

‘I couldn’t stop crying’

It was dubbed Black Tuesday — the night four people were shot dead during protests against World Bank structural adjustment policies in Papua New Guinea. The University of PNG journalism newspaper *Uni Tavur* published a special edition on 30 July 2001 with several students’ accounts of their experience. Here are the stories of two young women.

By WANITA WAKUS

THE SOUND of gunshots woke me from my deep sleep. I could also hear the footsteps of people running along the exposed corridors of my dormitory. I opened the door, curious to know exactly what was going on, only to hear someone somewhere in the shadows of the trees yelling at the girls to get in and shut their doors. The sound of the gunshots seemed to be getting louder, so I assumed the gunmen were coming closer. I quickly shut the door and only opened my window curtains to see what was happening.

Out in the dark, the shadows of the huge trees swayed to the rhythm of the wind. I could see figures crouching, lying and hiding behind them. They were quite visible because some were in white T-shirts and lighter colors and it was quite easy to spot them. They were about 30 meters away from where I was actually standing. The only thing that separated me and made me safe was that I was in a building with a fence around me while they were at the mercy of the gunmen.

I knew I was safe as long as I stayed inside the doors of my room but I always came close to doubting my safety every time the sounds of gunshot and with it came the screams of the male students. When the gunshots were fired, I would walk up to the window and lift the curtains to see what was happening but I always saw the same sight of the boys trying to hide in the shadows of the dark. Since I was so tired I fell asleep amidst the sound of gunshots.

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I woke up again to the screams and gunshots but this time the sun was up. I couldn't tell what time it was but it could have been around 7.00am. I came out of my room and saw that everyone was standing with their gaze at a particular spot where the gunmen were standing. Walking towards where the group of ladies stood I saw that the gunmen were none other than the law enforcement officers, the police.

Their posture portrayed authority and they looked fearful. In their hands were the instruments of death. I compared them to their opponent and they were so different. The students seemed tired and signs of weariness were etched on their face because of the sleepless night they had had. But their eyes showed fear mixed with anger because they were unarmed and defenceless and left to the mercy of the policemen.

The sight brought tears to my eyes. Through my tears I saw some students taking their shirts off and with their hands over their head they walked to the gunmen showing a sign of surrender. Just as they were 30 or 40 metres away we heard another spray of gunshots. It must have been the guns or tear gas because seconds later gas filled the air while gunshots rang out. It was quite difficult to see what was happening.

A couple of minutes later, out of the smoke came four boys carrying the limp body of someone who would later be identified as Steven Kil who died. I was stunned. I couldn't believe what I was seeing and I cried in frustration. I felt that we were helpless.

The people we would have called first to come would be the police. But how do you tell a police person that we need help because your people just killed a man? The people you would seek refuge from are now against you. I just couldn't stop crying.

□ *Wanita Wakus is a second-year journalism student at the University of Papua New Guinea. This article was published in Uni Tavur, 30 July 2001. She later also gave testimony to the Commission of Inquiry.*



Uni Tavour

A conch shell - the voice of truth and independence

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"Simon, Steven, Thomas and Matthew - we at the University join with our parents, relatives and friends in bidding you farewell. Our pain is deep, our grief is deep. But you will be remembered." *Professor Len Kankana*



FEATURES

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A tragic end to a peaceful campaign & protest march!



Police shot dead 3 University students on the early hours of Tuesday June 26, following an overnight confrontation between them and the students throughout Monday night.

Port Moresby city came under siege

By sunrise, on this bloody Tuesday 26 June 28, 2001 - Port Moresby came under siege. Four people, including two students from the University of PNG, had been shot dead. Their bodies were driven to the Port Moresby General Hospital morgue.

Severely wounded protesters with pellet wounds were admitted to the hospital's emergency ward.

Several shops were looted around the city. A couple of them, including a Big Bazaar Fast Food outlet at Rainbow were set ablaze.

