third World leaders with white Europeans in the group's luxurious headquarters at Caux, Switzerland.³⁰ Staging such encounters could, it was hoped, avoid violent racial conflict – and the communist threat that this led to.

Even before Kwato came under MRA's influence, it had been the only mission in the Territory to emphasise producing a native elite. Rather than ministering to a whole society, Charles Abel believed, it was necessary to 'intensely and thoroughly ... concentrate very special attention on a few'.³¹ The Abels' practices – including removing local children from village life to live in the Kwato boarding school – were 'a destructive force on traditional Indigenous society'.³² And, as Bradley Underhill explains, plans to construct 'an indigenous "elite" were 'in direct competition with the Australian Government's more gradualist, universalist program'.³³ Unlike Canberra's program of facilitating 'equality of opportunity to participate in eventual self rule', the Abels ensured that 'Kwato-educated local people aspired to be part of, in fact probably lead, a self-governing Territory or nation'.³⁴ While Christianity provided 'a powerful tool that believers could deploy in support of decolonization', and missions were a common background amongst post-colonial leaders, few were as explicit as Abel in pursuing this agenda.³⁵

A key conduit of elite development was the *Papuan Times*. First published in 1948 with salvaged post-war surplus paper, Kwato's newspaper demonstrates how MRA's mission was articulated in the colony.³⁶ Edited by Penueli Anakapu and with much of the copy prepared by current and former Kwato students under the guidance of Cecil Abel and his wife (who themselves often

²⁸ Philip Boobbyer, 'Moral Rearmament in Africa in the Era of Decolonization', in *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 216.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁰ Milford, 'A New World in the Swiss Alps', 590.

³¹ David Wetherell, 'An Elite for a Nation? Reflections on a Missionary Group in Papua New Guinea, 1890–1986', *Pacific Studies* 9, no. 2 (1986): 4, 10.

³² Bradley Underhill, 'The New Deal on the Ground in Papua New Guinea' (PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2021), 172.

³³ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁵ Elizabeth A. Foster and Udi Greenburg, eds., *Decolonization and the Remaking of Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023), 4.

³⁶ Ryan Schram, 'The Tribe Next Door: The New Guinea Highlands in a Post War Papuan Mission Newspaper', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 30 (2019): 18–34. Schram's work, the most thorough to explore the *Papuan Times*, does not mention its connection to Moral Re-Armament.

contributed), the paper's miniscule circulation belied its ambition to serve a still-nascent national audience. Cecil Abel, who in the 1960s would serve as a lecturer in political science at Port Moresby's administration college, and later become a prominent nationalist politician, was no doubt aware of the importance of what Benedict Anderson would later call 'imagined communities' in print.³⁷

The *Papuan Times* covered international, national, and local news, all framed around MRA's anti-communist ideology. One article, on the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala, put this event in clear MRA terms, declaring it a 'another ideological battle' in an 'unending war of ideas'.³⁸ This was no distant concern. In 1952, an editorial warned that the spread of radios to isolated Papuan communities meant 'these people will hear Radio Moscow', and communist ideas 'may take root in the minds of these primitive people, who do not understand the real danger of Communism'. The Soviet's anti-colonial message was dangerous, and Australia 'should use propaganda in the way the Communists use it to convince people and teach them to fight for the Right Way'.³⁹

At the time of the 1951 anti-communist Referendum, the *Papuan Times* issued a warning for all Australians to 'see clearly what lies behind Communism and do his part to fight that evil thing'.⁴⁰ That Papuans, despite nominally being Australian citizens, could not vote was not mentioned. The article concluded:

we in Papua who look to Australia as our mother must wake up and every man do his part to fight the spirit of communism, the spirit of blame and hate and fear and self-interest. In this way we can help the Government to make our mother-country united and safe and prosperous.⁴¹

Communism was here conflated with Buchman's general critique of secular modernity, which was counterposed to hard work and prosperity.

The same article that warned of the danger posed by Radio Moscow spoke to the positive impact of newly formed 'cooperative societies and business organisations', under the aegis of the Australian administration, which were 'reaching thousands of our countrymen'. Such initiatives, central to the post-war development effort, were 'the real plants to take root and bear fruit in future political beliefs in the minds of backwards people'.⁴² Papuans must 'take the hard road and work alongside our government, traders and missionaries in the development of our country', another article explained, for 'then we shall know what democracy means'.⁴³ The *Papuan Times* articulated ideas entirely consistent

³⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). On Cecil Abel's later career see David Wetherell, *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission of Papua New Guinea 1891–1975* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996).

