

The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969

This book examines the role of the international community in the handover of the Dutch colony of West Papua/Irian Jaya to Indonesia in the 1960s and questions whether or not the West Papuan people ever genuinely exercised the right to self-determination guaranteed to them in the UN-brokered Dutch/Indonesian agreement of 1962. Indonesian, Dutch, US, Soviet, Australian and British involvement are discussed, but particular emphasis is given to the central part played by the UN in the implementation of this agreement. As guarantor, the UN temporarily took over the territory's administration from the Dutch before transferring control to Indonesia in 1963. After five years of Indonesian rule, a UN team returned to West Papua to monitor and endorse a controversial act of self-determination that resulted in a unanimous vote by 1,022 Papuan "representatives" to reject independence. Now, more than thirty years later, the man responsible for UN involvement at the time, ex-Under Secretary-General Narasimhan, has been quoted in the western press admitting that the vote was a complete sham. This, along with growing calls for freedom in West Papua, ensures that the issue is still very much alive today.

John Saltford works as a South East Asian Specialist in the Reader Information Services Department of the Public Record Office. He received his PhD on the United Nations and West Papua from the University of Hull.

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The anatomy of betrayal

John Saltford

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Key individuals

Abdoh, Djalal UNTEA Administrator, 15 November 1962 to 1 May 1963.

Abdulgani, Hadj Roeslan Indonesian Ambassador to the UN during the Act of Free Choice. Indonesian Foreign Minister, 1956–1957.

Ariks, Johan Prominent Papuan leader from Arfak region who led a rebellion against the Indonesians in the mid-1960s. Captured in 1967 and died in prison in 1969.

Awom, Frits (Ferry) Sergeant in the PVK and ringleader of 1963 PVK mutiny. From 1965, led a Papuan rebellion against Indonesia in the Bird's Head Peninsula.

Barwick, Garfield Australian External Affairs Minister until April 1964.

Bonay, Eliezer Spokesperson for the Papuan National Party Parna in 1962. In May 1963 was appointed first governor of West Irian by President Sukarno. Dismissed in 1965, later imprisoned and released in January 1969. Fled to PNG in the 1980s.

Bunker, Ellsworth US diplomat and mediator in UN-brokered Dutch/Indonesian talks on WNG, 1962. In March 1965 acted as US Special Representative to Indonesia and in April 1967 became US Ambassador to Vietnam.

Cameron, Peter UNTEA Divisional Commissioner, Manokwari (Western Division).

Carter, G. S. UNTEA Divisional Commissioner, Central Highlands.

Freeth, Gordon Australian External Affairs Minister, 1969.

Gilchrist, Sir Andrew British Ambassador, Jakarta, 1963.

Goedhart, Louis J. Head of Dutch Liaison Mission to UNTEA.

Gore-Booth, Sir Paul Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, 1965.

x *Key individuals*

Hasluck, Sir Paul Australian Minister for Territories, 1962. Head of Australian Mission to UN, 1964–1969.

Hokujoku, The Reverend A Jayapura representative in the Act of Free Choice. Now living in the Netherlands.

Indey, Martin Prominent Papuan pro-Indonesian militia leader during UNTEA period. Fled to PNG during 1970s.

Jockel, Gordon Australian Ambassador, Jakarta, 1969–1972

Joku, Hendrik Member of West New Guinea Council, 1961–1963. Fled to PNG in 1975 and became a senior figure in the OPM.

Jones, Howard P. US Ambassador to Jakarta from 1958 until May 1965.

Jouwe, Nicolas West New Guinea Council member, 1961–1962. Went into exile in the Netherlands in 1962 and formed the “Freedom Committee for West Papua”. Leading Papuan nationalist campaigner throughout the 1960s and subsequently.

Kaisiepo, Franz Governor of West Irian during Act of Free Choice. Replaced Eliezer Bonay in 1965.

Kaisiepo, Markus West New Guinea Council member, 1961–1962. Went into exile in the Netherlands in 1962 and formed the “High Court of the Chamber of Representatives of West Papua/Melanesia”. Leading Papuan nationalist campaigner throughout the 1960s and subsequently. Died in 2000.

Khalil, Aly Head of UNTEA’s Information Section.

Khan, Said-Uddin Pakistani Brigadier-General. Commanding officer of Pakistani UNSF troops during UNTEA.

Luckham, Harold UNTEA Divisional Commissioner in Fak Fak.

Lunn, Hugh Australian journalist in West Irian during the Act of Free Choice.

Luns, Joseph Dutch Foreign Minister from October 1956 until July 1971. Became Secretary-General of NATO from 1971 to 1984.

Malik, Adam Indonesian negotiator at talks leading up to the 1962 New York Agreement. Indonesian Foreign Minister, 1966–1977.

Mandatjan, Barens Brother of Lodewijk and Papuan rebel leader (see below).

Mandatjan, Lodewijk Led a rebellion with his brother Barens against the Indonesians on the Bird’s Head Peninsula from May 1967 until December 1968. Surrendered in January 1969. In July 1969 spoke in favour of Indonesia as a representative for Manokwari during the Act of Free Choice.

- May, Brian** Journalist with Agence France Presse in West Irian during the Act of Free Choice.
- Melin O. W.** Swedish naval commander. In August and September 1962 he led a team of twenty-one UN military personnel (UNMO) to observe the implementation of the ceasefire arrangements following the signing of the New York Agreement.
- Meset, Thontje** Chairman of West New Guinea Council when it was dissolved in 1963.
- Middelburg Duco G.** Dutch Representative to the UN in New York during the Act of Free Choice.
- Murtopo, Ali** Brigadier-General in Indonesian Army. Commander of the army's OPSUS (Special Operations Section) in West Irian during the Act of Free Choice.
- Myit, Mo** Burmese UNTEA Divisional Commissioner in Hollandia.
- Narasimhan, Chakravarthi** Indian UN Under Secretary-General and UN Secretary-General U Thant's *chef de cabinet* throughout the 1960s.
- Nasution, General Adul** Indonesian Minister Coordinator for Defence and Security until July 1966, then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.
- Nekunam, Ali** Senior adviser in Ortiz Sanz's UN team during the Act of Free Choice.
- Ortiz Sanz, Fernando** Bolivian UN Secretary-General U Thant's Representative for West Irian (UNRWI) during the Act of Free Choice.
- Plaatel, Pieter J.** Last Dutch Governor of WNG.
- Prai, Jacob** Ex-law student who joined the OPM in 1968 and became one of its two main leaders in the 1970s. In 1979 he went into exile in Sweden.
- Rawlings, G.** UNTEA Divisional Commissioner in Biak.
- Rikhye Jit, Indar** Indian Brigadier and military adviser to U Thant. Overall head of UNMO in WNG, August to September 1962.
- Robertson, James** British UNTEA Chief of Police.
- Rolz-Bennett, Jose** Guatemalan UN Under Secretary-General. Temporary UNTEA Administrator, 1 October to 15 November 1962. U Thant's Special Representative in WNG during the 1960s.
- Rooerd, Stein** Norwegian official with FUNDWI in 1968.
- Rotty, Joost** Indonesian Ambassador Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro's representative in West Irian during the Act of Free Choice.

xii *Key individuals*

- Sani, Chaider Anwar** Indonesian diplomat at the UN during the Act of Free Choice.
- Scheltema, Hugo** Dutch Ambassador in Jakarta during the Act of Free Choice
- Schiff, Emile** Dutch Ambassador, Jakarta, 1965.
- Schurmann, C.W.A.** Dutch Ambassador to the UN, 1963.
- Sevan, Benon** UN observer with Ortiz Sanz during Act of Free Choice. Assistant resident representative with FUNDWI in West Irian, 1970–1972. Since 1994 Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.
- Shann K. C. O.** Australian Ambassador, Jakarta, until 1969.
- Shaw, Sir Patrick** Australian Ambassador to the UN during the Act of Free Choice.
- Soedarto** Indonesian Colonel, commanding officer of Indonesian UNSF troops during UNTEA.
- Sommerville, David A.** UNTEA's Director of Internal Affairs.
- Stravopoulos, Constantin** UN Legal Counsel during the 1960s. Advised U Thant on issue of WNG.
- Subandrio** Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister until July 1966.
- Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro** Chief of the Indonesian Liaison Mission with UNTEA. During the Act of Free Choice acted as Foreign Minister Malik's special assistant for West Irian affairs. Was the main Indonesian official point of contact for Ortiz Sanz during his period as UNRWI.
- Suharto, Raden** Indonesian officer in charge of Operation Mandela to "liberate" WNG from Dutch rule, 1961–1962. Officially replaced Sukarno as Indonesian President in 1968. Resigned in 1998 following popular unrest.
- Sukarno, Achmed** Led Indonesia to independence in 1949. President until March 1967 when he was removed from power by General Suharto, following a failed coup allegedly backed by the PKI. He remained under house arrest until his death in 1970.
- Sutherland Iain, J.** Counsellor and Consul-General, British Embassy, Jakarta, 1967 to October 1969.
- Tanggahma, Ben** Member of the West New Guinea Council until 1962. Papuan nationalist, went into exile following Indonesian takeover.
- U Thant** UN Secretary-General, 1961–1971.

Van Diest Head of the police branch of the Indonesian Mission to UNTEA.

Van Roijen, C. H. Dutch Ambassador to the UN and negotiator during the Dutch/Indonesian negotiations in 1962.

Vickers, D. UNTEA's legal adviser.

Wajoi, Herman Leader of moderate Papuan Nationalist Party Parna in the early 1960s before Dutch departure. During UNTEA became a pro-Indonesian activist. In 1963, following the Indonesian takeover, became leader of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) in West Irian.

Werror Moses Papuan junior official at Indonesian Embassy, Canberra, during the 1960s. Returned to West Irian in 1969 to campaign for a referendum. Later became a leading figure in the OPM.

Wibowo, Sarwo Edhie Indonesian Brigadier-General paratroop commander. Closely involved in suppression of alleged anti-Suharto elements following the fall of Sukarno. West Irian military commander during the Act of Free Choice.

Wilson, D. Australian UNTEA Divisional Commissioner in Merauke.

Abbreviations

DPRD	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (People's Regional Representative Council). Indonesian-appointed replacement for the West New Guinea Council (Nieuw Guinea Raad) after May 1963.
DVP	Demokratische Volkspartij (Democratic People's Party). A Papuan national party banned by the Indonesians along with all other existing Papuan parties in 1963.
FCO	British Foreign and Commonwealth Office; name given to merger of Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office in 1967.
FO	British Foreign Office. Became FCO in 1967.
FUNDWI	United Nations Fund for West Irian. Set up following 1962 New York Agreement.
MPRS	Madjelis Perwakilan Rakyat Sementara (Indonesian Provisional People's Consultative Congress). Formed in 1960, its official functions were to choose the President and Vice-President and to determine the main lines of state policy.
NAA	National Archives of Australia.
ONUC	Operation des Nations Unies au Congo. UN operation in the Congo, 1960-1964.
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement).
OPSUS	Special Operations Section of Indonesian military.
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PNG	Papua New Guinea. Name of the eastern part of New Guinea since its independence in 1975.
PRO	Public Record Office. The national archives for England and Wales.
PVK	Papua Vrijwilligers Korps (Papua Volunteer Corps). Military force of around 450 West Papuans formed and led by the Dutch in 1960. Disbanded by Indonesia when it took control of West New Guinea.
SEAD	South East Asian Department of the FO and later FCO.

SWPD	South West Pacific Department of the FO and later FCO.
TPNG	Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Name of the eastern half of New Guinea during its administration by Australia. Became independent in 1975.
UNA	United Nations Association.
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly.
UNMO	United Nations Military Observers. Deployed in West New Guinea August to September 1962.
UNRWI	United Nations Representative in West Irian. Position held by Ortiz Sanz during the Act of Free Choice.
UNSF	United Nations Security Force in West New Guinea during UNTEA.
UNTAB	United Nations Technical Assistance Board.
UNTEA	United Nations Temporary Executive Authority. Administered West New Guinea 1 October 1962 to 1 May 1963.
WNG	West New Guinea.

Chronology, 1945–1969

- 17 August 1945** Following the Japanese surrender, Sukarno declares independence for the Republic of Indonesia. Soon afterwards, British forces arrive to assume control until the Dutch return.
- 15 November 1946** Linggadjati Agreement signed between the Dutch and representatives of the Indonesian Republic.
- 20 July 1947** Dutch launch a “police action” involving 100,000 troops. They make substantial territorial gains in Java and Sumatra. However, there is strong international condemnation of the Dutch action in the UN and elsewhere.
- 4 August 1947** Dutch agree to a ceasefire.
- January 1948** Dutch and Indonesians sign the Renville Agreement recognising as a ceasefire line the furthest advance of Dutch forces into Republican territory.
- September 1948** PKI uprising in Madiun against Republican government is put down.
- 18 December 1948** Dutch launch second “police action” and make further military gains. International protest against the Netherlands grows.
- 11 August 1949** Under pressure from the United States, the Dutch agree to another ceasefire.
- 23 August–2 November 1949** Round table conference between the Dutch and Indonesians held at The Hague. Both sides agree to the establishment of a Republic of the United States of Indonesia (USI) with the Dutch queen as titular head, and Sukarno as President.
- 27 November 1949** The Hague Agreement. The Netherlands cedes sovereignty of the Netherlands East Indies to the Indonesian Republic, but keeps WNG. The Netherlands together with the new Republic establish a Netherlands–Indonesian Union. It is agreed that the status of WNG will be decided in further talks to take place within a year.
- August 1950** Sukarno announces the formation of the unitary Indonesian Republic to replace the Indonesian Republic of the USI.
- December 1950** Netherlands–Indonesian Union talks at The Hague fail to resolve the question of WNG’s final status.