Business and Government offices closed and the city's central business district was deserted. The city's public transport came to a complete stop.

Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta appealed for calm among the citizens.

"I am appealing to all leaders - political, religious, community, business and unions... to join hands with the authorities to restore peace and good order to Port Moresby," Sir Mekere said.

Catholic Archbishop of Port Moresby Brian Barnes, Western Highlands Governor Fr Robert Luk, Speaker of National Parliament Bernard Nankoko and acting Opposition Leader Michael Nali called for calm and an end to the violence.

NCD education authorities ordered the city schools closed until July 9.

Acting Police Commissioner Joseph Kupo said Police were treating the turmoil in the city as a law and order matter.

Guns of darkness left 3 dead by dawn!

GUNSHOTS, automatic fire, and drizzling fire-flies spewed from unseen barrels of steel, crackled in deadly staccato - continuously drowning the yells and wailing of angry students throughout Monday night as heavily armed policemen tried to disperse and prevent students from gathering within their residential area, the Waigani campus.

The University community hardly slept, the fear was real - and by dawn - the shocking reality and desperate scramble to rush those dead and wounded to the hospital amid looting, stamping and panicking by police personnel.

Both University members and helping students received serious beatings as they formed their way through roadblock and in the hospital miles away.

Thousands of residents within the Motu, North and Central Waigani, Tokagan, and Dibia areas went on a looting spree as policemen raced into the area an hour later and continued what had become a volatile and tense situation.

Protesters faced outside in patches and formed human barricades as they damaged plants along the Waigani Drive and marched towards the University campus.

The crowd swelled into thousands and was passing the Waigani Police Station when police rushed in and dispersed the crowd with more gunshots in the air and teargas.

The protesters and curious onlookers ran for cover. One mother was reported to have banged her head on the rock as she ran and tripped in flight. She did not get up immediately and the road stonked all over her before someone came to her aid. It was 10.30 am at the Waigani Service Station and it was here two protesters were shot and wounded by police.



Peter Nali (2nd year) Psychology



Steven Kil (1st year) Business economics



Running away from teargas

In recognition of the fallen students the University will establish a memorial garden area on the field where they died.

**Freedom of Expression, Clean Environment,
Democracy and Peace**

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The special edition of Uni Tavour, 30 July 2001: Reporters Wanita Wakus and Estella Cheung tell their stories of the shootings by police.

Chronology of a protest

By *UNI TAVUR*

Friday, June 15: Students hold a Student Union Day at the University of Papua New Guinea. The day is divided into two parts. The morning session is devoted to discussing problems of not enough lecturers, outdated books in the library, limited academic weeks, an expensive bookshop and other issues affecting the university.

Student Representative Council (SRC) president Augustine Moionges is in Mount Hagen and vice-president Kalogo Gima takes charge of this forum.

Afternoon session opens debate on the World Bank (WB) and international Monetary Fund (IMF) initiated land mobilisation programme. Students express concern about the Government being used by the two monetary organisations to “sell” Papua New Guinea to foreign developers.

By the end of the day, students declared war on the WB and IMF!

Saturday June 16: SRC members travel by boat to Motupore Island outside Port Moresby and hold a secret meeting. Minutes of the meeting are unknown.

Monday June 18: Most students are unaware that a strike is looming. They prepare for normal classes; SRC president Augustine Molones returns from Mt Hagen and calls on the students to stop attending classes and to attend a forum. He terms the boycott of classes as “voluntary”. Students continue heated debates on privatisation and land mobilisation issues. The forum gets emotional.

Tuesday June 19: Students decide to “voluntarily boycott” classes again and remain at the forum area. After lunch, the SRC sends out parties to carry out awareness campaigns in all major suburbs of Port Moresby. The focus of the awareness is the WB, IMF, privatisation and land mobilisation, SRC also seeks assistance from the Electoral Commission to conduct a referendum at the university.

Counting of votes takes place at the Electoral Commission’s office at Boroko overnight.