³⁸ 'Unending War of Ideas: Another Ideological Battle Is Being Fought in Central America', *Papuan Times*, 24 June 1954, 1.

³⁹ Editorial, *Papuan Times*, 29 August 1952, 3.

⁴⁰ 'Australia Wake Up Tomorrow Is Too Late', *Papuan Times*, 14 March 1951, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴² Editorial, *Papuan Times*, 29 August 1952, 3.

⁴³ 'Our Administrator', *Papuan Times*, 20 February 1953, 2.

with the 'educative' role of colonialism. Australia was performing a parental duty in its colonies, slowly preparing them for freedom, by which time Kwato's elite would be ready.

Racial disharmony, however, risked undermining this good work. An editorial in early 1954, one of the few that openly criticised Australians, commented on a recently published cartoon in the Port Moresby-based *South Pacific Post*. The cartoon depicted 'a native that has recently returned from an Australian university as a lawyer ... serving two white men with a tray of tea'.⁴⁴ That this 'man of knowledge', wearing the judge's wig he had earned, was still serving as a 'planter's house boy' might be 'very funny for Europeans', the author commented. Amongst Papuans, though, it will only create 'bitterness and hate' reinforcing a 'feeling of inferiority' that had become 'a way of life in this country for more than 70 years'.⁴⁵ If left unattended, it seemed inevitable that 'sometime' this repressed consciousness would 'burst out in a dangerous explosion as it has done in other parts of the coloured world'.⁴⁶ Luckily, MRA provided a ready-made solution: it was only through 'a change of heart on both sides' that 'racial unity' could be forged between 'brown and white'.⁴⁷

The *Papuan Times* ceased publication in 1954, a year before Oala-Rarua's arrival at Kwato, fresh out of teacher's college. However, it was only part of Abel's work, another being the recruitment of Papuans for travel to MRA gatherings abroad. Such pilgrimages were viewed as vital by Buchman's movement: 'From the late 1940s onward, efforts were made to bring African leaders and students [together] in order to draw them into conversation designed to encourage reconciliation between Europeans and Africans'.⁴⁸ While MRA shared with liberal internationalists such as the Pan Pacific Women's Association a belief in the power of affective experience to overcome historical injustice and promote 'modernity', its ideological commitment stands out.⁴⁹ MRA's Kwato connections saw Papuans brought into the organisation's activities in the colonial world from their inception. Four residents of Kwato – Anakapu, the *Papuan Times* editor; Alice Wedega; and Merari and Vera Dickson – were granted permission in October 1952 to attend the First Asian Assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Ceylon.⁵⁰

The Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, was enthused about the group's trip, issuing a press release expressing hope that they would 'worthily represent

⁴⁴ 'Bad Cartoon about Us', *Papuan Times*, 21 January 1954, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. On how humour perpetuated white supremacy in settler colonies, see Nicola Ginsburgh, 'Laughter of the Oppressor: Humour, Whiteness and Masculinity in Late Rhodesia', *History Workshop Journal* 95 (Spring 2023): 197–218.

⁴⁶ 'Bad cartoon about Us', 4.

⁴⁷ 'A Warning on Racial Problems Here', *Papuan Times*, 15 June 1954, 4.

⁴⁸ Boobbyer, 'Moral Rearmament in Africa', 218.

⁴⁹ Fiona Paisley and Helen Gardner, 'Cosmopolitan Pacific: Pan-Pacific Internationalisms in the Mid-Twentieth Century', in *The Making and Remaking of Australasia*, ed. Tony Ballantyne (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 93–114.

⁵⁰ D.M. Cleland, 'Removal of Natives from the Territory', 15 October 1952, in NAA, A518, BM840/1/4.

their country' and 'make a useful contribution' to MRA's agenda.⁵¹ The power that this exposure could have is evident in the testimony of the four Papuans. Merari Dickson, the only Papuan appointed to the Territory's first Legislative Council, thought it 'just wonderful to see many hundreds of people ... from many parts of the world', who 'are so free and gay and have so much to give us Papuans'.⁵² Travelling from his 'little corner of the world' to 'the heart of Asia' gave 'quite a different picture and a more definite world sense'. He recounted one of MRA's many staged experiences – where a former German communist and a British naval officer spoke on the same platform – noting how:

[T]heir conviction and restitution (putting right and saying sorry) was very telling, when you [...] see people from different backgrounds and different races putting things right and being reconciled it is not only very convincing but you realise this is the security of the future.⁵³