- 16 May 1951** The Hague issues a decree to set up three advisory councils in WNG (mainly made up of Papuans) to advise the Governor and help prepare the Papuans for autonomy.
- January 1952** Dutch Constitution amended to include WNG.
- 30 November 1954** UNGA rejects an Indonesian-sponsored resolution on WNG.
- December 1955** Dutch/Indonesian talks at The Hague fail to resolve the dispute over WNG future status.
- February 1956** Further Dutch/Indonesian talks held in Geneva fail to resolve the WNG dispute.
- 13 February 1956** Indonesian government announces that it is unilaterally dissolving the Netherlands–Indonesian Union.
- 21 April 1956** Indonesian Parliament revokes the 1949 Hague Agreement.
- October 1956** UNGA rejects Indonesian-sponsored resolution on WNG.
- January 1957** A petition signed by 400 Dutch citizens living in Indonesia is sent to the Dutch States-General calling for a rapid negotiated settlement of the WNG dispute.
- 6 November 1957** Canberra and The Hague issue a joint statement on future cooperation in the development of both sides of New Guinea.
- 29 November 1957** The UNGA votes again not to adopt an Indonesian-sponsored resolution on WNG.
- 2 December 1957** National twenty-four-hour strike takes place in Indonesia to protest at Dutch control of WNG.
- 6 December 1957** Most of the 50,000 Dutch nationals living in Indonesia told to leave the country by the authorities.
- 1958** A series of (US-backed) regional rebellions break out in Sumatra and the Celebes against the central government in Jakarta. Government forces succeed in ending most of the rebellions by the end of 1958.
- 1959** Elected regional councils begin to be set up by the Dutch in WNG.
- August 1960** Dutch Embassy in Jakarta closes and official Dutch/Indonesian diplomatic ties are severed.
- January 1961** John F. Kennedy becomes US President.
- February 1961** Elections are held for sixteen members of the WNG Council. A further twelve are selected by the Dutch for areas considered not yet ready for meaningful elections.
- 5 April 1961** Inauguration of the WNG Council. Britain and Australia send representatives, the United States does not.
- September 1961** A number of armed Indonesian infiltrators are rounded up by Dutch forces and local Papuans.
- 26 September 1961** Dutch Foreign Minister Luns presents a proposal to the UNGA on WNG's future. The "Luns Plan" proposes an end to Dutch sovereignty and the establishment of a UN administration in WNG to supervise and organise a plebiscite to decide the territory's final status.
- 24 November 1961** UNGA votes on a Dutch-backed "compromise" proposal

on WNG which recognises the Papuans' right to self-determination and calls for direct Dutch/Indonesian negotiations on the issue. Although it is supported by fifty-three votes to forty-one, it does not receive the necessary two-thirds majority to be passed.

- 1 December 1961** The WNG Council votes to rename the territory West Papua with a national anthem and a flag which flies alongside the Dutch tricolour. It also passes a series of resolutions supporting the Luns Plan and calling on all nations to respect the right of the Papuans to self-determination.
- 19 December 1961** Sukarno issues the "People's Triple Command" (TRIKORA) calling for the total mobilisation of the Indonesian people to "liberate" West Irian.
- 15 January 1962** "Battle of Arafura Sea", Dutch/Indonesian naval clash off coast of WNG results in the sinking of an Indonesian naval patrol boat and the death of Commodore Yosophat Soedarso, Deputy Chief of the Indonesian Naval Staff.
- 17 January 1962** Dutch and Indonesians accept a public invitation by U Thant to meet with him to discuss the possibility of direct negotiations on WNG. The talks stall on Indonesian insistence that any negotiations are based upon pre-condition that WNG will eventually pass to Indonesian control.
- February 1962** President Kennedy's brother, US Attorney-General Robert Kennedy, visits Jakarta and The Hague in a successful effort to persuade both sides to begin direct negotiations.
- 11 March 1962** On US instructions, U Thant appoints US diplomat Ellsworth Bunker as mediator for forthcoming Dutch/Indonesian talks.
- 20 March 1962** Preliminary Dutch/Indonesian talks begin in Middelburg, Virginia, without pre-conditions.
- 24 March 1962** Indonesians announce that they are withdrawing from the talks.
- 24 March 1962** Indonesian naval vessel, possibly a Russian-built Skoryi destroyer, is sunk by the Dutch near the south coast of WNG.
- 25 March 1962** Indonesian aircraft attack a small Dutch naval vessel injuring three crew.
- 2 April 1962** United States informs the Dutch of its proposals to resolve the WNG dispute. Known as the "Bunker Plan" a key provision allows the transfer of the territory to Indonesia *before* any act of Papuan self-determination. Luns condemns the plan while the Indonesians accept it as a basis for negotiation.
- 13 April 1962** Twelve-hour Dutch Cabinet meeting to discuss the Bunker Plan. The Cabinet reluctantly agrees not to reject the plan outright.
- 14 April 1962** Dutch Labour Party organises a 15,000 strong march in Amsterdam to protest at the dispatch of Dutch troop reinforcements to WNG.
- 25 May 1962** UN makes public details of the Bunker Plan.

- 26 May 1962** Dutch agree to restart talks based upon the Bunker Plan but on-going disagreements between them and the Indonesians prevent talks from taking place.
- July/August 1962** The UN's Trusteeship Council produces a report on Australian New Guinea. It recommends a national parliament for the territory of around 100 members to be elected on the basis of direct election by universal adult suffrage.
- 29 June 1962** Constantin Stavropoulos, the UN legal counsel, advises U Thant that "there appears to emerge a strong presumption in favour of self-determination in situations such as that of WNG" on the basis of the wishes of the people "irrespective of the legal stands or interests of other parties to the question".
- 12 July 1962** Talks reconvene.
- 28 July 1962** Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio threatens to withdraw but is persuaded to stay by President Kennedy.
- 30 July 1962** Further talks held.
- 14 August 1962** Talks suspended following the dropping of hundreds of Indonesian paratroops into WNG.
- 15 August 1962** New York Agreement signed by Indonesia and the Netherlands.
- 18 August 1962** 0001 GMT Ceasefire in WNG comes into force.
- 20 August 1962** First UN military observers (UNMO) arrive under command of Swedish naval officer O. W. Melin.
- 21 August 1962** In a breach of the New York Agreement, fourteen Indonesian troops land near the WNG capital Hollandia by submarine.
- 1 September 1962** Only nine of the twenty-eight WNG Council members vote to endorse the New York Agreement. In a second vote, half the Council walk out leaving the remaining fourteen to vote in favour by twelve to two.
- 19 September 1962** "Papuan National Congress" organised by Herman Wajoi and Nicholas Tanggahma ends with a call for a plebiscite on WNG to be held under UN auspices.
- 21 September 1962** Repatriation completed of all Indonesian troops not assigned to remain in WNG.
- 21 September 1962** UNGA debates the New York Agreement and votes to pass a Dutch/Indonesian resolution on it by eighty-nine votes to none with fourteen abstentions.
- 28 September 1962** Dr Pieter J. Platteel, the last Dutch Governor of WNG, leaves the territory.
- 1 October 1962** UNTEA administration begins with Jose Rolz-Bennett as temporary administrator.
- 15 November 1962** Djalal Abdoh becomes UNTEA administrator.
- 15 November 1962** Indonesian troops take over a stretch of road near Sorong and beat up several Papuan policemen.

- 20 November 1962** Indonesian troops surround Sentani Airstrip near Hollandia and hold several policemen at gunpoint.
- 22 November 1962** Last Dutch troops depart from WNG.
- 1 December 1962** Papuan nationalist march cancelled after being banned by UNTEA.
- 2 December 1962** Biak–Numfor Council drafts a resolution condemning UN plans to transfer WNG to a “ruthless colonial power” and calling for a free plebiscite in 1964 under UN auspices.
- 10 December 1962** Indonesian troops open fire on Papuan demonstrators in Merauke injuring two.
- 13 December 1962** Indonesian troops launch a mortar attack on a police station in Sorong. One Papuan policeman is killed.
- 18 December 1962** Indonesian police commissioners working with UNTEA are secretly ordered by Indonesia to ensure that police sign pro-Indonesian statements calling for the early departure of UNTEA and the abandonment of any act of self-determination.
- 1 January 1963** Indonesian flag officially flown alongside UN flag.
- 13 January 1963** Violence between pro- and anti-Indonesian Papuans breaks out in Kaimana.
- Mid-January 1963** A series of pro-Indonesian marches involving Papuans takes place in Biak, Hollandia and Manokwari. No forewarning given to UNTEA despite the legal requirement to do so.
- 17 January 1963** A Papuan student is beaten up after pro-Indonesian Papuans enter the Government School of Administration in Hollandia looking for Papuan flags.
- 17 January 1963** Several Papuan nurses beaten up by Indonesian paratroops at Hollandia Hospital.
- 21 January 1963** Forty-four Papuan students who had fled to TPNG return to WNG following assurances given by UNTEA regarding their safety. That evening they are attacked in their dormitories by around thirty pro-Indonesian Papuans armed with knives. Two students need hospital treatment.
- 6 February 1963** Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio announces that Jakarta accepts the date of 1 May 1963 for the transfer of power from UNTEA to Indonesia.
- 9–12 February 1963** Under Secretary-General Narasimhan pays a visit to WNG. In a speech he confirms the 1 May 1963 handover date.
- 17–18 February 1963** Led by Sergeant Frits Awom, the Papuan Volunteer Corps (PVK) in Manokwari mutinies. The Indonesian Army retreats to its barracks. On the morning of 18 February, the PVK returns to barracks but not all weapons are handed back.
- 20 February 1963** UN officials trick the PVK into disarming. Their arms are then removed by Pakistani UNSF troops.
- 13 March 1963** Indonesia re-establishes diplomatic relations with the Netherlands.

- 10 April 1963** Following increasing pressure from Indonesian UNTEA officials, the Biak–Numfor Council repudiates its December resolution and pledges loyalty to Indonesia.
- 23 April 1963** UNTEA Administrator Abdoh formally opens the new WNG Council building in Hollandia.
- 1 May 1963** UNTEA transfers administration of WNG to Indonesia.
- 4 May 1963** Indonesian President Sukarno arrives in WNG (West Irian) for a visit. Appoints Papuan politician Eliezer Bonay as Governor. All existing Papuan political parties and unofficial political activity are banned.
- 14 May 1963** Narasimhan writes to the Indonesian government announcing the Secretary-General's intention to send a number of "experts" to West Irian as specified in Article XVI of the New York Agreement. None are ever deployed.
- 21 May 1963** Confidential Australian communication reports that the Dutch and Narasimhan have agreed that Papuan self-determination need not involve any direct voting on the issue by the Papuans. Instead, some form of "representative" assembly could decide on behalf of the people.
- May/June 1963** 220 West Papuan refugees from the Merauke region cross the border into TPNG.
- November 1963** The United Nations Fund for West Irian (FUNDWI) is established.
- May 1964** UN Under Secretary-General Rolz-Bennett arrives in Jakarta for talks with Sukarno. He privately repeats Narasimhan's view that the Papuan act of self-determination need not include any direct voting by the Papuans. He then briefly travels to West Irian visiting Biak, Sukarnapura (Jayapura) and Manokwari.
- August 1964** Two US embassy officials are given official permission to make a ten-day visit to West Irian.
- 7 January 1965** Indonesia withdraws from the UN in protest at the appointment of Malaysia as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This is part of Sukarno's on-going "Confrontation" with Britain and Malaysia.
- 1965** OPM founded in Bird's Head region. Sporadic rebellions on-going in the area since 1963.
- May 1965** Sukarno rules out any act of self-determination for West Irian. He claims that the Irianese (Papuans) do not want it.
- May 1965** OPM members arrested in Bird's Head region following attempted raisings of the Papuan flag. In Biak, Papuan rebels are reported to have attacked Shell Oil Company installations.
- 26 July 1965** Papuan government employees attack and kill a number of Indonesian soldiers during an illegal Papuan flag raising ceremony.
- 28 July 1965** Frits Awom leads an attack of "several hundred" Papuans against army barracks in Manokwari.

- 4 August 1965** Indonesia launches Operation Sadar – the first Indonesian military counter-insurgency operation in West Irian.
- 12 August 1965** A battalion of the Indonesian Army Parachute Commando Regiment is flown to Biak from Jakarta in response to Papuan unrest.
- 30 September–2 October 1965** Unsuccessful coup attempt in which the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) is implicated. As a result, thousands of allegedly left-wing Indonesians are killed. Over the next two years Sukarno loses power and is replaced by the pro-Western President Suharto.
- August 1966** Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik visits West Irian accompanied by a number of foreign journalists.
- 30 September 1966** During a visit to the UN in New York to arrange Indonesia's re-entry to the organisation, Foreign Minister Malik announces that Jakarta will permit a Papuan act of self-determination.
- January 1967** Indonesian military aircraft strafe Manokwari town. The Indonesian government later explains that this was in response to Frits Awom's declaring a "free Papuan state". Indonesia also admits that forty Papuans were killed in the attack.
- 1967** Throughout the year Papuan armed rebellion continues, particularly in the Bird's Head region.
- 1967** Freeport Sulphur granted a licence to begin mining operations in West Irian.
- 1 April 1968** Ortiz Sanz appointed UN Representative for West Irian (UNRWI).
- May 1968** Indonesian ministerial delegation visits West Irian. Members are privately appalled at the economic situation and Papuan antipathy towards Indonesia.
- Mid-June 1968** An Indonesian combat force is sent to West Irian from South Celebes in response to continued armed Papuan rebellion.
- June 1968** Six Indonesian military generals visit West Irian to assess the security situation.
- 29 June 1968** Brigadier-General Sarwo Edhie Wibowo is appointed military commander for West Irian.
- 12 August 1968** Ortiz Sanz arrives in Indonesia.
- 12 August 1968** Jakarta announces that in recent military operations in West Irian 162 Papuan rebels have been killed and 3,200 surrendered.
- 20 August 1968** An Indonesian government team led by Foreign Minister Malik makes a four-day tour of West Irian accompanied by a number of foreign journalists.
- 23 August 1968** Ortiz Sanz arrives in West Irian.
- 26 August 1968** Ortiz Sanz and three of his staff begin a ten-day tour accompanied by Indonesian officials.
- Late September 1968** Ian Morgan, a British diplomat based in Jakarta,

makes a brief tour of West Irian in the company of a number of Australian officials.

- 1 November 1968** Leaflets signed by Sarwo Edhie are distributed around the Bird's Head Peninsula calling for rebels to surrender by 1 December.
- 14 November 1968** Ortiz Sanz suggests a "mixed method" for the Act in a meeting with Sudjarwo.
- 18 November–14 December 1968** Ortiz Sanz and members of his team embark on a second tour of West Irian.
- 1 December 1968** Indonesian military launches another offensive in the Bird's Head Peninsula.
- 18 December 1968** UNGA passes a resolution on TPNG calling for Australia to fix an early date for self-determination and independence in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people. It also calls for Australia to hold free elections under UN supervision on the basis of universal suffrage.
- 1 January 1969** Papuan Bird's Head rebel leaders, the Mandatjan brothers, surrender to Indonesian forces.
- 7 January 1969** Mandatjan brothers flown to Jakarta on the same flight as Ortiz Sanz, his wife and former West Irian Governor Eliezer Bonay (recently released from prison).
- Mid-January 1969** Rebellion on Bird's Head erupts again under the leadership of Frits Awom.
- 30 January 1969** Rolz Bennett writes to Ortiz Sanz informing him of Indonesia's rejection of his "mixed method" suggestion for the Act.
- February 1969** Australian External Affairs Minister Gordon Freeth indicates publicly that Australia would accept the results of an act of self-determination in West Irian consisting of a polling of 1,000 representatives.
- 10–12 February 1969** Ortiz Sanz holds a series of meetings with Sudjarwo and other Indonesian officials.
- March 1969** The Dutch privately ask U Thant to consider sending an "expeditionary force" to West Irian to guarantee a Papuan vote free from Indonesian military intimidation. U Thant rejects this.
- 18 March 1969** Ortiz Sanz issues a press release concerning Indonesian plans for the Act. To be acceptable he states that the Assemblies would have to be sufficiently large and represent all sectors of the community. Furthermore, additional members would have to be clearly elected by the people. He adds that Indonesia has given him assurances on all these issues.
- 22 March–11 April 1969** Eight Regional Councils meet to consider Indonesian proposals for the Act. Indonesia and the UN report that the Councils all accept. But eyewitness Garth Alexander, a British journalist, claims that in Merauke most members called for a more democratic method for the Act.
- 11 April 1969** Demonstration by Papuans in front of Ortiz Sanz's Jayapura

residence calling for a referendum on self-determination. It is dispersed by troops and many are arrested despite military assurances to Ortiz Sanz that they would take no action.