Wednesday June 20: In the morning, the SRC announces the results of the counting and declares that majority voted for strike action. The strike is to

last until Friday, June 22. Students go out to carry out awareness campaigns and also to mobilise support for the strike. The university administration warns students that the strike and referendum are illegal and urges everyone to return to classes.

Thursday June 21: Students continue awareness programme and attract hundreds of people to the Prime Minister's office at Waigani. All public motor vehicles (PMV) halt operations in support of the students. Most government offices at Waigani shut down. The SRC students and the public demand that Prime Minister, Sir Mekere Morauta, come out and receive their petition.

However, Sir Mereke sends cabinet ministers Philemon Embel (Provincial Affairs), John Pundari ((Foreign Affairs). Peter Ipatas (Mining) Ben Micah (Privatisation Commission chairman) and Police Commissioner John Wakon, but the crowd refuses to give them their petition.

Still the Prime Minister does not show up. The crowd decides to spend the first night around the old Pineapple building and outside Morauta House where Prime Minister's office is located.

Friday June 22: The crowd wakes up and waits for the Prime Minister all day. Police block vehicles from entering the Waigani government offices. PMV routes 7,8,11 and 15 had to be detoured. All buildings in the Waigani government offices have closed doors and hundreds of public servants stay out from work.

By 6pm, it becomes evident that the Prime Minister would not meet the people. But the crowd is determined and decides to spend the second night sleeping outside on the car park and PM's office. In the night, police attempt to disperse the crowd but the crowd ignore the police presence and continue praying and singing the national anthem and police give up.

Saturday June 23: Over the weekend, there is no communication between the PM and the SRC. The crowd keeps growing — reaching to about 15,000 — and the SRC reminds the people that they were to spend this night outside the PM's office as well. This is the third night; the crowd sleep outside the PM's office.

Sunday June 24: The large crowd still waits at the gates of Morauta House.

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The university is almost deserted as students decide to take up temporary residence at the PM's office gate.

SRC arranges transport for students to travel between the campus and Morauta House. Students return to the campus for shower, rest and meals before they return to the PM's office. Students and their supporters spend the fourth night outside.

Monday June 25: This time, the crowd is even bigger than before — about 20,000 plus as they wait for the Prime Minister. Around 12 noon, the Prime Minister sends word out that he would be meeting the protesters. Finally, Sir Mekere is escorted under very heavy guard.

The SRC presents its petition and gives the PM 24 hours to reply. While receiving the petition, the Prime Minister explains to the protesters that he will give some but not all answers the next day. Sir Mekere tells the crowd that some of the decisions have to be made by the Cabinet. In the meantime, he urges them to return to their homes. After the Prime Minister leaves, the SRC leaders tell the crowd that they were to spend the night outside and get their answers tomorrow. The protesters again agree to sleep outside Morauta House.

12 midnight: Heavily armed police personnel arrive at the Waigani government offices and order the people to leave the area within 15 minutes, but the protesters still maintain their positions. After three warning shots, the police fire tear gas canisters into the crowd and forcefully chase the crowd out of the area.

As the crowd disperses, it becomes violent. Along the way at the Administrative College near UPNG, two cars are burnt. Another car is burnt at the university's main entrance. Around university's main bus stop, a fourth car is burnt. Stones, bottles, and bricks being thrown by angry protesters damage many cars travelling along the main highway. The Big Rooster outlet at Rainbow is burnt down by arsonists and fire fighters travelling to fight the fire get stoned. Plants, signposts and streetlights along the Waigani Gerehu road are destroyed.

Police arrive at the scene and chase both students and members of the protesting public into the university premises.

It is during this period that students are eventually shot and some are

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wounded. Police concentrate heavy gunfire into the air and sometimes directed at the students.

The gunshots are heard in many parts of the the city. Police also fire lots of gas canisters into the campus. The bullets and tear gas do not deter the students.

The gunfire continues until 7am Tuesday morning, when the police withdraw and take up position at the Waigani police station.