Anakapu remarked of his experience that 'everything here is so big and yet so simple for us to take back to our country. It just needs change of heart and human nature'.⁵⁴

Such encounters were carefully scripted. MRA devoted substantial resources to ensuring that its visitors experienced the correct political message. As one disillusioned Ugandan participant put it, at Caux.

you would have the pleasure of listening to the same speaker, giving the same speech, over and over again [...] it was an iron rule that you couldn't speak unless you prepared your speech in advance, and showed it to one of the MRA chiefs for censoring, who would pass, correct or reject it as the case might be.⁵⁵

Staging is particularly evident in Oala-Rarua's case. Quickly after arriving at Kwato, Oala-Rarua's potential was recognised, and he was selected to attend the 6th meeting of MRA in Caux, after which he would travel to the United States. Oala-Rarua's letter to Hasluck that opened this article exemplifies the outcome that MRA desired. To press the point, Buchman himself wrote to Hasluck extolling Oala-Rarua's contribution to furthering 'understanding of his own country [and] winning the hearts and opening the minds of the Asian peoples to the future that lies in ... the Pacific'. Buchman called Oala-Rarua 'a representative of whom his people can be justly proud'.⁵⁶

Reading the words of Oala-Rarua and other Papuans under the influence of MRA, it is easy to see them as victims of this group, instilled in its dogmatic agenda. Milford, however, takes a more critical approach, wondering to what degree this involvement demonstrates subaltern agency. For many emerging

⁵¹ 'For Press: Papuans to Attend Moral Re-Armament Conference', 13 October 1952, in NAA, A518, BM840/1/4.

⁵² 'News from Colombo', *Papuan Times*, 28 November 1952, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁴ 'Editor's News: Colombo', *Papuan Times*, 7 November 1952, 2.

⁵⁵ Milford, 'A New World in the Swiss Alps', 593.

⁵⁶ Frank N.D. Buchman to Paul Hasluck, 10 December 1956, in NAA, A518: EP840/1/4.

African leaders, working with MRA was a necessary hurdle to gaining access to travel documents, which were under the strict control of white masters. In 1954, Kenyan trade unionist, aspiring politician, and MRA supporter Tom Mboya 'likely took up the invitation to Caux so that MRA would pay his airfare to Europe to allow him to meet with International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) representatives in Brussels'. While we cannot know Oala-Rarua's motivations, neither can we assume his duplicity. Through the provisions of platforms to speak and endorsements for passports, MRA provided 'an entry point into a mobile, international world' that figures like Oala-Rarua would join with gusto.⁵⁷

Nor should 'sticking to the script' necessarily indicate duplicity. Helen Gardner argues in her work on Presbyterian involvement in the decolonisation struggle in Vanuatu that 'Pastors developed both theological knowledge and political skills through their engagement in the spiritual and temporal elements of the Presbyterian Church', which 'were readily translated to the early forms of political representation in the colony'.⁵⁸ Anti-communism provided a political vocabulary that spoke not only to Papua New Guinean aspirations for their future but also, crucially, to the agenda of Australian administrators. These two political imperatives would not always align so harmoniously, however.

'A fully grown sheep and not a political lamb': Trade unions and the fate of 'free institutions' in Port Moresby

After returning from his overseas trip in 1956, Oala-Rarua rose quickly through the ranks of the Territory's schooling system, becoming headmaster of Kerepuna school in 1961. The following year he was appointed assistant to John Gunther, the Assistant Administrator of PNG. In that same year Oala-Rarua took on leadership of the then-Papua New Guinea Workers Association (PNGWA), which represented several thousand workers in the Port Moresby area. It was through his trade union work that Oala-Rarua became known to the AACF, which had begun to cast its mind to Australia's long neglected colonial question.

The CCF was part of an ecology of anti-communist organisations and movements founded in the 1950s, in this case with direct support from American intelligence. Embracing a then-fashionable 'end-of-ideology' liberalism – which concealed deeply ideological motivations – the CCF championed free cultural expression in opposition to 'totalitarian' models of social control.⁵⁹ It also shared with MRA a commitment to dialogue as a salve to communist agendas.⁶⁰ Roland Burke sees the group as a key centre for the 'liberal

⁵⁷ Millford, 'A New World in the Swiss Alps', 591.

⁵⁸ Helen Gardner, 'Praying for Independence: The Presbyterian Church in the Decolonisation of Vanuatu', *The Journal of Pacific History* 48, no. 2 (2013): 142.