16 April 1969 Five armed Indonesian soldiers force their way into Ortiz Sanz's Jayapura residence and try to arrest Marshal Williams, UNRWI's black American Chief Administrative Officer, mistaking him for a Papuan.

Mid-April 1969 Wide-scale rebellion erupt in Western Central Highlands. Ninety armed Papuan policemen mutiny and join the rebels.

20 April 1969 The selection process begins, without any UN involvement, of additional Assembly members for the Act.

27 April 1969 Aircraft carrying General Sarwo Edhie hit by groundfire while trying unsuccessfully to land at Enarotali.

27 April 1969 Muju tribesmen attack an army camp near Merauke killing three Indonesian soldiers.

30 April 1969 Indonesian paratroops dropped into rebel-held areas. Approximately 14,000 locals are reported to have fled into the bush.

April/May 1969 Indonesian troops cross into TPNG in pursuit of West Papuan refugees, killing two.

1 May 1969 300 Papuans demonstrate in Arso and raise the West Papuan flag. Two demonstrators are shot by Indonesian security forces.

12 May 1969 Ortiz Sanz writes to Rolz-Bennett saying that he wishes to ask the Indonesians to postpone the Act for several months to allow time for democratic conditions in the territory to improve. The request is never made.

12–18 May 1969 In response to the rebellions, Ortiz Sanz flies from Jakarta for a week-long visit to West Irian. On his return, he issues a press statement (written prior to the trip) announcing that the situation is quiet but tense and dismissing foreign press reports as exaggerated.

21 May 1969 Indonesian and Dutch Foreign Ministers Malik and Luns issue a joint statement following a meeting in Rome pledging to implement fully the New York Agreement.

30 May 1969 Six weeks after the process has commenced, the UNRWI team receives a timetable of "elections" for additional Assembly members for the Act.

4 June 1969 In Biak, UN officials witness their first selection process for additional Assembly members.

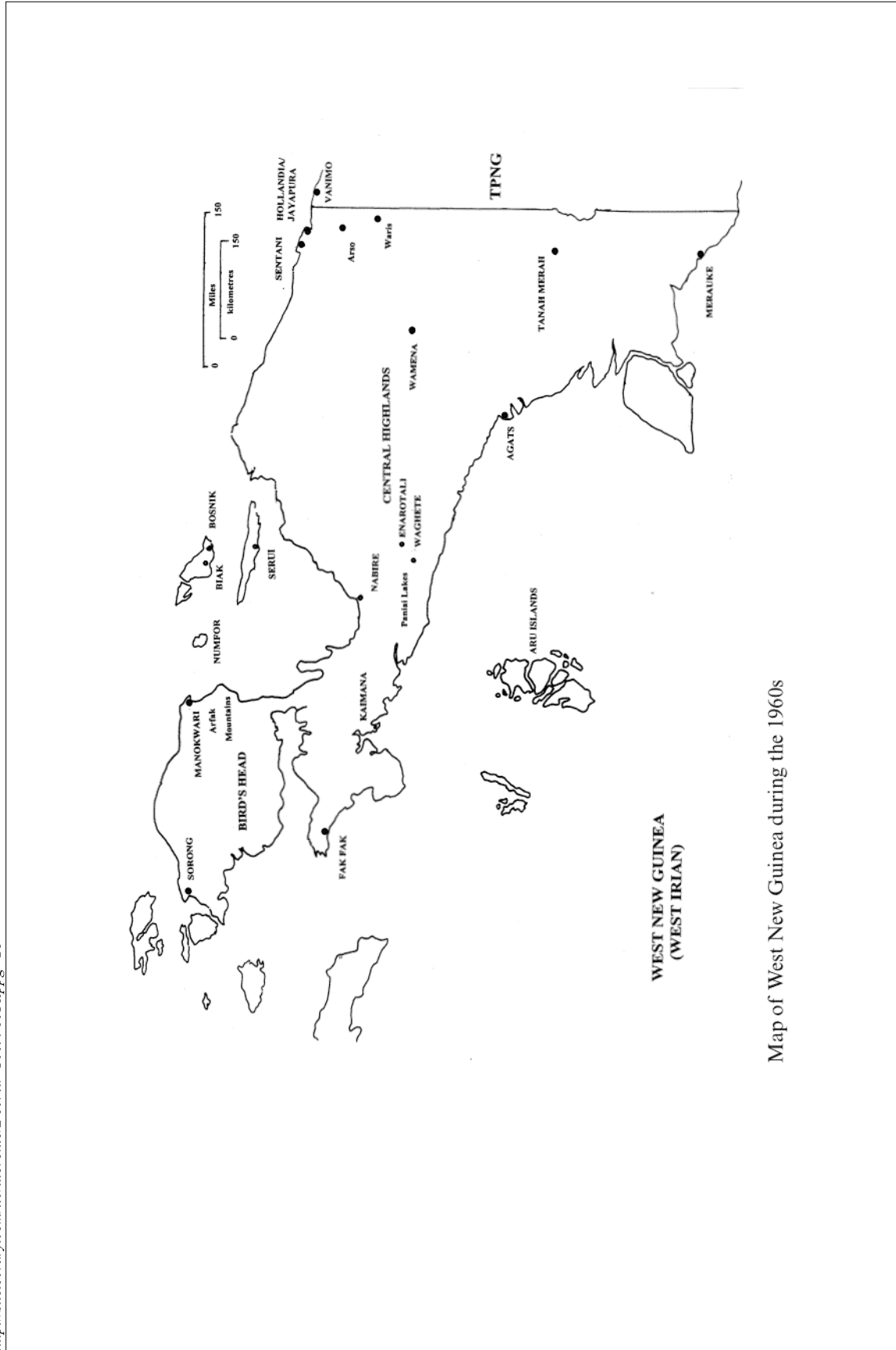
13 June 1969 Ortiz Sanz writes to Sudjarwo requesting that he hold some fresh elections in areas where no UN officials were present during the original selection process for the Act.

14 June 1969 Ortiz Sanz writes to Rolz-Bennett informing him that he has urged the Indonesians to obtain assurances from the Dutch that they will not challenge the result of the Act. He also reveals that he has offered to show Sudjarwo "on a personal basis" those parts of his planned report to the UNGA that "might be controversial".

- 23 June 1969** Indonesia sends Ortiz Sanz a timetable for nine fresh elections. In the end the UN witnesses six. In total the UN witnesses the selection of 195 of the 1,022 representatives who eventually take part in the Act.
- 28 June 1969** TPNG Assembly adopts a resolution criticising Indonesia and the UN for neglecting West Papuan political and human rights.
- 1 July 1969** Renewed rebellion in Western Central Highlands involving Ekari tribesmen.
- Early July 1969** Representatives for the Act are reportedly isolated from the rest of the population by the Indonesians.
- 14 July 1969** The Act of Free Choice begins with a unanimous vote by the Merauke Assembly to remain with Indonesia. Among the guests at the event are various foreign ambassadors including those from Australia and the Netherlands.
- 15 July 1969** Ortiz Sanz gives a press conference defending the Indonesian method adopted for the Act as “practical”.
- 17 July 1969** The Wamena Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia.
- 19 July 1969** The Nabire Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia. Scheltema, the Dutch Ambassador, leaves the territory and does not witness the remaining Assembly votes.
- 23 July 1969** The Fak Fak Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia.
- 26 July 1969** The Sorong Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia.
- 29 July 1969** The Manokwari Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia. Australian journalist Hugh Lunn witnesses Papuan demonstrators outside the Assembly Hall being thrown into trucks and driven away by Indonesian security forces. He goes inside and tells Ortiz Sanz who reportedly refuses to intervene.
- 31 July 1969** The Biak Assembly votes unanimously to remain with Indonesia.
- 2 August 1969** The final Assembly meeting takes place in Jayapura with a unanimous vote to remain with Indonesia. The authorities organise celebrations to mark the end of the Act.
- 17 August 1969** Ortiz Sanz attends celebrations in Jakarta to mark the twenty-fourth anniversary of the 1945 proclamation of Indonesian independence.
- 18 August 1969** Ortiz Sanz leaves Indonesia.
- 4 September 1969** Duco Middelburg (Dutch Ambassador to the UN) comments privately to his Australian counterpart, Patrick Shaw, that he “hopes that the handling of the Act in the UNGA will go quietly”.
- September/October 1969** Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik tours a number of African countries to argue the Indonesian position over the Act. Papuan nationalist Nicholas Jouwe also tours Africa lobbying against Indonesia.

- 10 September 1969** Confidential FCO briefing to the British Mission to the UN in New York advises it to “steer clear” of the West Irian issue but adds “privately however, we recognise that the people of West Irian have no desire to be ruled by the Indonesians...the process of consultation did not allow a genuinely free choice to be made”.
- 6 November 1969** UN Secretary-General U Thant presents his report on the Act to the UNGA. It consists of a summary by himself followed by reports from Ortiz Sanz and the Indonesians.
- 13–19 November 1969** Series of plenary meetings held at the UNGA to discuss a resolution which “takes note” of the results of the Act and the UN’s fulfilment of its role. The resolution is sponsored by Belgium, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Thailand.
- 18 November 1969** A number of African representatives at the UN hold a “stormy” meeting on the Act and refuse to receive the Indonesian representative.
- 19 November 1969** UNGA votes by fifty-eight to thirty-one with twenty-four abstentions to reject a move by Dahomey for an adjournment for further consultations on the Act. It then votes by sixty to fifteen, with thirty-nine abstentions, to reject a Ghanaian amendment to the resolution on the Act calling for a further act of free choice in West Irian by the end of 1975. Finally, the UNGA votes by eighty-four to none with thirty abstentions to pass the unamended resolution on the Act.

Saltford, John. *United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962-1969: The Anatomy of a Betrayal*. Richmond, Surrey, GBR: Curzon Press Limited, 2002. p. xxvii. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utoronto/Doc?id=10099601&ppg=28>



Map of West New Guinea during the 1960s

Introduction

The Indonesian province of West Papua¹ differs markedly from the rest of the Republic. As the western half of the island of New Guinea, its flora, fauna and geography are closely linked with Papua New Guinea, the independent state on the eastern half of the island. New Guinea as a whole is a diverse land of tropical jungles, lakes, swamps, highlands and snow-capped mountains. It is the second-largest island in the world and covers a total of 792,540 square kilometres.

Although some coastal populations have intermixed to a degree with Indonesians from elsewhere, the vast majority of the indigenous people of West Papua, who commonly describe themselves as Papuans, are ethnically and culturally very different to the Asian populations of Indonesia. Instead, their ethnic and cultural links lie primarily with the neighbouring people of Papua New Guinea. They are also similarly connected with the inhabitants of other islands such as Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomons and to a lesser extent the aborigines of Australia.² Nonetheless, there is much cultural diversity among these people. In West Papua alone, over 250 different languages are spoken.

Despite the affinity between the two sides of New Guinea, a border drawn down the middle by European colonialists in 1895 and 1910 officially separated them. Although the British and Germans claimed the eastern half and the Dutch the west, it made little difference to the indigenous inhabitants, few of whom outside the coastal settlements had even seen a European. However, this border was to have a profound effect on the people in the Dutch territory following the independence of Indonesia in 1949.

The Netherlands laid claim to West New Guinea in 1828, mainly because of its proximity to their East Indies possessions. The motivation seems to have been simply to prevent other colonial powers, particularly Britain, from establishing settlements there first. According to the Dutch historian Meinisma writing in the 1870s, the basis of this Dutch claim rested on the rights to the territory put forward by the Sultan of Tidore. Since the Sultan was a “vassal” of the Dutch “that portion of the island was accounted to belong to the Dutch Indies”.³ In reality, the Sultan’s influence was limited to

2 Introduction

a few coastal settlements on the Bird's Head Peninsula, and according to a secret British memorandum on the issue in 1884:

There is no evidence of the Sultan's authority having ever been recognised by the natives on any part of the [New Guinea] Mainland [beyond the Bird's Head Peninsula], or of his people having ever visited any part of it. This is generally admitted by the Dutch writers.⁴

It was not until 1898 that a nominal administration was set up under the Dutch Resident at Ternate in the Moluccas. The decision to administer the territory from Ternate was made simply because the negligible Dutch presence in New Guinea did not warrant a separate administration there. However, in 1902 a heated debate took place in the Dutch parliament on whether New Guinea should have a separate budget from the East Indies on the grounds that it was part of "Polynesia" while the latter belonged to Asia. In the end, for administrative purposes, the link with Ternate was maintained.⁵ But this arrangement led Indonesia at independence to claim that the territory was an integral part of the Republic.

Following a Dutch refusal to hand it over, it became a source of growing tension between the two countries throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Eventually, under threat of Indonesian attack and pressure from the United States, the Netherlands agreed to withdraw from the territory and hand it over to a temporary United Nations administration. In the New York Agreement signed by the Dutch and Indonesians on 15 August 1962, it was agreed that the UN would subsequently transfer administration of West New Guinea to Indonesia. Within five years of this, a UN team was to return to assist Jakarta in organising an act of self-determination in the territory. Its purpose was to determine whether the Papuans wished to become part of Indonesia, or choose independence.

The subject of this book is the UN's political involvement in West Papua from the signing of the Agreement in 1962, until the aftermath of the act of self-determination in 1969. Specifically, it examines two UN operations. The first is the UN Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) that administered the territory from October 1962 until May 1963. The second is the mission of the Secretary-General's Representative, Fernando Ortiz-Sanz. This mission spent a year in West Irian (as it was then known), beginning August 1968, and was responsible for "advising, assisting and participating" in the Indonesian-organised act of Papuan self-determination, known as the "Act of Free Choice".

In particular, I will consider whether the terms of the New York Agreement were fulfilled, and if not, the extent to which the UN was complicit. As part of this, I will look at the relationship between the UN and Jakarta, particularly during the period of Ortiz Sanz's mission.

In order to put this study of the UN into some context, I will also discuss the role of other countries and their attitudes towards the territory during

the 1960s. Primarily this will concern Australia, which as the administering power in East New Guinea (TPNG) had a direct interest in developments over the border. In addition, British attitudes towards the territory will be considered. Although Britain had little direct interest in New Guinea, it was involved in the region for much of the period owing to its conflict with Jakarta over Malaysia. Furthermore, traditional links with Canberra ensured that British contemporary reports provide an alternative, but informed, viewpoint on Australian policy and events in WNG generally. The attitudes of other countries, including the United States and the Netherlands, will be discussed as well.