Tuesday, June 26: The city of Port Moresby comes to a standstill as students continue to fight police with saticks and stones. A large crowd from Gerehu (stages 1-6), Rainbow, Moarata (1, 2 and 3), Ensisi, Waigani and Tokarara join the students. People from other areas too come in large numbers and demand the police allow them through to the Prime Minister's office for answers to their petition.

There is general disorder, destruction and looting in all parts of the city. However, the police refuse to let the crowd pass. Tensions between police and protesters mount and finally the crowd go on a rampage. Police fire rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd and chase the thousands of people away.

The Governor-general declares a curfew in Port Moresby.

Wednesday, June 27: Students mourn the death of fellow students and anxiously await the news of those in hospital.

Wednesday, July 4: Funeral attended by about 3000 plus students, city residents, friends and relatives.

‘Dear Mum and Dad’

‘By sunrise, on this bloody Tuesday, June 26, Port Moresby came under siege. Four people, including two students from the University of PNG, had been shot dead. Their bodies were driven to the Port Moresby General Hospital morgue. Seventeen protesters with pellet wounds were admitted to the hospital’s emergency ward.’

Quote from *Uni Tavur*

By ESTELLA CHEUNG

Dear Mum and Dad

I’VE GOT lots to tell you! Before I go on just one word of advice, “Don’t believe everything you hear or read in the media” (that includes newspapers, radio and TV). I’m saying this because of the current situation here at UPNG, which you may have some idea about ... but I know that parents have it in their nature to be concerned about everything and anything under the sun that will affect their children. I bet you, that right now you have a thousand questions you are dying to ask.

Before I continue with what I want to say, I ask for your patience, time and understanding to read the truth about the whole situation because I want you to know the truth. I want you to draw your minds from being tossed about with endless questions and set the record straight. So please, bear with me.

On Saturday night (17 June 2001) my room mate and I were watching a movie on the big screen in the main lecture theatre. In the middle of this movie, the screen was shut off and the lights were turned on. The president of one of the Highlands provinces broke the news to those of us in the theatre that the following Friday (22 June 2000) PNGBC — our bank — was going to be sold out or privatised.

He explained how the land mobilisation programme would come into effect. From the brief lecture he gave us about the bad side of selling PNGBC,

I learnt that if ever land mobilisation was imposed, we would be forced to register our own land in order to live on it and toil it. I'm sure you've heard about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Well, since independence, Papua New Guinea has been borrowing so much from the World Bank in order to “develop” the country. Unfortunately, I am sorry to say we never succeeded. The reason is because of the WANTOK SYSTEM from which CORRUPTION is bred. PNG's loans are so big, not even our resources can pay them all back — like the Ok Tedi mine, Lihir mine, West New Britain palm oil, Jant, etc. So the loans just keep on growing year after year.

The government came up with a solution, a solution that will solve our debt problem as a country but one that will affect us as individuals even more. And that is to sell PNGBC and have people register their land. If they don't, their land is taken away from them and given to the bank. The bank will then rent it out to larger companies. The profit will then go to the World Bank to repay our loans. The registering of land would depend on the size of person's land. If you have a big piece of land you pay more, if you have small piece — you pay less to get your land registered.

But the majority of our people are subsistence farmers and live in rural areas where the land is the source of their children's school fees, clothing etc. This will NOT be fair on them, because they have no chance at all of keeping their land. If they cannot pay the registration fee before the set date their land will be taken away. So they will have to work on someone else's land to feed their children, and pay for their family needs.

Anyway, after the movie ended, we had a long talk about it. The majority of the students wanted to do something about it because they come from the rural areas. I felt that it was my responsibility to take part because my future depended on the land at home, and the future of my family depended on me.

So I disobeyed you and Dad's advice to me at the beginning of my first year. (Not to take part in any protest or strike). I couldn't stand and watch, and the thought of leaving school with no job and no place to settle, ticked me off! Besides, it was for a good cause.