⁵⁹ Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Political Economy of American Hegemony 1945–1955* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁶⁰ Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1989); Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, 'The End of

democratic strands within early postcolonialism', marked by attitudes that were 'Uneasy about power, uncertain of the merits of modernization, and unwilling to sacrifice individual freedom'.⁶¹ The CCF's activities in the Third World, where state formation was in process, took a more political than cultural hue. From 1951, when a conference was held in Bombay, India, the Congress developed a substantial following in the decolonising world, which it furthered via numerous seminars and workshops across the world, and by establishing literary journals in Spanish, Hindi, and Arabic.⁶²

The AACF was late to emerge, founded in 1954 by Richard Krygier, a Polish-Jewish refugee turned bookseller and publicist in Sydney. The AACF pulled together luminaries from the right of Australian politics, including poet James McAuley and former High Court judge John Latham, as well as at least ostensibly left-wing figures like the ex-communist head of the Railways Union, Lloyd Ross, who served as the group's president for much of the 1960s, and lawyer (later Governor-General) John Kerr. Importantly, both McAuley and Kerr had extensive experience working in PNG since the 1940s. Responding to the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa, and the famous 'winds of change' speech delivered by Harold Macmillan, the AACF founded a New Guinea sub-committee in 1961, chaired first by *Bulletin* editor (1962–64) Peter Hastings and then by anthropologist Peter Lawrence.⁶³ The sub-committee's key area of work was convening a series of seminars on PNG, which after much delay were held in three parts over 1964 and 1965.

It appears that the AACF was unhappy with the conservative Australian government's slow progress towards reforming its racial attitudes, and in preparing PNG for independence. In February 1962, Krygier wrote to Ivan Kats, head of the Congress' Asian operations, imploring him to 'give some consideration to the problem of New Guinea as the last remaining purely colonial area of the world outside some enclaves in Africa'.⁶⁴ Krygier no doubt knew he could rely on Kats' interest in PNG: both of his parents had close connections with the former Dutch East Indies, and Kats was already deeply involved in working with critics of the Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno.⁶⁵ It was hoped that

Ideology and the Third World: The Congress for Cultural Freedom's 1955 Milan Conference on the "Future of Freedom" and Its Aftermath', in *Inventing the Third World: In Search of Freedom for the Post-war Global South*, eds. Gyan Prakash and Jeremy Adelman (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 85–98.

⁶¹ Roland Burke, "Real Problems to Discuss": The Congress for Cultural Freedom's Asian and African Expeditions, 1951–1959', *Journal of World History* 27, no. 1 (2015): 53–86.

⁶² See for instance Elizabeth M. Holt, "Bread or Freedom": The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and the Arabic Literary Journal *Ḥiwār* (1962–67)', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44, no. 1 (2013): 83–102; and Eric D. Pullin, "Money Does Not Make Any Difference to the Opinions That We Hold": India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951–58', *Intelligence and National Security* 26, no. 2–3 (2011): 377–98.

⁶³ Peter Hastings, 'Proposed New Guinea Seminar', December 1961, AACF, MS 2031, Box 3, NLA.

⁶⁴ Richard Krygier to Ivan Kats, 26 February 1962, AACF, MS 2031, Box 12, NLA.

⁶⁵ Giles Scott-Smith, 'Liminal Liberalism? Ivan Kats, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Obor Foundation in Cold War Indonesia', *Journal of Contemporary History* 57, no. 4 (2022): 1051–71.

AACF initiatives could exploit what they perceived as the gap between the "paternalistic" attitude of the Department of Territories and the "more enlightened" approach of External Affairs.⁶⁶

While MRA's religiosity and belief in the importance of ideology were at odds with the AACF's secular mission and rejection of what they saw as ideological extremes, the two groups shared a commitment to fostering a native elite. Kerr, writing in a 1959 article, lamented that 'there is little Australian action at the present time to bring an educated elite into existence'.⁶⁷ Furthermore, they shared a rhetoric of freedom. In MRA's nomenclature, individuals were 'free' so long as they believed in 'right ideas', while to the AACF, freedom meant the contest of ideas, accompanied by considered and reasoned debate. Nonetheless, each group held a commitment to the power of ideas to transform individuals. The use of seminars and workshops was meant to demonstrate 'what ... the technique of discussion, and the democratic ideal can offer to the solutions of the serious problems which face the peoples of this area'.⁶⁸ Free discussions, it was thought, made free people.