I do not contend, however, that it is necessary to conduct a detailed study of this issue to identify serious concerns about the legitimacy of the Act of Free Choice. The factual accounts given in the 1969 UN Secretary-General's report describe clearly how, under conditions of tight political control, 1,022 Papuans decided unanimously, on behalf of the entire population, to join Indonesia. In particular, Indonesia's own account, which formed part of the Secretary-General's report, portrays a situation in which it is difficult to identify much evidence of genuine Papuan participation in the Act.

But at the time of writing, the official position of Indonesia, the UN and almost all of the international community is that the Act fulfilled the requirements of the Agreement with regard to Papuan self-determination. Challenging this position are many Papuans and their supporters who point to the UN report and eyewitness accounts as evidence that genuine self-determination did not take place in 1969.

However, to come to an informed conclusion on this issue, it is necessary to examine comprehensively the relevant material, particularly that which is contained in official documents only recently made available for research. The main objective of this book is to provide such a study.

Much of the material on which this book is based is taken from documents that were declassified at my request by the UN Archives in New York. The other major sources of information have come from the British and Australian National Archives. US and Dutch government records have also been used.

In addition to those with an interest in West Papuan history, I hope that my work will be of value to the study of international organisations and international relations in more general terms. Although it is beyond the remit of this book to consider how it relates to the UN in a wider context, it should, as an examination of the first UN administration of a territory, be of interest to those concerned with more recent examples, such as the operations in Kosovo or East Timor. Furthermore, my research into the UN's conduct before and during the Act will have some relevance to any work carried out on other UN-organised, or UN-monitored, elections and referendums. Examples of this might include the 1999 referendum in East Timor, the UN-organised elections in Cambodia in the early 1990s, or the much-delayed referendum planned for the Western Sahara.

4 *Introduction*

Finally, a clearer understanding of the events and politics surrounding the Papuan act of self-determination will assist in evaluating the current political situation in Indonesia as a whole. Maintaining Indonesian unity remains a key objective for many Indonesians from the President down, but there are dissenters. In a 1999 article on the subject, the Indonesian political analyst Soedjati Djiwandono wrote:

Would we prefer to have a single nation-state out of this huge but almost unmanageable archipelago...marked by abject poverty among the majority of people, by continued injustice, continuous tension and conflicts because of seemingly irreconcilable differences in ethnic, religious and cultural terms? Or at the risk of being dubbed "blasphemous", to split peacefully into two, three, four or even five smaller nation-states with a greater chance and hope for peace, greater prosperity, equality and justice for all?⁵

1 Background

1949–1962

The 1950s

The origins of UN involvement in West New Guinea (WNG) began with the formation in 1949 of the UN Commission on Indonesia. This established the “Round Table Conference” at The Hague, resulting in an agreement to transfer sovereignty of the Dutch East Indies from the Dutch to an Indonesian federation led by President Sukarno. It was the end of a bitter four-year struggle for independence by the Indonesians.

During the negotiations, the Netherlands insisted upon retaining sovereignty of WNG. The Indonesians protested but, initially at least, with little enthusiasm, particularly amongst the Sukarno-led Republicans based in Java. At one point, prior to independence, Mohammed Hatta (Indonesia’s first Vice-President) even argued with his colleagues that the Papuans were not Indonesian and had a right to their own state.¹

The other main Indonesian grouping, the Federalists, representing East Indonesia (Bali, Timor, Celebes, Lombok, the Moluccas, etc.), made more of an issue of WNG. But even they excluded it from their list of Indonesian territories while lobbying the UN Security Council in August 1947.² However, by the time the Dutch formally transferred sovereignty of the East Indies on 27 December 1949, the general Indonesian position was that WNG belonged to them. Eventually it was agreed that further negotiations would take place to settle the matter within a year. But initial willingness by the Dutch to consider the Indonesian claim³ ceased with the formation of a unitary Indonesian Republic in August 1950. At talks with Jakarta four months later, the Netherlands was unprepared to hand the Papuans over to a centralised Javanese regime.

This decision was welcomed by other Western powers, particularly Australia. In 1950 Percy Spender, Canberra’s Minister for External Affairs, made plain that Indonesian control of WNG would be an unwelcome move. He predicted that they would make “hostile and aggressive neighbours” and threaten Australian East New Guinea. He also considered that any Asian expansion into New Guinea would assist the spread of communism on the island.⁴

6 Background to 1949–1962

Suspicious that the Dutch might still withdraw, Spender even planned informing Indonesia that Australia aspired to become the administering power for the whole island. However, opposition from the Dutch, British and Americans, along with further reassurances from The Hague that they intended to remain, persuaded him to abandon this plan.⁵

Despite having concerns at what they felt was Spender's provocative stance on the issue, the British shared his antipathy towards an Indonesian takeover of WNG. Generally they favoured Dutch retention of the territory for strategic reasons, since among other things, "its transfer to the Indonesian Government might be used as a precedent for a subsequent claim to British territory in Borneo".⁶

In Washington, the WNG position throughout the early 1950s had been one of maintaining an official policy of neutrality, while privately reassuring The Hague and Canberra that the US favoured option was for a continuation of Dutch sovereignty.⁷ In essence it was a balancing act that attempted to placate Australia and the Dutch, while at the same time avoiding alienating Jakarta to the extent that communist support in the country was strengthened. With the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) growing in size and influence and at the forefront of the campaign for WNG, it would become an increasingly difficult position for Washington to maintain.

Between 1954 and 1957, Indonesia submitted four draft resolutions on the issue to the UN General Assembly, but none was adopted. Privately, some Dutch officials in 1955 were prepared to consider a proposal by Secretary-General Hammarskjöld to place WNG under an internationally agreed trusteeship. This was seen as one solution that would avoid transferring the territory to Indonesia, but there was little enthusiasm for this among politicians in The Hague.⁸

Disillusioned with the UNGA, in late 1957 Jakarta launched a campaign against the Dutch in Indonesia, expelling thousands and nationalising their businesses. These events marked the beginning of what Jon Reinhardt describes as the "third and final phase of the West Irian dispute, a skilful mixture of diplomacy and threats of military force".⁹ It also coincided with an outbreak of regional rebellions against the government in Jakarta, which were exploited by Washington in an effort to move Indonesia into an anti-communist alignment with the United States. The immediate objective was to "eliminate the Communist party [PKI], weaken the army's strength in Java, and drastically clip the wings of, if not fully remove, President Sukarno".¹⁰

Despite the domestic crisis, "deeply rooted support for national claims to West Irian existed throughout Indonesia, stretching all across the political spectrum".¹¹ Furthermore, as Harper and Greenwood note:

Publicity in Indonesia about alleged Papuan uprisings against the Dutch oppression seems to have convinced even quite senior Indonesian officials that the Dutch grip was weakening.¹²

As part of Canberra's continuing effort to keep Indonesia out of WNG the Australians issued a joint statement with the Dutch on 6 November 1957 concerning the future development of the entire island. In practice the ultimate goal was to create a political association between the two halves. However, to avoid antagonising Jakarta, the policy had to be pursued on a completely confidential basis, and portrayed publicly as cooperation, rather than coordination.¹³ This was also the solution favoured by the British.¹⁴ Meanwhile, US policy had hardened during this period to one of opposing "by appropriate measures, any attempt by a Communist-orientated Indonesia to seize West New Guinea".¹⁵

However, following the failure of the regional rebellions, the West had to reassess its attitude towards Sukarno. In Washington there was growing recognition that, in the short term at least, it could do little more than support "responsible elements" within the Indonesian Army, such as General Nasution, by offering training and modest supplies of armaments. But the US decision to offer only limited military aid resulted in Sukarno turning more to the Soviet Bloc for assistance as part of his new WNG strategy that combined diplomatic pressure with a massive increase in military expenditure.

Soviet support for the Indonesian campaign seemed to stem from little else but a perception in the early 1950s that the United States favoured the Dutch and hoped to exploit WNG's natural resources while establishing military bases in the territory. Prior to this, Moscow had briefly opposed Jakarta in reaction to an initial suspicion that Washington actually favoured an Indonesian-controlled WNG.¹⁶

Soviet interest in the issue increased following a visit to Moscow by Sukarno in 1956 and the granting of US\$100 million in credit to Indonesia the same year. By 1962 the relationship was such that Indonesia was the largest non-communist recipient of Soviet Bloc aid with credits exceeding US\$1.5 billion.¹⁷ In total, between 1961 and 1963, Jakarta spent approximately US\$2 billion on military equipment – about one-half of its entire national budget. As the US Ambassador to Jakarta later commented:

Sukarno understood the tactics of *Realpolitik*. He was a master of painting himself into a corner and waiting for someone to rescue him. In this situation, with the help of the Russians, he created a real threat of war. It was not a bluff.¹⁸

Elsewhere, China was working hard to woo Sukarno, particularly following his state visit to Peking, also in 1956. In a report on the visit, the British Embassy in Peking commented: "it is difficult to imagine what more the

Chinese could have done to flatter and impress their guest”.¹⁹ Subsequent to this, Peking initiated a modest programme of aid to Jakarta and in April 1961 the two countries signed a treaty of friendship paving the way for Peking’s eventual role as a major ally of Sukarno’s regime.²⁰

Uti possidetis juris

By siding with Indonesia, the communist powers were able to align themselves firmly with the anti-colonialists at the UN. This movement had grown in importance throughout the 1950s and early 1960s as more and more African and Asian colonies gained independence from the old European empires. In 1960 alone, eighteen colonial territories became independent UN member states. Except for Cyprus, they were all African and 1960 became known as “The Year of Africa”.²¹

From a modern perspective it appears somewhat bizarre that so many of these vociferous opponents of colonialism should object so strongly to any Dutch moves towards granting WNG independence. However, while some African countries did remain sympathetic to the Papuan cause, the crucial point to remember about the “anti-colonial” states during this period was their strong adherence to the doctrine of *uti possidetis juris*.

Essex University academic Michael Freeman defines this as the doctrine that territorial boundaries of post-colonial states should match those of the colonial territories that they replaced. The logic behind this was that it minimised territorial disputes among post-colonial states thereby avoiding much unnecessary conflict. However, Freeman asserts that this was to prove a flawed argument:

Most states were multinational or polyethnic, and many subordinate ethno-nationalist groups perceived the doctrine of *uti possidetis juris* to be an ideology that justified the domination of weak peoples by groups that had managed to seize state power. Consequently, secessionist wars and anti-secessionist repression became pervasive features of the post-colonial world order. The UN states system could not live in peace with the nationalism that it had itself encouraged. It would only recognise states, while it denied to many peoples the right to their own states.²²

The Papuans’ problem was that Jakarta was able to convince most of the anti-colonial movement that WNG had been an inherent part of the Dutch East Indies. Therefore under *uti possidetis juris* it belonged to Indonesia. If the Dutch granted WNG its independence it would be an act of separatism against Indonesia. As Oguchi notes, what the Third World countries found in the dispute was not the right of self-determination but the threat to national unity in the name of these same rights.²³

Oguchi also notes the relevance to WNG of the declared secession of the province of Katanga from Congo eleven days after Congo’s independence

on 30 June 1960. The anti-colonial movement believed that Katanga, and its pro-Western leader Moïse Tshombe, was supported by Belgium and other Western powers wishing to protect their economic interests in the resource-rich province:

This perception resulted in the division of members of the United Nations between European “imperialists” on the pro-Katanga side and the Afro-Asian world on the other. The issue of Katanga, thus, created the “increasingly cohesive non-aligned bloc”.²⁴

The UN as a whole sided with the Congolese government against Katanga, a policy that hardened with the appointment of U Thant as acting Secretary-General following Dag Hammarskjöld’s death in a plane crash in September 1961. Two months later, a UN Security Council resolution was passed authorising the use of military force to end the Katangan rebellion and over the next twelve months a UN force of up to 20,000 men (ONUC) was deployed to ensure the mission’s success.²⁵

The UN’s involvement in Congo cost the lives of 126 ONUC soldiers and left the organisation in a serious financial predicament with a bill for US\$433 million.²⁶ Furthermore, the UN and U Thant himself faced severe criticism over their handling of the crisis. For this reason, Oguchi argues that WNG provided an ideal opportunity for the organisation to prove that it could oversee the peaceful resolution of another dispute without the financial and human cost of ONUC.²⁷ Importantly, with the two crises unfolding concurrently, it was easy for Jakarta to “cry Katanga” and consolidate its support among the anti-colonial movement against Papuan “separatism”.²⁸

This growing support for Indonesia coincided with the arrival of President Kennedy in the White House in 1961. Unlike his predecessor Eisenhower, Kennedy was not opposed to possible US involvement to find a settlement. Nonetheless, there were still influential opponents in Washington to any shift of policy on the territory. In March 1961, the CIA sent a memorandum to the President’s staff:

To appease Sukarno on the West Irian and other questions, and to compete with the Bloc in economic and military aid in the vain hope of gaining time – would, we believe, finally destroy the resolve of conservative elements to oppose Sukarno’s policies and to act as a brake on the leftward and downward course of Indonesia.²⁹

Moves towards Papuan self-rule

In the territory itself, the Dutch accelerated their efforts to prepare the territory for self-rule. Several political parties were formed and apart from one, whose membership consisted almost entirely of ethnic Indonesians, they all

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supported eventual Papuan independence. Evidence of Papuan support for independence was also noted in a report by an Australian official in February 1962: “The Papuans with whom I spoke at the various centres were unanimous in their conviction that they could not permit Indonesia to take over.”³⁰ At the same time, the academic Paul Van der Veur carried out a questionnaire in various towns of 329 Papuan pupils above the second year of secondary school. The respondents demonstrated a considerable degree of political awareness, and the results showed an overwhelming support for eventual independence, and a rejection of Indonesian rule.³¹

Beginning in 1959, elected regional councils were set up in the territory, while at the same time, official policy was that “Democratization will be energetically pursued on the local and regional levels, but simultaneously a short-term central representative body will be established [the West New Guinea Council].” Independence was to be achieved by 1970. Furthermore, a Dutch policy paper from 1960 stated: “The ‘Papuanization’ of the administrative body will now become, to a greater extent than formerly, a matter of systematic and purposeful action.” As a target, the paper predicted “Papuanization of the country will have increased from 52% in 1960 (almost entirely in the lower grades) to 93% in 1970.” Commenting on the importance of this, the paper continues, “It is essential for the Netherlands to see to it that, once the time for independence has come, a sufficient number of qualified indigenous inhabitants are available to take over the greatest part of the administration.”³² But with possibly over half the 700,000 population still living in areas outside Dutch administrative control, it would not be an easy task.

In February 1961, elections took place for the West New Guinea Council in an atmosphere described in the *New York Times* as being “devoid of racial feeling.”³³ Around 20 per cent of administered Papuans voted, choosing between some ninety candidates to elect sixteen councillors. A further twelve were selected by the Dutch for areas considered not yet ready for meaningful elections. There were three Dutch and two Eurasians on the Council and the rest were Papuans. Terrence Markin has dismissed the exercise as primarily designed by the Dutch to appeal to outsiders. However, he supports his argument by incorrectly asserting that most councillors were appointed by the Dutch.³⁴ Nonetheless, it is true that the Council could only advise, rather than direct, the territory’s governor. But whatever its limitations, the Council was a genuine attempt to accelerate the establishment of an indigenous political elite eventually to lead an independent West Papua.