The next day, Monday, classes were cancelled, but some still attended classes. There was a forum, and in the forum the issue was addressed again. People, who knew more about the issue, tried to educate everyone on it.

On Tuesday, we had a referendum vote on whether to go to class and at the same time address the issue or whether to stop classes and concentrate on addressing the issue. The majority voted for no classes. We did everything

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legally. For the voting part, we had some people from the Electoral Commission of PNG come down and conduct the secret ballot — so the final result was recognised and respected by the administration.

The referendum covered until Friday, June 22, then the following week everyone was expected to return to classes. Under the bylaws of the university, after 10 days of boycotting classes, the university will have to close for the rest of the academic year. So the Student Representative Council (SRC) told us that the referendum was only covering five days.

On Wednesday, we broke up into regional and provincial groups and we were given areas to do awareness campaigns for the public. The reason for this was to educate the public and at the same time get their support. We told them to meet in front of the Morauta Haus on Thursday morning and wait for the Prime Minister to come down and receive the petition, which was drawn up by the SRC. We covered the whole of the National Capital District. I was in the New Guinea Islands group. We covered the Gerehu area and downtown Port Moresby. By the time we finished, it was 5.30 pm. PMV drivers helped out with the transport by using their working time to drive us around to our located areas to protest. By the end of the day the whole of NCD was aware of what was happening. Our theme was non-violence, the Ghandi way. This was pointed out to the public and they were aware that we were going to address the issue using non-violence. The start of the protest was peaceful.

On Thursday morning, the NGI students made their way downtown to protest in front of PNGBC. We were yelling “rausim IMF, rausim World Bank” over and over. We got the attention of several PNGBC workers, who thought they’d support us a little from the top of the PNGBC building. It was interesting to see how much attention we got from the public. There were a few very thoughtful betel nut sellers, who bought us cold drinks, seeing we had been out in the sun for hours. Drivers tooted their horns to show their support as they drove pass, the public joined in with the yelling when we started losing our voices. For those of us who were engaged in a protest for the first time, it was fun. But for those who were in past protests, it was something serious and “fragile”. Other regional groups were doing the same at different areas.

At lunch time we headed back to Morauta Haus. By the time we got there, there was already a large crowd gathered. Approximately 20,000 men women and children. Talk about public support, we practically had the whole of NCD there! (Except for the working class, particularly the ones who are stuck in their offices all day).

Our student leaders sent word to the Prime Minister to come down and receive the petition. He sent other ministers instead. (A pretty cheap thing to do for someone of his rank). I'm not so sure who the ministers were, but boy did they have the time of their life! I mean they were shamed in public by the crowd and I suppose a handful of really impatient students who thought their waiting all day in the sun was a big waste. The poor ministers never knew they would be "baptised" with new names like "Tea boy" and "Beer-bel". Anyway, the students refused to give the petition to those ministers because our first petition this year was given to the Education Minister (just because the Prime Minister didn't come) and has had no response yet.

That night was the first night spent in front of the Morauta Haus. Both the students and the public were not going to give up and go home. It was a must that the Prime Minister received the petition in his own hands. Students told the public to go home, have something to eat and have a rest but they refused. So food and water was brought from the university mess to feed the public. It was amazing to see how understandable the public was, and how supportive and obedient they were to the student leaders. Just for that week, they committed themselves to a protest march, they totally forgot about the comfort and security of their homes; out in the cold and wind on the streets with no sheets or whatsoever to keep them warm, just to be with us.

Through the night it was peaceful, people sang songs, told stories, played cards and just did little, quiet things to keep them busy.

The crowd remained the whole day on Friday. The referendum was going to be illegal as of midnight on Friday. The Prime Minister still did not come.

On Friday night, the students and the rest of the crowd spend another night in front of Morauta Haus.