From early on, the AACF was keen to ensure not only that the vital second seminar (on 'the present') be held in PNG, but also that it involve 'native' participants so as to 'avoid the impression that it was just another group of foreign "experts" discussing the future of an underdeveloped country'. 'Native' speakers were to be organised after the 1964 elections, so as to identify appropriate 'emerging leaders'.⁶⁹ The invitees included educationalist Paulias Matane, newly elected representatives John Guise and Lepani Watson and, of course, Oala-Rarua. Local involvement in the seminars, much as with MRA, was intended to impress on them the superiority of western ideas of democracy and freedom. Yet PNG politics was also evolving quickly, which was reflected in Oala-Rarua's remarks.

The PNGWA was established in 1960 by Dr Reuben Taureka, a qualified doctor who had come under MRA's influence while working in Kwato from 1953 to 1954. The PNGWA articulated a suite of reforms towards independence that would forestall the communist threat and ensure PNG remained in the Western-Christian fold. Written only months after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, the PNGWA's submission to Australian Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck was notably moderate and reflected deep MRA influence. The submission's suggestion of an increase in elected Papua and New Guinean representation in the Legislative Council to roughly thirty-five per cent, the founding of a local university, and education campaigns to eliminate prejudicial attitudes amongst Australians were part of what the authors saw as ongoing

⁶⁶ Richard Krygier to Ivan Kats, 3 April 1962, AACF, MS 2031, Box 12, NLA.

⁶⁷ John R. Kerr, 'White Boycott in New Guinea', *Pacific Affairs* 32, no. 4 (1959): 409.

⁶⁸ Lloyd Ross, 'Introduction to the Second Seminar', *The Future of Free Institutions in Papua New Guinea: Second Seminar*, 4.

⁶⁹ Peter Lawrence, 'Report on Proposed Seminar on The Future of Free Institutions in Papua and New Guinea: AACF Executive Meeting, 16–17 November 1963', AACF, MS 2031, Box 3, NLA.

‘political–economical–ideological defensive warfare’.⁷⁰ In so doing, it reflected new concerns about the direction of decolonisation, as an early generation of liberal anti-colonial leaders in Africa and Asia gave way to those of a less democratic and arguably more doctrinaire persuasion.⁷¹

‘Communism and Christianity are the two major conflicting ideologies in the world today’, the PNGWA’s submission read, and ‘every Afro-Asian nation must decide ... into which camp it will eventually go’. It was vital for ‘the emerging Papua-New Guinea nation to be Christian, and to be economically and politically allied to the Western Christian nations and the emerging Christian nations of the South-West Pacific (Fiji, Samoa, etc.)’.⁷² This wish dictated the speed at which decolonisation should unfold. Taureka’s group warned against ‘Communists using United Nations pressure to force a premature and chaotic independence’, but also cautioned that ‘undue delay’ could play into Moscow’s hands: a target date was required.⁷³ The submission also cautioned that while ‘We wish to be among the sheep on the right hand and not among the goats on the left ... we wish to be a fully grown sheep and not a political lamb’. PNG might be on the side of the West, but it wanted full membership, not a second-fiddle, neo-colonial accommodation.⁷⁴

The rise of trade unionism in the Territory was particularly welcomed by the AACF. John Kerr wrote how:

Our New Guinea Territories provide us with a great opportunity to profit from the vast experience of others in this field of labour problems in dependent areas and thus to ensure that our solutions for New Guinea are informed, not only by our own interesting history in labour matters, but also by the experiments of others in the newly emerging states of Africa and Asia.⁷⁵

Trade unions were a political battleground in Australia, of course: AACF president Lloyd Ross was a veteran of Catholic-Communist struggles in the 1950s. And while anti-communists sought to cultivate trade union leaders, Gerard McCann describes how the colonised themselves were ‘determined to use the trade unions – which had hard-fought Western credentials as a legitimate expression of political protest and economic power – to push for political change under the protection of Western liberalism’.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Dr Reuben Taureka et al., ‘The Papuan New Guinean Workers Association Submission to the Right Honourable the Minister for Territories, Mr Paul Hasluck’, 14 July 1960, 2, https://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/pdf/nib/pdf_afbeelding/4000/4673.pdf (accessed 15 August 2023).

⁷¹ Burke, ‘Real Problems to Discuss’.

⁷² Taureka et al., 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ J.R. Kerr, ‘Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Australian New Guinea’, *Journal of Industrial Relations* 3, no. 1 (1961): 17.

⁷⁶ Gerard McCann, ‘Possibility and Peril: Trade Unionism, African Cold War, and the Global Strands of Kenyan Decolonization’, *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019): 357.