The Luns Plan

In September 1961, Dutch Foreign Minister Luns presented a proposal to the UNGA on the territory’s future. The “Luns Plan” envisaged Dutch withdrawal from the territory and termination of sovereignty, to be replaced by a UN administration and the establishment of a “member state study

commission”. This would supervise the administration and organise a plebiscite to decide the territory’s final status.³⁵

Some in Washington were hostile to the plan. Rostow, a National Security Affairs adviser, wrote to the President in October 1961 expressing impatience with the Dutch and asserting that Indonesian control of the territory was the only permanent solution to avoid Jakarta being “driven into the arms” of the Soviets. He also advised that the United States should be frank with The Hague and tell the Dutch that self-determination for the “stone-age” Papuans was rather meaningless.³⁶

Despite this, the United States eventually voted in the UNGA with the Dutch on a resolution based upon the Luns Plan. Although the Netherlands was pleased to receive more than half the vote, it was not enough to be passed by the Assembly. Meanwhile, on 1 December 1961, following a vote by the West New Guinea Council, the territory was renamed West Papua and given an anthem and a flag to fly alongside the Dutch tricolour. The Council also voted to support the Luns Plan and called upon all nations to respect the right of the Papuans to self-determination.³⁷

Following the UNGA’s failure to adopt the Luns Plan, “the Dutch were suddenly left without a definite policy toward New Guinea except the one that followed before...and that policy was considered no longer adequate”.³⁸ Then on 19 December, Sukarno increased the pressure by issuing the “People’s Triple Command” (TRIKORA), calling for the total mobilisation of the Indonesian people to “liberate” West Irian. Soon afterwards, the Dutch agreed to a request by acting Secretary-General U Thant to begin direct negotiations with Jakarta. Importantly, they dropped a pre-condition that talks could only be on the basis of the Papuan right to self-determination.³⁹

While the threat of an invasion undoubtedly forced the Dutch to negotiate, Indonesia’s campaign of sending in armed infiltrators to WNG did not appear to pose a serious threat to security. An Australian official reported in February 1962:

Indonesian “infiltrators” are regarded by the Dutch and Papuans as more of a joke than a nuisance....I met several people, Dutch and Papuans, who had been concerned with the infiltrators in the Sorong area about last September [1961], and all expressed incredulity at the apparent Indonesian belief that the Papuan populace would rise up in revolt against the Dutch once the infiltrators had established a base in New Guinea....The Papuans had regarded the rounding up of the infiltrators as a sort of sport.⁴⁰

Dutch/Indonesian talks and US pressure

At first, talks were delayed by an Indonesian pre-condition for prior agreement that the territory would ultimately become theirs. U Thant proposed a

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compromise in which the territory would be administered on behalf of the UN by two Asian countries, before its ultimate status was decided. The Dutch accepted, but Jakarta said no.⁴¹

By now, Washington had concluded that Indonesia's peaceful takeover of the territory was necessary to undermine the communist threat to Jakarta. More pressure was therefore required on the Dutch to make them take "the final jump". As one US official prophetically noted:

I can't blame Dutch for doubting that Indos have any intention of allowing genuine plebiscite five years or so from now. But the important thing is that some such Indo promise is the essential face-saving device Dutch have been seeking. We must get them to take it as best they can expect.⁴²

In February 1962 Attorney-General Robert Kennedy, the President's brother, travelled to Jakarta and The Hague in an effort to get the talks started. They finally began on 20 March in Middleburg, Virginia. Although sponsored by the United States in all but name, the UN was selected as the official mediating body to provide "a cloak of unquestioned impartiality."⁴³ Washington chose Ellsworth Bunker, a US diplomat, as mediator. On being told by the United States to appoint him, and issue invitations to the talks, U Thant allegedly expressed surprise, and commented that he had been led to believe by both sides that the UN would not be involved.⁴⁴

Washington would no longer accept Luns' refusal to transfer the Papuans to Indonesia prior to self-determination. To force the issue, the Americans proposed the establishment of a temporary UN administration, after which full control would pass to Jakarta. Only then, at some point, would "self-determination" occur. The Dutch were informed of this "Bunker Plan" on 2 April 1962, two days after Jakarta. Luns' initial response was a bitter rejection and a condemnation of the US.⁴⁵ However, on 13 April the Dutch Cabinet held a twelve-hour meeting in which Luns and his colleagues reluctantly decided not to reject the plan. Instead, they reassured each other that they could use it as a basic framework from which to secure political guarantees for the Papuans.⁴⁶ In reality, they must have known that the plan was never intended to allow the Papuans any say in their future.

An important reason for this Dutch capitulation was their unwillingness to fight a war which they felt they could not win.⁴⁷ Neither Australia, Britain nor, crucially, the United States would give any commitment to provide military support, and the Dutch, understandably, were not prepared to fight alone on a matter of principle. However, by the time The Hague accepted the inevitability of a transfer to Indonesia, the Dutch were, according to Markin, in such a weakened position that they had little leverage over the Indonesians:

in a sense, then, Bunker's task became one of holding hands, seeking to reassure the Dutch that they were doing alright until, at the end of the talks, The Hague realized that it had really won nothing on which to hang its claim of having negotiated an agreement that preserved Netherlands honor.⁴⁸

Before talks could reconvene, further delays occurred as both sides tried to interpret the Bunker Plan differently. Luns attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain some political guarantees for the Papuans, but by the time the talks began again on 12 July, Indonesia was demanding a direct transfer without any prior UN administration. Although Ambassador Van Roijen, the Dutch negotiator, had already made concessions without first consulting The Hague,⁴⁹ he felt unable to agree to this. Eventually, despite further Indonesian threats to invade, agreement was reached for a UN administration of at least seven months (five months less than specified in the Bunker Plan). Nonetheless, Jakarta's acceptance came only after President Kennedy made clear to Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio that the United States would blame Indonesia if war broke out after so much had been gained peacefully.⁵⁰

In the meantime, Jakarta rejected suggestions by Stavropoulos, the UN legal counsel, for the appointment of a UN team led by a commissioner to remain in the territory after transfer to Indonesia. The team's task would have been to assist in preparations for Papuan self-determination and then submit a report. Indonesia's key objection to the plan was that, before the act of self-determination could take place, the UNGA would need to vote on whether to approve the arrangements for it.⁵¹

In the end, less precise terminology was accepted. Another late concession by Van Roijen, which would have great relevance later, was the omission of the words "plebiscite" or "referendum" in the Agreement.⁵²

Summary

Finally, on 15 August 1962, the New York Agreement was signed. Within six weeks, a UN administration was running the territory, and in less than nine months, control passed to Jakarta. It was a great victory for Indonesia, but all shades of political opinion in The Hague generally considered it to be an "exceedingly bad deal".⁵³ The only achievement of the Dutch was to avoid war. But by this stage, it was something many in the Netherlands were relieved to accept.

In retrospect, Dutch complacency, and their underestimation of Indonesia's resolve, denied the Papuans any real chance of independence. A concerted Dutch/Australian effort in 1949 to prepare the whole island for self-government might have created, by the 1960s, a level of internationally recognised Melanesian national feeling sufficient to undermine severely

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Jakarta's claim that West Irian belonged with Indonesia. But in the event, the Netherlands ran out of time.

For the West, and particularly the United States, though, the Agreement was seen as an important victory in the struggle to prevent Indonesia drifting into the communist "camp". Even Canberra, a long-standing supporter of the Dutch, was, by January 1962, "giving active encouragement to the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia".⁵⁴

London was also satisfied. In 1959, it had made a confidential commitment to offer the Dutch logistical support in the event of war.⁵⁵ But in February 1962, a British Chiefs of Staff paper voiced concern that such assistance risked precipitating colonial unrest, particularly in Singapore. Furthermore, "It might well jeopardise negotiations for the establishment of Greater Malaysia and our future use of the Singapore base."⁵⁶ Other uninvolved European powers seemed satisfied to see the issue resolved. As one West German Foreign Ministry official remarked: "once the Indonesians get [WNG] it might become a 'desert' but who really cares?"⁵⁷

For the Soviets, the settlement was a disappointment. The dispute had assured their influence as the major arms supplier to Indonesia at a time when increasing US involvement in Indo-China made the archipelago a strategically important area.

In the end, though, it was the Papuans who had most to lose from the settlement. They played no part in the negotiations, but they would be the ones who would have to live with the consequences.

2 Preparations for UNTEA

15 August to 1 October 1962

The end of US interest and the search for a UN security force

In Washington, the end of the WNG dispute was seen as a valuable window of opportunity for improving US/Indonesian relations. On 15 August 1962, the day the Agreement was signed, Komer wrote to President Kennedy:

Without trying to count too many chickens before they've hatched, we ought to capitalise on the WNG settlement by moving fast toward the "future fruitful cooperation" of which you spoke to Sukarno. Capital of the sort we've gained is a transitory asset to be used while it's still good. Moreover, Indonesia is one of the truly big areas of East-West competition; having invested so much in manoeuvring a WNG settlement for the express purpose of giving us leverage in this competition, we'd be foolish not to follow through.¹

Kennedy agreed, and called for a plan of action to be ready within a month to assess what further measures could be taken to capitalise on the US role in the settlement. Specifically he suggested the possibility of expanded civic action, military aid and economic stabilisation and development programmes, as well as diplomatic initiatives.² It was clear that Washington had little if any interest any longer in WNG itself. The task of putting the transition process into practice was to be left to the UN.

The signing of the New York Agreement gave the UN just six weeks in which to prepare for the task of taking over administrative control of the territory, a responsibility for which it had no previous experience to draw upon. It was therefore never possible for there to be any proper planning for the operation, or for there to be any clear idea of the role that the UN was supposed to play under the terms of the Agreement.

The first priority was to organise and set up a UN Security Force (UNSF), preferably to be in place before 1 October. Article VII of the Agreement stipulated that the role of this force was to supplement existing Papuan police in maintaining law and order on behalf of the UN administrator. The UN administrator would also have at his disposal the Papuan

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Volunteer Force, a military unit created in 1960 by the Dutch who had envisaged it as being “a good opportunity for the growing national consciousness to express itself and promote community feeling among the Papuans”.³ In reality, U Thant made clear privately that the UNSF should effectively take over the law and order responsibilities from the Dutch armed forces on 1 October.⁴

The Agreement also stipulated that the UNSF would incorporate all Indonesian armed forces already in the territory at the time of the ceasefire. While in practice the UN had little choice but to accept and legitimise the existing Indonesian military presence in WNG, it was a concession to Indonesia that would undermine, rather than strengthen, the UN’s ability to maintain law and order.

The UNSF might have been more acceptable to the West Papuans if it had been multinational, with black and/or non-Muslim countries contributing, but instead it was decided, almost certainly before the signing of the Agreement, to use solely Pakistani troops.

Initially, there was speculation in the press that U Thant would ask Malaya to provide the troops for the UNSF.⁵ In fact on 17 August, he wrote to Pakistan’s Permanent Representative at the UN requesting that his country provide a UNSF consisting of an infantry battalion and essential arms and services with a total strength of about 1,000 men.⁶ A week later U Thant was given a verbal reply assuring him that Pakistan would agree to his request.⁷

According to Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan, the Secretary-General’s Indian *chef de cabinet*, it was he who suggested to U Thant that Pakistani troops be used.⁸ Although he did not explain why, there were practical arguments against assembling a multinational force at such short notice. Writing in 1964 on legal aspects of UN practice, D. W. Bowett comments:

No doubt this almost exclusive reliance on the contingent from one state was due to the fact that it was estimated that about one battalion was all that was needed, and it would have led to unnecessary complications to accept small contingents from several states in order to make up the one battalion required.⁹

Furthermore, outside of the Western and Eastern Blocs, there were few countries capable of fulfilling the UN’s requirements at such short notice. In the event, Pakistan’s UNSF soldiers were to fulfil the difficult role assigned to them with a commendable degree of professionalism under very difficult circumstances.

Ceasefire

The first UN military personnel arrived in WNG on 20 August 1962 (with more following on 24 August). The advance team consisted of twenty-one

military observers (UNMO) led by O. W. Melin, a Swedish naval commander, who was transferred from UN duties in Israel/Palestine. U Thant's Indian military adviser, Brigadier Rikhye, overall head of the observer operation, accompanied him. Their responsibility was to observe implementation of the Agreement, particularly the ceasefire arrangements which came into force at 0001 GMT on 18 August.

It was a potentially dangerous assignment. Shortly before their arrival, angry Papuan police in Kaimana fired rifle shots into the air in reaction to the appearance of the first armed Indonesian paratroop officer. Despite being able to maintain order, it was still, according to one Dutch eyewitness, an explosive situation.¹⁰

The observers faced a possible crisis almost immediately. On the night of 21 August, fourteen Indonesian troops were landed by submarine in the vicinity of the capital Hollandia. The submarine (some reports spoke of two) was not attacked by the Dutch who instead illuminated it with flares and a searchlight until it withdrew shortly afterwards.¹¹ Following this, Brigadier Rikhye sent a telegram to U Thant describing this as the third violation of the Agreement by Indonesia.¹² A later investigation by the UNMO found full physical evidence to confirm that the incursion had occurred.¹³ As in previous such incidents, the operation was amateurish and the Dutch quickly apprehended five of the intruders whom they planned to repatriate on the basis that they had arrived illegally.

A unilateral decision by the Dutch to repatriate was seen as provocative by Under Secretary-General Jose Rolz-Bennett, the Guatemalan Special Representative of the Secretary-General in WNG. Instead he suggested to Brigadier Rikhye that he should endeavour to resolve the matter via consultation with the Indonesian and Dutch liaison teams.¹⁴ The Dutch conceded to this and the Indonesian authorities eventually agreed to have their personnel returned to Indonesia.¹⁵

The first job of the UNMO on arrival was to establish a series of observation posts at sites around the territory, including the nine garrison positions where most of the 12,000 Dutch troops were stationed. Four more UNMO were stationed in Jakarta. Plans were made for an air-drop of nine tons of Indonesian-language pamphlets. This, along with a series of radio transmissions, was designed to inform the estimated 800 to 1,000 Indonesian military personnel still at large that a ceasefire was in operation. The plan then was to choose a number of mutually acceptable sites where the Indonesian troops could gather and report to the UNMO.