The same thing was done on Saturday night. On Sunday at 4pm, finally the Prime Minister came down to receive the petition. The SRC president, Augustine Molonges, handed it over to him and gave him 24 hours to respond to it. But did the Prime Minister respond after 24 hours, at 4pm on Monday? No. If he needed more time to discuss with his advisers, why couldn't he speak up and say so? Anyway the students and supporters, made it very clear to the police, and the Prime Minister that they weren't going to move until they had a response.

At around 9pm Monday night, students were making their way down to Morauta Haus for yet another night. This was illegal, but like I already said, "No response from PM, no leaving Morauta Haus for yet another night." Along the

Police drew their guns. The person in charge told the students to leave in 15 min. No one listened. After three warning shots, teargas was fired into the crowd... Then the police began hitting people with the butts of their guns.

way, they were stopped and sent back to the campus. The ones, who were already there since the afternoon, had no idea what was happening to the others who were supposed to make their way there. Police arrived at Morauta Haus, and drew their guns. The person in charge told the people to get up and leave the place in 15 minutes. No one listened. After three warning shots, teargas was fired into the crowd. People started running around, trying to avoid the sting of the teargas. After the firing of teargas, the police moved in and began hitting people, using the butts of their guns. Students started running away from the police. This was when the chase began. Police vehicles started going after the students. Female students, who couldn't think straight about their safety on the streets, were so afraid of the police they took off in every direction.

Somehow the police came all the way to the campus. What went on at the round about, I wouldn't know; but around 11pm they were already in the campus firing their weapons. The female students by then were already indoors. Teargas was fired as well as rubber bullets and live bullets. The shooting kept getting louder, which meant they were moving closer. The male students tried their best to keep the police from moving any further into dormitories by throwing rocks in their direction, cursing them. Female students fetched water buckets and passed them out for the guys to put out the teargas and wipe their eyes.

Watching from the very top level of Tuluon House, I could see the boys running around, diving behind trees and searching for rocks to throw. Then when the boys ran out of rocks, brave female students came out of the dormitories and collected rocks from the flower gardens and threw them out of the fence to boys. Several shots were fired towards our dormitories as well. I got hit on my right arm with a rubber bullet while I stood out on the balcony. It only swelled, but the swelling has already gone down.

All night the police were firing, and all night the male students were trying to keep them out. There was no rest for the boys. The shots were fired after every few minutes, and no pause as long as four minutes. It wasn't until between 6 and 7 on Tuesday morning did the male students try to surrender. The police had stopped firing for a while. It had been a long night, and the boys just couldn't take it any more, so they put their hands on their heads in a sign of surrender, and started waking towards the police. Suddenly the police started firing again and four guys were hit. The security vehicles picked them up and rushed them to hospital. One died instantly, another died in hospital. Around 9 am the police left. Students began to mourn for their dead fellow students. After everything quieted down, students found bullet holes in their dormitories. A female student found holes in her bed sheets and the wall in her room. A university building has little holes everywhere in the louvre blades, made from the bullets.

The relatives of one of those who got shot are now demanding K500,000 compensation from the SRC and another K500,000 compensation from the government. I don't know where the SRC is going to find that kind of money. But there was a coronial inquest and a Commission of Inquiry will investigate the killings.

Anyway, we had a state funeral for the dead on Wednesday, July 4. There were no classes. Opposition Leader Bill Skate flew in to attend. Speaker of Parliament Bernand Narokobi was there as well. Classes have resumed as usual. But just the other day, the Pro Vice Chancellor got this phone call telling him that there was a bomb in the basement of the library and in the computer labs.

The Library and computer labs were closed and the bomb squad was asked to come, but nobody came (The police have bomb experts, they were probably too afraid to even come in and check out the situation. Nothing happened after a long while, so the Pro VC presumed something was just trying to disrupt classes. But the computer lab and library are now open and school is back to normal.

Estella

□ *Estella Cheung is a second-year journalism student at the University of Papua New Guinea. This article was published in Uni Tavor, 30 July 2001. She later also gave testimony to the Commission of Inquiry.*