Oala-Rarua became president of the PNGWA in 1962, renamed in that year the Port Moresby Workers Association, and adhered closely to its original platform. Quoted in a *Canberra Times* article in 1962, Oala-Rarua was amongst several 'native leaders' who voiced concerns around the report of a United Nations Trusteeship Council visiting mission, and its calls to 'hurry up' independence for the Territory.⁷⁷ The report's request for a fully-elected parliament "no later than April 1964" was impossible, Oala-Rarua commented, adding that 'These UN suggestions are forcing too much on our people'.⁷⁸ In September 1964, however, a decision by the Australian government sparked a change in Oala-Rarua's position. After lengthy deliberation, Australia's Department of Territories announced that a new pay scale would come into force in PNG's public service. Once paid at the same rate, this change cut a Papuan's remuneration to about forty per cent that of an Australian doing the same job. The decision confounded even senior Australian officials, one of whom asked 'who could expect Papuans and New Guineans to take this without putting up a fight'. 'We have trained them to look to better standards of living' he said, 'then cut their feet from under them'.⁷⁹ Justified by the Australian administration as better reflecting what a post-independence government could be expected to afford, the pay scale was felt as a deep betrayal by leaders like Oala-Rarua who held to liberal ideas of race equality. Denouncing the move as 'discrimination', Oala-Rarua declared the massive pay cut to be 'the greatest mistake any colonial nation has ever made'.⁸⁰

The AACF's seminar in Port Moresby was held in January 1965, in the aftermath of this decision and the protests it engendered. Proceedings were, however, dominated by Australian academic and political experts on PNG and the broader decolonising world, particularly from the Australian National University. The seminar was introduced by Lloyd Ross, who made clear the perceived parallels between PNG and situations in Africa and Asia. Like the MRA, the AACF saw PNG as just another battlefield in a larger Cold War, to which similar solutions could be applied. Ross had attended a CCF seminar in Paris a year earlier, and had been 'impressed by the extent of the activity being shown by the Congress in the growth of national freedom and democratic institutions in Asia and Africa'. These discussions, he thought, would naturally flow to PNG. In opening the Port Moresby seminar, Ross remarked, 'is it not here in Port Moresby that the subjects and methods which are interesting the Congress in

⁷⁷ This was the so-called Foot Report; see *United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territories of Nauru and New Guinea, 1962: Report on New Guinea, Together with the Relevant Resolution of the Trusteeship Council* (New York: United Nations, 1962).

⁷⁸ 'N.G. Planning "too Hurried"', *The Canberra Times*, 11 July 1962, 15.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Jonathan Ritche, "'The First Stirring of Political Consciousness": The Australian Mis-handling of the 1964 Public Service Pay Decision in PNG' (paper presented at the 'Australia and Its External Territories' Workshop held at Monash University, Caulfield Campus, 24 November 2022).

⁸⁰ 'Discrimination against Natives', *The Canberra Times*, 12 September 1964, 3.

Asia and Africa are involving, disturbing and challenging the peoples of Australia and Papua-New Guinea?’⁸¹

Unsurprisingly, a key talking point at the Port Moresby seminar was the pace and nature of self-government. This was a long-held preoccupation of colonising powers, who viewed the ability to govern in highly racialised terms. Ross, the inveterate trade unionist, mocked such ideas in his opening address to the second seminar by remarking that:

[I]t is often assumed that before people are given independence, whether they be the poor people of nineteenth century England, the deported people of early Australia, or the politically awakened countries of Africa and Asia, they should be able to demonstrate by certain changing and confusing tests, that they are capable of governing themselves. By some such tests most of us would fail.⁸²

Undeterred by such critique, Minister for Territories Charles Barnes, who replaced Hasluck in 1963, raised the possibility of non-nation state forms for PNG’s future. At the third seminar (in May 1965), he remarked: ‘to talk of independence as the only outcome for the Territory is to slide over part of the question’.⁸³ Prompted by doubts as to the capacity of Papua New-Guineans to rule themselves, Barnes was canvassing the possibility that the Territory would remain permanently in some kind of political association with Australia, perhaps as a seventh state.⁸⁴ As Barnes put it, in a particularly revealing sentence,

The people of the Territory had political independence, and were wholly economically viable before the Europeans came. If we did not believe that the nature and quality of the society counts, as well as the labels, we certainly shouldn’t be here talking about free institutions.⁸⁵