The main source of Dutch intelligence on the Indonesian troops came from the Papuan police who had taken a leading role in rounding up at least 500 Indonesian infiltrators before the ceasefire. Their information suggested that the remaining Indonesian forces were deployed in six main areas, each being about 40 to 100 kilometres wide: 350 in the Merauke area; 250 in the Kaimama area; 75 in the Fak Fak area; 180 on the island of Miscol; 150 in the Sorong area and either 40 or 250 on the island of Waigo.¹⁶

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It soon became clear that Indonesia was incapable of resupplying these troops. Consequently, many who had evaded the Papuan police and Dutch army were in acute need of food and medical supplies. One Dutch colonial official later described his journeys around the Fak Fak area, locating Indonesian paratroopers who “gave themselves up willingly because they could not survive in the area”.¹⁷ In Brigadier Rikhye’s statement to the press on 10 October 1962, he described the UN’s serious humanitarian problem of supplying the Indonesian troops. He also added that: “Some supplies to meet emergency situations were arranged by the Netherlands forces. They also offered to take in for treatment all those seriously sick.”¹⁸ Dutch willingness to help was also mentioned by UNMO Commander Melin in his report to Rolz-Bennett:

The Netherlands authorities showed a constant preparedness to give every medical assistance, hospitalization included, to Indonesian soldiers in need of such, and to supply them with tentage and food from their own stores until re-supply from Indonesia was flown in some weeks later.¹⁹

It was a reality far removed from the version of events still adhered to by Jakarta, in which victorious Indonesian soldiers, hand in hand with their Papuan brothers, had fought and defeated the Dutch.

Indonesian suspicion of the Netherlands

Unsurprisingly, the UN encountered a deep mutual mistrust between the Dutch and Indonesian representatives. Sukarno took seriously the possibility that the Dutch would encourage Papuans to resist once they departed. In August, he told Rikhye that he suspected that the Dutch were distributing weapons and deliberately encouraging “elements opposed to Indonesia”.²⁰ He brought up the issue again with Rikhye in September when he declared that his main concern was the possibility of the Dutch leaving “time bombs” and “Westerling” types in the territory to create disorder.²¹ Rikhye replied that he believed the Dutch government was genuinely behind the Agreement but he assured Sukarno that UNSF was on alert and would deal with any incidents firmly.²²

Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio made U Thant personally aware of these concerns when he visited him in New York on 22 September. According to Narasimhan, Subandrio informed U Thant that he had information that lower echelon Dutch officials were arming Papuans and instructing them to start trouble as soon as UNTEA assumed control.

If such disturbances occurred the Foreign Minister felt that it would be difficult to hold back Indonesian army and leave the matter to be handled by UNSF exclusively.²³

Although Subandrio was in effect threatening the Secretary-General, Rikhye appeared to sympathise with him. Rikhye's impression of the Dutch colonial officials was that they were inflexible in their opinions and not in tune with home politics, views and interests. He reported to Narasimham that the efforts of the Dutch government to win the officials over to the Agreement had little impact.²⁴ Importantly, on 20 September he cabled U Thant:

Political activity has received considerable impetus lately from outgoing colonial power. Congress of political parties, continuous session NG Council and meetings between Dutch administrative officials and political leaders are decidedly contributing to tension. Administration has said little about UNTEA and generally Dutch controlled information media indicate void after 1 October. My request to Governor...to explain agreement has had little effect. Certain outgoing Dutch officials are complacently hoping for breakdown in law and order. It would be fair assumption that outgoing administration is contributing more to tension than any other single factor....UN must be prepared for certainly some breakdown in law and order.²⁵

Papuan reaction

Rikhye's belief that the Dutch had effectively stirred up this Papuan political activity ignored the impact that news of the Agreement would have had on Papuan activists. For the most part, the Agreement left them feeling confused, shocked and betrayed. Until the signing, the Dutch had insisted that their promise of genuine self-determination would be honoured. These Papuans did not need any encouragement from outgoing colonial officials to react as they did. The politically aware section of the population knew all too well that UNTEA and the transfer to Indonesia would entail fundamental changes to the way their country was run. Like all the other foreign decision-makers on the territory's future, Rikhye seemed unable to accept that the Papuans were capable of independent political thought. In public, however, he stated "The Papuans approached us with open minds and left us relieved."²⁶

In a heated debate that ended on 1 September, many members of the West New Guinea Council spoke out against the bill for ratification of the Agreement, which had been referred to the Council by the Dutch, although only for an advisory opinion. Nicholas Jouwe, the representative for Hollandia (who would later go into exile), said that they were being asked to sign their own "death warrants" but that there was no alternative to accepting it. He suggested that members should abstain, thereby giving no formal agreement. Markus Kaisiepo (who would also go into exile) was startled and angry with the terms of the settlement but blamed the Papuans themselves for their own lack of unity and concluded that they

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would now have to resign themselves to the results. Elizer Bonay, on the other hand, welcomed the Agreement and declared that the justified demands of the Papuans would be met under Indonesian rule (Bonay, a spokesman for Parna, the National Party, would become the territory's first post-UNTEA governor before being removed by the Indonesians in 1965). When the Council eventually voted, the bill was only supported by nine councillors and was therefore defeated. The chairman called for another vote, at which point half the councillors (including the five Dutch members) walked out. The remaining fourteen voted in favour by a margin of twelve to two.²⁷ Of the twenty-eight members, only thirteen would go on to swear an oath of allegiance to the incoming UNTEA administration.²⁸

Two weeks after the Council's vote, a "Papuan National Congress" (one of the events described by Rikhye as contributing to the tension) was organised by Nicholas Tanggahma, the Council member for Fak Fak, and Herman Wajoi (leader of Parna, a party which favoured eventual Papuan independence while remaining friendly with Indonesia). The Congress brought together about eighty Papuans of differing opinions from around the country to discuss the future in the light of the Agreement. At the end of the Congress on 19 September, a statement was drawn up accepting the Agreement as the only way to prevent a war, although a majority favoured holding a plebiscite during the UNTEA period. The delegates made clear that they saw UNTEA and Indonesian rule as periods of preparation for a plebiscite that would allow the people to "choose its own freedom in 1969". Furthermore the Congress expressed support for the continuing use of the Papuan flag and anthem. It also expressed a wish to send a delegation to Indonesia to explain its position. The Indonesians in turn agreed to invite some Council members including Tanggahma and M. Achmad, the representative for Kaimana.²⁹

Significantly, Kaimana, and Tanggahma's region of Fak Fak contained numbers of pro-Indonesian Papuan Moslems and Indonesian settlers who apparently had little contact with the rest of the civilian population.³⁰ Tanggahma remained sceptical of Indonesian intentions following his visit, but Achmed returned in late October and began a campaign against UNTEA and the plebiscite in the Kaimana district, eventually sending in a petition asking for the end to UNTEA by 1 January 1963.

The Indonesians had chosen well in getting Achmed's support. He was the head of the Kaimana sub-district and the son of the local raja (traditional leader). Achmad would also become an UNTEA employee and use his position to intimidate the remaining Dutch UNTEA employees stationed in the area. Harold Luckham, UNTEA's Divisional Commissioner in the Fak Fak area, eventually warned him to stop these activities or resign. Luckham also contacted his UNTEA superiors in Hollandia to have Achmed removed, but according to him they refused.³¹

The West Papuan flag

The New Guinea Council had adopted the West Papuan “Morning Star” flag as the official flag of the territory on 1 December 1961. The flag was, and has remained, a powerful symbol of West Papuan nationalism, with its origins going back to the Korero nationalist movement in Biak prior to the Second World War. In turn, Korero had its origins in the belief that a liberator spirit called “Manseren” had taken on a human form in the 1860s and would one day return and free the Papuans.³² But to Rikhye, the Papuan flag was simply another Dutch-initiated tactic for raising the political temperature. On 2 September he cabled Narisimhan from Hollandia to say that the flag was:

Flying over all government buildings and practically every Papuan house and abode. Governor and Netherlands officials indicate that Papuans would prove sensitive to removal. Colonel Papuan Corps said removal would cause trouble. Some Papuan councillors approached me saying their flag should be permitted by United Nations. Netherlands authorities encouraged Papuans flying flag during negotiations agreement. They should have informed us earlier question included for discussion under terms of agreement. All realise that agreement does not recognise Papuan flag and suggest it could be allowed as state or provincial flag.³³

Papuan leaders including New Guinea Council member Tanggahma who, along with Jouwe, Womsiwor and Kaisiepo, attended the UN debate on the Agreement, shared the view that the Dutch should have included the issue of the flag in negotiations and felt let down by the Dutch on this issue.³⁴

A few weeks later, Rolz-Bennett informed Narasimhan that he had discussed the question of the flag with Papuan leaders. He also reported that a mixed group of UN, Indonesian and Netherlands officials, which had recently visited most of the main population centres of the territory, found that in every place the issue of the flag was raised. A Papuan leader in Merauke had told one official in private that his people would fight if their flag was not hoisted along with the others when UNTEA took over.³⁵ From the beginning, however, the Indonesians made it clear that they would not tolerate this symbol of Papuan nationalism and Antara, Indonesia’s official news agency, published a series of warnings on the subject in early October:

New York October 2...The Indonesian flag will be hoisted on Dec 31, 1962, side by side with the UN flag. Any effort to fly the so-called “Papuan Flag” is illegal and a violation of the agreement and therefore cannot be tolerated.³⁶

The issue of flags, particularly the West Papuan one, was to continue to be a source of tension throughout the UNTEA period, and subsequently.

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Indonesian troops

For their part, the Dutch made frequent representations to the UNMO about Indonesia's reluctance to assemble its troops as agreed.³⁷ Melin did not see this as a major problem but the behaviour of Indonesian troops remained a matter of concern for the Dutch, particularly in the area around the border town of Merauke.

Indonesian forces had first arrived in the area in mid-1962 when 200 paratroopers were dropped in. According to the Australians:

Three who crossed the border [into Papua and New Guinea] were disarmed and sent back. Villagers generally attempted to avoid involvement and tended to refuse cooperation. Some assisted Dutch troops to hunt them down. The Dutch killed 13 Indonesians in Nassem village.³⁸

Following the ceasefire, there were accusations from Papuans that these paratroopers began a campaign of intimidation against the local inhabitants leading to increased tension in the area. In a telegram to Rolz-Bennett on 14 September, Rikhye relayed the complaints and appeals of locals:

Paratroopers at Koeperik near Merauke are persuading Papuans accept arms against Dutch. Also giving Indonesian flags and change of name Western Papua to Indonesia. Not acceptable to locals, force was used by paratroopers. Inhabitants of Jobar, Boeti and Spadim near Merauke have fled and those of Koeper gone astray. Permission required from Indonesian paratroopers for villagers to enter bush causing hunger.³⁹

However, when Harold Luckham, a British citizen working for UNTEA, arrived in Merauke at the end of September he found the paratroopers under good discipline and behaving well, "although later on in December discipline got laxer". Nonetheless, his assessment of local opinion towards the Indonesians suggested that relations between the two groups had, for whatever reason, been strained for some time before his arrival. This situation had been deemed serious enough to prompt UNTEA to post him there as soon as its administration began, apparently with the express purpose of not only preventing disorder, but also diffusing Papuan opposition to Indonesia. Arriving in Merauke on 30 September to take over from the Dutch Resident of South New Guinea, Luckham commented:

I was sent to Merauke as there was the possibility of trouble there. The Papuans of this division appeared more opposed to the Indonesian takeover than those of other divisions and threatened to resist by force, although they were in no position to do so. My brief was, therefore, to prevent trouble between the Papuans and Indonesians, trying to get them on better terms...the relevant point was really that the Papuans were united in their objections to Indonesian rule, sent petitions against

it to the UN and tried to organise demonstrations. We managed to keep them quiet, but there was a risk of incidents, which would have started rioting and worse.⁴⁰

In an attempt to get the Indonesian troops around Merauke moved and the rest relocated to agreed areas, the Dutch urged the Secretary-General to make a decision on the location of the sites. The Dutch agreed to Sorong, Fak Fak and Kaimana, but not Merauke. In support of this they informed Rolz-Bennett on 11 September that two tribes in the Merauke area who “wanted to see blood” were preparing to attack Indonesian paratroopers once UNTEA took over.⁴¹ Furthermore the Dutch claimed that Indonesian troops were spreading out in a circle around Merauke and arming the small local Indonesian population.⁴²

Eventually, however, the Dutch gave way and accepted Merauke as an area of concentration for Indonesian forces. In addition to Merauke, the Dutch warned of possible Papuan resistance to the Indonesians in the Central Highlands and reportedly sent an official to dissuade the locals. It was believed that the Highlanders had unpleasant memories of Japanese behaviour following the previous Dutch evacuation in 1942.⁴³

Following the UNTEA takeover, this final phase of Dutch/Indonesian negotiations was portrayed publicly by Rikhye in a positive light, understandably underlining the official UN position that, throughout, the organisation was proving itself to be an effective tool of conflict resolution:

Slowly the tension was ebbing out. The goodwill shown by the Netherlands authorities towards the Indonesian liaison team and the tactfulness on the part of the Indonesians was beginning to pay.⁴⁴

Once agreement had been reached, the process of repatriating the Indonesian detainees began. A total of 537, who had been held in two camps at Manokwari and on Woendi Island, were flown back to Indonesia in US Air Force C-130 aircraft. This operation was completed by 21 September.

Problems in recruiting UNTEA staff

As the start of the UNTEA period drew closer, the problem of recruiting sufficient personnel to serve in the territory became more obvious. On 4 October the *New York Times* reported:

At the moment there are only about 20 non-Indonesian members of the United Nations staff on hand, including secretaries and at least five information aides. The United Nations found it was impossible to get quickly enough skilled specialists willing to serve in a dreary climate on a job that would not last longer than several months.⁴⁵

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At the same time, Radio Australia quoted a UNTEA official in Hollandia as saying that the administration would collapse in three months unless sufficient staff could be found.⁴⁶

An official involved in recruiting personnel for UNTEA illustrated the authority's recruitment problem in a communication on 11 October to Charles Coates, a senior officer at the UN's Personnel Office in New York. Commenting upon the appointment of six Filipino police officers and nineteen patrol officers, the Manila-based UN official wrote that he was not happy about the "calibre" of the police officers: "However, this was a rush programme" and all but two of the candidates presented to them had been accepted.⁴⁷

In a report on 27 October by the Divisional Commissioner for South New Guinea, policing was described as one of the biggest headaches. He noted that although the three Filipino officers in his area were doing a good job, they were handicapped by a lack of knowledge of the Malay (Indonesian) language and by a failure of UNTEA to provide English/Malay interpreters.⁴⁸

Specifically, however, UNTEA had hoped to persuade enough Dutch officials to stay to enable a smooth transition. Within a week of the Agreement being signed, Rikhye had emphasised to U Thant the importance of retaining sufficient numbers of Dutch officers in the Papuan Volunteer Corps and the Papuan police. Following a visit to the Papuan Volunteer Corps at Manokwari, he telegraphed:

Dutch personnel consisting of 10 officers and 34 NCO's are due to leave. Perhaps some of them would agree to stay if offered better terms, similarly 200 Dutch police officers are planning to leave. If this situation allowed to develop UN would face an impossible task.⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, for the most part the Dutch declined UNTEA's offer. This was partly due to understandable concerns for their safety once the Agreement had been signed. On 17 August the British Embassy at The Hague reported:

there is some anxiety about the possible conduct of the Indonesian soldiers infiltrated into New Guinea....There does not seem to be much chance of persuading any large numbers of Dutch civil servants to stay on.⁵⁰

A month later, Britain's Embassy in The Hague was estimating that around 2,000 out of 2,500 Dutch officials were planning to leave by mid-October.⁵¹ In fact, by 1 October only 775 were left in the territory.⁵² Van der Veur summarised the problem in his critique of UNTEA:

The hurried exodus of Dutch officials compounded UNTEA's problems...[and] disrupted existing services at least temporarily. Indonesian

officials rapidly filled the vacuum and soon out-numbered the handful of United Nations personnel. This immediately jeopardised the development of an independent United Nations administration.⁵³

Australian reaction

Although Canberra had concluded by early 1962 that the Dutch position in New Guinea was no longer tenable, Jakarta's success was still a major setback for established Australian foreign policy. In private, Australia had done everything, short of offering military assistance, to keep the Dutch in place until a solution for New Guinea could be found that did not include an Indonesian takeover. Part of this policy had included the stationing of an Australian liaison officer in Hollandia and a Dutch counterpart in Port Moresby. With the Dutch leaving, Australia would need to rethink completely its cross-border cooperation policy, and this became a source of some disagreement within the government.