Behind this lay the belief that Western political institutions were not only superior to the Territory’s pre-colonial customary governance, but also essential safeguards against communist domination. Some seminar speakers asked: Could a western democratic model thrive amidst such a diverse population who were still perceived as occupying a lower civilisational rung, especially amidst a decolonising world where one-party states were increasingly the norm? Burke notes that the CCF’s African and Asian gatherings in the late 1950s saw a growing challenge to Western ideals, including a rejection of multi-party democracy in favour

⁸¹ Ross, 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸³ C.E. Barnes, ‘Speech Given by the Honourable C.E. Barnes MP Minister for Territories in Opening the Seminar of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom at Canberra, 27th May 1965’, in *The Future of Free Institutions in Papua New Guinea: Third Seminar, Australian National University, 27th–30th May 1965* (Sydney: Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, 1965), 7.

⁸⁴ See Christopher Waters, ‘The Last of Australian Imperial Dreams for the Southwest Pacific: Paul Hasluck, the Department of Territories and a Greater Melanesia in 1960’, *The Journal of Pacific History* 51, no. 2 (2016): 169–85; and Gardner and Underhill’s contribution to this special issue.

⁸⁵ Barnes, 7.

of authoritarian options geared towards social and economic development.⁸⁶ Commenting in *Quadrant*, Owen Harries, then a junior scholar at University of New South Wales who would go on to found American neo-conservative journal the *National Interest*, criticised non-Western models he saw as emanating from younger attendees at the seminar. In particular, he questioned a point made with some frequency by Papuans and Australians: that traditional consensus-based decision making might offer a democratic alternative to Western models. That 'same tradition in Indonesia and many African countries had not prevented the rapid destruction of a liberal democratic framework', he warned.⁸⁷

Such geopolitical and strategic concerns did not preoccupy those few Papuan speakers at the symposium. Two of their papers have survived. One, by Paulius Matane, spoke of the difficulties of education in the Territory, which imposed a brain drain on the highland provinces, and resulted in their cultural isolation. He concluded by noting that the seminar's agenda was undermined by the gap between Australian and Papuan living standards, which has made some 'hate Europeans and [become] very jealous', concluding that his audience ought to 'beware' of blowback.⁸⁸ Lepani Watson was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as remarking that he 'will not travel through my electorate with administration patrols', as he 'did not want my people jumping up and saluting me as if I were their master'.⁸⁹ Both articulated a dangerous knowledge gap between colonised and coloniser.

Oala-Rarua's paper centred on the pay decision, a move he labelled 'absurd'. Its reasoning, that an independent PNG could not afford a well-paid public service, seemed to indicate an Australian desire to 'cut off' the colony financially after independence. Having recently travelled to Kenya at the invitation of Tom Mboya – the two had met during the latter's visit to Australia in September 1964 – Oala-Rarua reflected that the African nation remained dependent on British financial assistance. And in any case, 'Australia has shown no signs of avoiding its responsibility'. Oala-Rarua's comment then shifted to a coded warning about Australia's fears of red subterfuge in its region. If independence were granted and the Australian government's Grant-in-Aid – which made up a substantial portion of the Territory's budget – were withdrawn, then 'other nations or international agencies [might] provide alternative sources of aid'.⁹⁰

Drawing on his Kenyan experience, Oala-Rarua also castigated the Australian administration for the lack of Papuans working in the bureaucracy, noting that 'young and inexperienced Australians' receive work over 'older and experienced Papua and New Guineans'. By contrast, 'the British gave much of the responsibility to Kenyans many years before that country's independence', a path that Australia ought to quickly follow, as 'time is against us and we

⁸⁶ Burke, 'Real Problems to Discuss'.

⁸⁷ Owen Harries, 'Seminar in Moresby', *Quadrant* 9, no. 2 (March 1965): 79.

⁸⁸ Paulius To Nguna, 'Papua and New Guinean Reactions to New Forms of Education and Employment', *The Future of Free Institutions in Papua New Guinea: Second Seminar*, 4.

⁸⁹ 'Leaders Show Political Sophistication', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1965, 6.

⁹⁰ Oala-Rarua, 'Development of Public Service in Papua New Guinea', 2, 5.

cannot afford to waste any more'.⁹¹ While pushing for greater autonomy, Oala-Rarua played to the Cold War anxieties that animated the conference to remind Australia of the dangers a hasty withdrawal might pose.

The seminars made a splash. Krygier wrote to Kats that the gatherings had 'been much more successful than we dared to hope'. Never backwards in spruiking his group's success, Krygier proclaimed the Moresby gathering 'the first ... multi-racial seminar ... in New Guinea's history' and reported that 'one of the outstanding native leaders' – Lepani Watson – had been invited to another seminar Krygier planned for Kuala Lumpur the next year.⁹² The *Canberra Times* took the opportunity of Barnes' speech to editorialise on the benefits of a potential economic and political Australasian bloc, and the *Sydney Morning Herald's* special correspondent welcomed the 'political sophistication' of emerging leaders, who 'are not bewildered, easily led natives'.⁹³ A new elite was making its voice heard.

Conclusion: 'Home rule' and the legacies of anti-communism

The AACF paid substantially less attention to New Guinea after May 1965, perhaps owing to its eclipse by Vietnam as the dominant regional issue. MRA, on the other hand, continued to cultivate wide and influential networks throughout the 1970s.⁹⁴ It is notable, indeed, that Cecil Abel, who had brought MRA's teachings to Kwato, was a signatory on a submission to the House of Assembly Select Committee into Constitutional Development in March 1967, calling for immediate home rule.⁹⁵ Other signatories included two of Abel's protégés, Rueben Taureka and Oala Oala-Rarua. Oala-Rarua had begun agitating for self-government in 1965, founding the short-lived United National Party. Perhaps predictably, white planters accused the party of communism, allegations dismissed by Australian chief administrator Donald Cleland and Oala-Rarua himself.⁹⁶

Time, it now seemed to the authors of this submission, had run out. 'The Federal Government must step down, hand over and stand to one side while our leaders begin to run our country', the submission declared.⁹⁷ The statement was also signed by two then-relative unknowns: Albert Maori Kiki and Michael Somare, who had come under Abel's influence while studying at the Administration College. This newer generation of nationalists, while less fearful of left-

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹² Krygier to Kats, 21 June 1965, AACF, MS 2031, Box 12, NLA.

⁹³ 'Can We Give Papua a Choice?', *The Canberra Times*, 29 May 1965, 2; 'Leaders Show Political Sophistication'.

⁹⁴ 'Group for MRA Talks', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, 24 June 1971, 9; 'PNG Delegates Go to NZ Conference', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, 19 January 1977, 18.

⁹⁵ 'Warning on NG Race Relations: Call for Home Rule Clarified', *The Canberra Times*, 26 May 1967, 3.

⁹⁶ 'NG Party Members "in Clear"', *The Canberra Times*, 8 September 1965, 16; 'Links with NG Party Denied', *The Canberra Times*, 1 September 1965, 10.

⁹⁷ 'Warning on NG Race Relations', 3.

wing ideologies and 'racial disharmony', found common cause with those influenced by MRA. It is not coincidental that each of these signatories would be founding members, only months later, of the Pangu Pati, which remains PNG's dominant political grouping to this day.⁹⁸ While Oala-Rarua's statements at the 1967 Evatt lecture in Sydney might have differed fundamentally in tone from those made a decade earlier, and were enough to see him depart Pangu several months later, they reflected the evolution of his beliefs rather than a reversal.⁹⁹ His anti-colonial nationalism continued to be grounded in anti-communism and its warnings of racial disharmony.

What are historians to make of the role of anti-communism, in its religious and secular orientations, in PNG's road to independence? MRA's and the AACF's anxieties about communism's threat to the Territory made it into yet another domino in their Cold War 'mental maps'. Fear of communism forced conservatives to view PNG not as a potential state of Australia or a perpetual protectorate, but as a nation-in-waiting, accepting everything that went along with that, including constructing a 'native' elite who shared their views. Nation-statehood was not the predetermined outcome of decolonisation. But it soon became an appealing prospect to colonised and coloniser alike, who feared what continued colonialism and racial discrimination might bring.

Ideas or practices that had long sustained empire, such as religion or the educational role of European power, became tools in its ending. Liberal universalist rhetoric of freedom, democracy, and (formal) equality were translated and reimagined by those 'natives' that the MRA and AACF influenced. Perhaps most importantly, anti-communist networks served to introduce many Papua and New Guineans to a world in flux and revolution. Oala-Rarua, whose first overseas trip was facilitated by MRA, became perhaps PNG's most worldly figure until his death in 1980 at only forty-five. Communists and their foes sought to control the minds of post-colonial elites, but the colonised could and did resist their placement on the Cold War's global chess board.

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⁹⁸ 'NG Home-Rulers Will Lobby their Case', *The Canberra Times*, 23 August 1967, 3.

⁹⁹ 'Leadership Rift in Pangu Pati', *The Canberra Times*, 29 August 1967, 3.