Garfield Barwick, Australia's External Affairs Minister at the time, had been the main driving force behind Australia's change of policy towards WNG in 1962. In a letter on 7 September to Paul Hasluck, Canberra's Minister for Territories, he outlined the problems Australia now faced, but cautioned abruptly terminating the existing liaison arrangements as this would:

enable the Indonesian Government to claim that Australia has demonstrated that our concern was less with the welfare of the indigenous inhabitants of West New Guinea and more with keeping the colonist Dutch there.⁵⁴

Hasluck, however, appeared to favour a more rapid termination of the arrangement. In a minute to his officials on 17 September 1962 he commented:

The circumstances in which administrative co-operation with West New Guinea was an advantage to our administration of East New Guinea have completely disappeared and indeed we have to watch closely a situation in which too ready and too active co-operation with Indonesia will damage the confidence of our own people in our own Administration...we should ease ourselves out of administrative co-operation arrangements.⁵⁵

UN General Assembly debate, September 1962

International reaction to the transition was limited to a vote on a Dutch/Indonesian resolution on the Agreement by the UN General Assembly on 21 September. It was adopted by eighty-nine votes to none

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with fourteen abstentions. The group abstaining was made up of France and a number of francophone African countries. There had been a plan by these countries to submit an amendment, or to vote against the resolution, since, as the Senegalese President commented to British diplomats shortly beforehand, there was much resentment over “Negro Papuans” being handed over to Indonesia.⁵⁶ Dahomey, one of the countries which eventually abstained, explained its position following the vote:

my Government cannot endorse arrangements whereby a people of 700,000 is transferred from one power to another under a bilateral treaty concluded without previous consultation with the party chiefly concerned, the Papuan people.⁵⁷

In addition Mr Zollner, the Dahomey representative, drew attention to a crucial and deliberate omission in the Agreement and commented prophetically:

Much has been said on the subject of self-determination; but when we peruse this Agreement, what do we see in the articles dealing with self-determination? Not once – I repeat, not once – do we find in the text any mention of a “referendum”, the most normal, the most usual and the most objective form of public expression of opinion. The most precise formula we find is the vague one of “the freely expressed will of the population”, without any indication of how that will is to be expressed. That is left entirely to the discretion of the councils, which are described as “representative” without the slightest definition of the manner in which they are to be appointed....The actual public expression of opinion will be organized entirely by the party which has the greatest interest in the yielding of results that are favourable to it.⁵⁸

Despite this African disquiet, there was little interest from other states in the fate of the Papuans once the Agreement had been reached. Most were now only concerned in ensuring that the brief UNTEA period would allow some veneer of respectability to accompany the eventual transfer to Indonesia. For this to be possible, UN officials preparing for UNTEA knew that it would be the Indonesians, rather than the Dutch or Papuans, they were going to have to collaborate with.

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The first weeks of UNTEA

A few days before UNTEA assumed control of WNG, the New Guinea Council held a special meeting to bid farewell to Dr Pieter Johannes Platteel, the territory's Dutch Governor. In a brief speech to them Platteel advised that by supporting UNTEA they would be defending on "solid grounds" the rights which the Agreement had recognised.¹

At the same time, the Indonesians were making it clear to UNTEA that they expected to play a key role in administering the territory from the very beginning. In a memorandum on 28 September 1962, the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Department outlined proposals for cooperation between itself and UNTEA that it claimed were based upon recent discussions held with Rikhye and U Thant. Specifically Indonesia asserted that it had already arranged to meet all UNTEA requirements in the fields of security, administration, economy, education and social work. Furthermore:

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia is prepared to supply all essentials for the daily life of the people in West Irian after the second week of October. The first two weeks of October are needed to collect all the data in this field.²

Significantly, the Indonesians also informed UNTEA that, at the request of "political leaders, missionary leaders and business people of West Irian", they intended to provide "leadership" for the Papuans, to guide and direct them throughout the UNTEA period.³

Jakarta justified this by pointing out that the Dutch had done nothing to inform the Papuans about the Agreement or UNTEA. This was true, but they would have had little opportunity to achieve much in the six weeks available before UNTEA's commencement. However, Indonesia's self-assigned role was not an agreed part of the New York Agreement and if senior UN officials had, as claimed, accepted Jakarta's proposals, they would have been undermining their own administration's authority in advance. In reality, the Indonesians were able to provide neither the

finances nor the skilled manpower necessary to fulfil their obligations to UNTEA. In late November, Rolz-Bennett noted to U Thant that a request made several weeks previously by UNTEA for Jakarta to provide over 200 officials had still not been met.⁴ In the same communication, Rolz-Bennett continued:

taking into account financial difficulties being experienced by Indonesian Government to meet their costs of UNTEA and if you approve, I would discuss with Netherlands Government...whether [it] would be agreeable to meet half the cost of subsistence payments to Indonesian troops in WNG as part of UNSF expenses. Question of supplies of perishable foodstuffs by UNTEA to Indonesian troops will probably also arise.⁵

It appeared then that two months after the start of UNTEA, Indonesia was still unable to feed or pay for its own troops, relying instead on the UN and the Dutch to foot the bill.

For Rolz-Bennett, who assumed the role of UNTEA's Temporary Administrator following Plateel's departure, the first weeks of the new administration were dominated by the practicalities of replacing the Dutch administration with minimum disruption. The main contingent of Pakistani troops could not arrive until 7 October and this posed an immediate security problem for UNTEA.

In particular, a reduction of Dutch-led police patrols in the Baliem Valley was followed by press reports of tribal uprisings at the beginning of October. UNTEA's own report described the situation as more of a localised inter-village dispute but the disturbances were considered serious enough to warrant personal visits to the area by Rolz-Bennett, his Chief of Police and the UNSF Commander. However, by 6 October the area was reportedly quiet again.⁶

In the last few days of Dutch rule, Rolz-Bennett informed Narasimhan of a number of disturbances in the capital, Hollandia. On 27 September, Dutch citizens at a cinema were terrified when a group of drunken Papuans burst in brandishing bottles and fighting amongst themselves. The next evening a fire destroyed the Hollandia Yacht Club, the only exclusive Dutch club in the town. This was thought by the Acting Dutch Governor to be the work of disgruntled members who did not want to leave the club for the Indonesians.⁷

In the same report, Rolz-Bennett made clear that he was greatly concerned about general security in the town during the handover period because, until the Pakistani troops arrived, responsibility for maintaining order would lie mainly with the Papuan police force. Rolz-Bennett then related how a noisy Papuan drunk had disrupted Governor Plateel's departure from the airport on 28 September for approximately forty-five minutes while the local police stood by doing nothing.⁸

He also complained that the Acting Governor had refused his request that the broadcasting station be guarded until UNTEA could take it over. He was told that the police lacked the numbers and capability necessary to carry out the task. In conclusion, Rolz-Bennett made clear: “[Brigadier and head of Pakistan’s UNSF contingent] Said and I regard Papuan police as helpless and ineffective, meanwhile on 1 October before arrival bulk of UNSF we are left with very little.”⁹

Unsurprisingly, many Dutch UNTEA officials felt that the situation in the territory had deteriorated as soon as the new administration took over. Hank Metzler, the senior Dutch UNTEA official, decided to leave in late November. In a conversation with J. E. Gray of the Australian Liaison Office in Hollandia, he claimed that the territory’s whole administrative machinery was grinding to a halt with the rapid replacement of experienced Dutch personnel by UN staff ill-prepared for administering a backward colonial territory. He also declared that unemployment was growing as businesses pulled out. Specifically he described how UNTEA’s Department of Economic Affairs was in a state of utter confusion under the leadership of a New Zealander called Hill who, he judged, knew nothing of the territory’s economic situation.¹⁰

Metzler was also scathingly critical of his fellow Dutchman Rozenboom who had been Deputy Chief of Economic Affairs in the colonial administration and now fulfilled a similar function with UNTEA. Metzler dismissed him as an unimpressive buffoon and seemed to suggest that most of the dwindling number of Dutch officials who had chosen to stay on were less competent than their colleagues who were leaving. More importantly, he accused the UNTEA administration at the policy-making level of making it patently clear that it had a deep distrust of its Dutch employees, which did little to encourage them to stay.¹¹ While recognising that Metzler’s was a partisan view, Gray nonetheless believed that his attitude was a cause for concern, and in the conclusion to his report of the conversation, painted a very negative picture for his superiors of the first weeks of the UNTEA administration:

It is undoubtedly true that the UNTEA administration is lacking in the requisite experience called for in running this territory and that there is a marked division of opinion on the implementation of the Netherlands/Indonesian Agreement between the career U.N. officials and some of the temporary administrators, some of whom are former British Colonial officials....The UNTEA administration is undeniably suffering from lack of cohesion and lack of informed guidance from headquarters in Hollandia, as well as from a grave dearth of capable junior executives and clerical staff. This causes acrimonious accusations and counter accusations and the development of personal feuds, which inevitably leads to a further lowering of efficiency and professional frustration.¹²

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Birch, Gray's superior at the Hollandia Liaison Office, shared his pessimism of UNTEA's performance. In a conversation with British officials during a Christmas visit to Canberra, he stated that the administration was struggling along but had been greatly hampered by a lack of personnel to translate the territory's Dutch-language files and records. He also commented that the Papuans did not seem competent to take over from those Dutch who had vacated their posts, while all the Indonesians serving in Hollandia were horrified at what they had let themselves in for, and were doing everything to prevent their permanent stationing in the territory.¹³

It is not surprising that Australian officials in New Guinea held such a low opinion of UNTEA, which many viewed as an organisation more sympathetic to Indonesia than the Netherlands. Most would also have deeply regretted the departure of the Dutch and had serious concerns about the prospect of sharing a border with Indonesia. But although prejudiced, these Australian reports can give at least some insight into the first few months of UNTEA's administration and in general they seem to be supported by most internal reports made by UNTEA officials themselves.

In his letter to the Foreign Office in August 1963, Harold Luckham described the situation in Fak Fak where he arrived as UNTEA's Divisional Commissioner in late October 1962. In his opinion, relations between Papuans and Indonesians were on the surface easier than they had been in Merauke.¹⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Luckham explained that the Fak Fak region was unusual in that it had established links with Indonesia and contained a community of Indonesian settlers as well as some Muslim Papuan villages. However, he also saw this situation as a possible cause for concern because while these people were pro-Indonesian, the bulk of the population were actively hostile to Indonesia:

I have mentioned this to make it clear that Indonesian agitation against the UNTEA and the plebiscite would not merely be in direct breach of the Agreement, but would also run the risk of causing serious trouble and making it difficult for the UN authorities to keep the peace and implement the UN side of the bargain.¹⁵

In Merauke, Divisional Commissioner Wilson submitted a generally upbeat assessment of the situation to 27 October. Administratively, things were under control and there were no significant shortages of commodities, although those with money were sending it out of the country and the purchasing power of small traders, particularly the Chinese, had diminished. As for the Papuans, Wilson remarked: "Plenty of work and hence income, is one of the best guarantees against internal disturbances."¹⁶ He had praise for the Pakistani troops and the excellent liaison that existed between them, the police, the Indonesian military and himself. The behaviour of the Indonesian troops was also praised, though their presence caused "much

heart-searching amongst the Papuans".¹⁷ In his conclusion, however, he had a warning about the coming months:

it is not administrative problems which are so important, we can get along somehow. The more important problem is the apparent hardening attitude of Papuans against the Agreement.¹⁸

Indonesia's Campaign against the UNTEA and PNG

Into this vulnerable situation a further serious threat to UNTEA's stability was deliberately introduced by one of the central players in the Agreement. Within weeks of UNTEA's arrival, Indonesia began campaigning, first for the authority's early withdrawal, and second for the abandonment of any plans for an eventual "act of self-determination". On 1 November, Rolz-Bennett reported to U Thant that rumours and statements had begun circulating in the territory as well as in Jakarta and Holland that UNTEA was going to transfer control to Indonesia on 1 January 1963.¹⁹

At this stage it seemed that the Indonesian tactic was to highlight statements by other supporters of this move. Seventeen members of the West New Guinea Council visited Jakarta in November and December where they were given prominent coverage in the Indonesian press for expressing these sentiments, as were reports made in the Dutch Socialist weekly *Het Vrije*, which criticised UNTEA and claimed that the Indonesians could better meet the Papuans' needs. Uncertain of Jakarta's motives, Rolz-Bennett speculated on whether this campaign was linked to Indonesian difficulties in meeting its share of UNTEA's costs.²⁰ Whatever the reasons, Henderson noted in his book:

After UNTEA took over...the political climate changed dramatically. The shield of Dutch benevolence was suddenly removed....For those who remained, Jakarta quickly brought to bear the instrumentalities of coercion and cajolement to force a sea change in their expression of Papuan sentiment. Unhappily, the UN interim administration proved an indifferent champion of Papuan liberties. By November, the New Guinea Council was dutifully calling for an abbreviation of the UNTEA phase and a speedier transfer to Indonesia.²¹

Paul Van der Veur, who spent some time in the territory during the UNTEA period, also remarked:

Papuan delegates who were hustled to Djakarta on expense-paid trips quickly experienced the facts of political life. Taken from one event to another, dined, flattered, pressured, and (if necessary) intimidated, those who did not succumb to Indonesian wishes were few

indeed...[pro-Indonesian] resolutions...signed by leaders speaking in the name of all the people of their areas, mysteriously began to spring up simultaneously all over the territory of West Irian.²²

What is certain is that Indonesia was still, even at this stage, clearly intent on winning yet more concessions over WNG, despite having already achieved virtually all its goals.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio raised the subject with the Iranian Djalal Abdoh within a week of the latter taking over from Rolz-Bennett as UNTEA administrator on 15 November. Subandrio suggested that new developments in the territory, such as increasing unemployment, altered the situation and made a speedy integration of West Irian into Indonesia the best way of facilitating reconstruction and rehabilitation. In support of his position, he cited pro-Indonesian statements recently made by visiting Papuan “leaders” in Jakarta and recommended that the UN and the Netherlands should pay the “greatest attention to the wishes of the population”²³

Abdoh gave an ambiguous response. First of all he said that UNTEA had to operate according to the terms of the Agreement ratified by the UNGA and could not therefore withdraw before 1 May 1963. However, he then suggested that any changes to the Agreement would have to be agreed by all parties concerned. He therefore urged that they re-establish diplomatic relations with the Dutch as a pre-condition to “negotiating” their recommendations. Subandrio agreed to this and asked that U Thant be informed that Jakarta would comply as soon as all Dutch forces had departed from the territory.²⁴ In his communications to U Thant, however, Abdoh was clear that there should be no shortening of the UNTEA period. In a letter to the Secretary-General on 13 December he commented upon Jakarta’s campaign:

Early in November there were definite indications from Djakarta about the intention to advance the date of the transfer of administration from UNTEA to Indonesia. Since then we have received a spate of statements and resolutions emanating from various elements of the local leadership claiming to speak on behalf of substantial sections of the urban population. It is unlikely that this sudden spurt of political activity amongst the so-called “Papuan Intelligentsia” has any roots in the territory; in all probability it has been inspired, if not engineered, from interested quarters....My own conclusion from a study of the situation is that any proposal for transfer of authority to Indonesia early in January 1963 is completely impracticable.²⁵

Rolz-Bennett shared Abdoh’s conclusions. Shortly after completing his term as temporary administrator for the territory, he cabled U Thant suggesting that the Secretary-General address a diplomatically worded private letter to

Sukarno in support of maintaining the 1 May 1963 date for transfer to Indonesia:

His attention could be drawn to the political, administrative and practical advantages of keeping to the agreed timetable and to the damage to Indonesia's prestige which would be caused by forcing a change in the Agreement as such a move may give rise to doubts, however unfounded, about Indonesia's faithful compliance with agreement as a whole. Doubts would also arise about spontaneous nature of appeals by certain WNG leaders for earlier transfer, as it is a well-known fact that such leaders were recently on an extended visit to Djakarta.²⁶

As an incentive to Sukarno, Rolz-Bennett also suggested that U Thant assure the President that UNTEA's recruitment of Indonesian officials was proceeding well and that the administration was about to submit plans to Jakarta for an overall phased recruitment of Indonesian officials which would ensure an almost automatic changeover by 1 May.²⁷ This suggestion was a further important concession to Indonesia, since the Agreement simply said that Phase One of UNTEA would end on 1 May 1963, after which the second phase would begin. The second phase was to last for an indeterminate period, during which the administrator could transfer all, or part, of the administration to Indonesia whenever he saw fit. Since the Agreement also stated that the "freely expressed will of the population" had to be ascertained before 1969, then theoretically at least, UNTEA could have remained until this had taken place.²⁸ Instead it confirmed to Indonesia five and a half months before the end of Phase One that there would in practice be no Phase Two.

Nonetheless, it was the deliberately vague and contradictory nature of the whole New York settlement that facilitated these fundamental concessions to Jakarta. Commenting on the transfer date, Markin reveals how it had already been settled four months previously during the Dutch/Indonesian negotiations:

By shifting this responsibility [for the transfer date] to the United Nations, Netherlands officials hoped to avoid public criticism for having succumbed to Jakarta's demand for accelerated transfer. The Indonesians, in turn, were satisfied because they received an oral assurance from the Dutch delegation that transfer would not only commence, but also conclude, on May 1.²⁹

The reference to a supposed Phase Two was therefore simply a small concession to the Dutch. This makes it more understandable that only two brief references to a second phase are made in the Agreement, and one of these seems to make little sense. Article XIII declares that the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) will be replaced by Indonesian security forces after the

first phase, inferring that UNSF will depart, leaving UNTEA's security for Phase Two in the hands of Indonesian-controlled forces. In the next sentence, however, it states that UNSF will withdraw upon transfer of administration to Indonesia. These two conflicting statements can only make sense if the understanding was that the end of Phase One and the transfer to Indonesia were to take place at the same time, which of course is what happened.

UNTEA Divisional Commissioners' attitudes towards the Indonesian campaign

Many senior UNTEA officials thought, initially at least, that they should be allowed to function for the agreed seven months and then leave. It surprised and rather disturbed them to find Jakarta so quick to challenge this. What was being proposed was a clear breach of the Agreement and not just a further concession. This may explain why, in the end, UNTEA was uncharacteristically firm on the matter. Nonetheless, on 1 December, these senior officials were asked confidentially by D. A. Sommerville, UNTEA's Director of Internal Affairs, to assess the practicalities of abandoning promises of a plebiscite and withdrawing earlier if this became necessary. Owing to poor communications, the report by Fak Fak Divisional Commissioner Luckham was not received, but the others were.

G. Carter, Commissioner of the Central Highlands, replied that while most tribal people were unconcerned whether the date of transfer was accelerated or delayed, the prestige of UNTEA in the eyes of the local population generally would still suffer if Indonesia took over before 1 May. On the subject of the plebiscite he was firm that it should be maintained.³⁰ Somerville himself, and Mo Myit, Hollandia's Divisional Commissioner, believed that an early withdrawal by UNTEA could be achieved without any local dissatisfaction, whereas any wavering on the issue of a plebiscite would be seen as a gross breach of faith.³¹

Manokwari Commissioner Peter Cameron declared that UNTEA's premature departure would be seen locally as an indication that the Agreement was dead. In his conversations with politically active urban Papuans, the main feeling was that UNTEA should not leave early. However, he qualified this by saying that a growing minority of Papuans believed that UNTEA was a delaying factor and an obstacle to direct contact between the locals and the Indonesians. He concluded:

Pressure for an early ending to UNTEA is going to increase and intensify. From January onwards it is going to be increasingly difficult to administer this territory without full co-operation of Indonesia, by February it will be impossible. In the circumstances we must get that co-operation by showing that, subject to international agreement of the parties concerned, we are willing to hand over administration as soon as

Indonesia is ready to administer. Present indications are that this will be towards the latter half of February.³²

James Robertson, UNTEA's Chief of Police, seemed more convinced than the Divisional Commissioners by the pro-Indonesian campaign. In his report, he declared that there was no doubt in his mind that if the Indonesians took over before 1 May, the Papuans would welcome them, although not perhaps "with open arms".³³

The Divisional Commissioner for Merauke was an Australian called D. Wilson who, according to a Dutch subordinate, was capable, honest, open-minded and congenial, with a wonderful sense of humour.³⁴ He was also blunt in his response to Sommerville's enquiries. On the plebiscite, he predicted that once Indonesia was in charge it would be a simple matter for it to coerce enough Papuans to declare a plebiscite unnecessary, or to have a vote in which 99 per cent were in favour of remaining with Indonesia. He commented that although the Papuans no longer trusted the Dutch or the Indonesians, they still had a "pathetic trust" in UNTEA which they regarded as their "last hope". Any change to the Agreement would, he suggested, make relations with the Papuans difficult for UNTEA and he advised against it, although he added:

if the date is advanced or if the Agreement is changed doing away with a plebiscite, I do not expect widespread disturbances because we have sufficient forces to control the situation – a whiff of grapeshot can easily control the situation if that is what UNTEA wants.³⁵

Finally, G. Rawlings, Commissioner for Biak, was equally blunt. He stated that Indonesian efforts at fabricating evidence in favour of an early end to UNTEA and the abandonment of the plebiscite were well known. In his view, genuine opinion was far better reflected by the Regional Biak–Numfor Council that, under the Dutch, had been elected by all adults in his area. "There can be no serious honest doubt that nationalist feelings and resentment against the Indonesians is quite general in that area, and particularly strong amongst the Papuan Police of Biak."³⁶

Members of the Biak–Numfor Council had drafted a strongly worded resolution on 2 December, refuting the statements of the New Guinea Council members in Jakarta, which they claimed had been coerced. Furthermore, they expressed concern at the suppression of political freedoms, even under UNTEA, and declared that the UN was removing WNG from Western colonialism only to hand it over to "an Eastern Republic which is even more ruthless a colonial power".³⁷ Instead, they called for a free plebiscite to take place in 1964 under UN auspices. Copies of the resolution were then sent to U Thant, Abdoh and various groups including the Brazzaville group of African nations at the UN.

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Rawlings' sympathy was obviously with the Biak Regional Council and he was dismissive of pro-Indonesian Papuans:

I have yet to meet any thinking, sober, generally responsible Papuan who sees good in the coming link with Indonesia. The supporters of Indonesia whom I have met or observed have seemed to be hopeful, willing dupes without a seriously thought out idea in their heads, and no case to state against the arguments of the leaders of the Regional Council.³⁸

Rawlings also reported that the Indonesians dismissed anti-Indonesian hostility as being orchestrated by Dutch UNTEA members. They further suggested that Rawlings' own presence was the only reason that Papuan resistance to Indonesia existed in his area. For his part, Rawlings predicted that the Indonesians' ruthlessness would result in growing Papuan hatred of them. He also predicted that increasing Indonesian troop and police involvement in suppressing anti-Indonesian demonstrators would result in a general collapse of the administration as Papuan staff refused to work or cooperate:

Unwelcome as the anxiety and resistance of thinking Papuans may be it is of course hardly surprising if one is not under pressure to close one's eyes to what is in fact happening to this people at the hands of the three parties to the Agreement.³⁹

Like his colleagues in other divisions, Rawlings advised against any abandonment of the plebiscite promise. However, with regard to UNTEA's length of mission, he believed that its own interests would be best served by leaving as soon as possible. To this end he made the rather cynical comment that it was unfortunate that, so far, none of the pro-Indonesians he had met had proposed an early end to UNTEA. Nonetheless, in due course he was sure that they would blindly support any line put out by the Indonesian Mission. In conclusion, Rawlings advice was that the Papuans would need to be let down slowly, if they were not "to explode":

That there will ultimately be quite serious resistance to the Indonesians is, I think certain...therefore...from the point of view of expediency it behoves the UNTEA to depart as soon as the Indonesians are in fact thick enough on the ground to make acceptable UNTEA administration impossible. At the present pace that is likely to be well before May 1st.⁴⁰

Early acceptance by most of the Divisional Commissioners that UNTEA could withdraw before May was indicative of the mood of uncertainty within the administration and the UN Secretariat over their capacity to resist Indonesian efforts to undermine their mission. In late November, UNTEA Administrator Abdoh had urged Narasimhan to inform U Thant

of the need to end uncertainty in the territory about UNTEA's future. If they were to depart early, then he believed that this should be announced as soon as possible. If there was to be no shortening of UNTEA, then U Thant should use his authority to make this very clear to the Indonesians and urge them to end their campaign.⁴¹ Two weeks later, he wrote to the Secretary-General informing him that there had already been sporadic incidents engineered by Indonesian troops to destabilise the smooth running of the administration. He warned that if this continued, he would have to use UNSF to confine the Indonesians to barracks, and that if they resisted, serious clashes would occur.⁴² Furthermore, he stated that UNTEA would continue to do its utmost to assert its authority at all times, even though, by mid-February, the bulk of UNTEA's 600 staff would be Indonesians "who would owe their allegiance to Indonesia rather than UNTEA".⁴³ Aware of possible Papuan unrest against UNTEA, he made it clear that if the decision was made to alter the Agreement, he wanted permission to inform the Papuans that this was an Indonesian/Dutch decision without any involvement by the UN. To conclude, he made an appeal to U Thant:

I am confident, Mr. Secretary-General, that you would wish to use your own influence and the prestige of your high office to persuade the Government of Indonesia, at the highest level, to offer its co-operation to UNTEA, fully and without any reservations, and thereby enable the United Nations to fulfil its solemn obligations under the terms of the present agreement.⁴⁴

An insight into the methods used by Indonesia in its campaign are revealed in a letter written by Van Diest, the head of the police branch of the Indonesian UNTEA Mission at Hollandia. In Fak Fak, Divisional Commissioner Luckham obtained a copy of this letter, sent to all the Indonesian Police Commissioners throughout the territory. Dated 18 December, it was accompanied by copies of statements allegedly made by Papuan police officers in favour of an early withdrawal of UNTEA and an abandonment of any plebiscite. There were also copies of pro-Indonesian speeches and other propaganda. The accompanying instructions in the letter for the Indonesian Police Commissioners stated:

copies should be distributed to all the members of the police under your command...the next task is to do all possible to convince the people and make them realise the truthfulness of those ideas and to get them to act parallel to the general policy of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and to come to a decision that the period of the transitional government of UNTEA should be shortened and the plebiscite planned for 1969 should be considered unnecessary. To achieve this you should act with discretion to the utmost of your powers.⁴⁵

Luckham commented quite correctly that, as an UNTEA employee, Van Diest had no right whatsoever to obey political instructions from Jakarta, although he understood that it would be difficult for him to do otherwise. Luckham immediately sent copies of this letter to Sommerville in Hollandia and to the commanding officer of the Pakistani company in Fak Fak, but he claimed to have had no response back.⁴⁶

1 December Papuan march banned by UNRDA

Indonesia's deliberate policy to undermine UNTEA undoubtedly played a major part in raising tensions in the territory. Papuan nationalists were as aware as UNTEA of the extent of Jakarta's campaign. For those who had seen the UN presence as the last opportunity to exercise genuine self-determination, the apparent weakening of UNTEA's grip was a cause for growing despondency.

A focus for the rising tension between Papuan nationalists and the Indonesians was a plan by the Papuan DVP (Democratic People's Party) to organise a peaceful march on 1 December. This was the first anniversary of the official naming of West Papua and hoisting of the Papuan flag and the march was intended to celebrate this and the promise of self-determination. UNTEA Police Headquarters in Hollandia came to know of the details through a source described as "influential in Papuan circles". UNTEA Chief of Police Robertson explained to the informer that such a procession would attract counter-demonstrations and claimed that it would almost certainly be banned by UNTEA who would use the police to enforce this. The informer replied that he would do his best to persuade the procession's organisers to call it off.⁴⁷

The opinion of D. Vickers, UNTEA's legal adviser, was that the discretion to grant or refuse permission for such processions was not covered by existing law in the territory. His advice was to make it clear to the organisers that any "undesired consequences" should be avoided by modifying their proposals in advance if necessary. These "undesired consequences" were possible outbreaks of violence caused by Indonesian-organised counter-demonstrations. Avoidance of this would prevent UNTEA being compelled to ban the procession or intervene to maintain order.

Although I do not suggest that UNTEA should curtail in any way the political liberty or individual freedom of expression of the population, I believe that it would be in the interests of the latter that the sponsors of such a procession should be made fully aware in advance of UNTEA's position and of the probable consequences of their action.⁴⁸

It seems therefore that Vickers was sufficiently concerned about the possibility of Indonesian-inspired disruption that he felt it desirable to persuade the procession organisers to "modify their proposals" which, in the case of a

peaceful procession, could only really mean calling it off. Consequently, despite his claim to the contrary, Vickers was suggesting a curtailment of Papuan rights of expression, which he apparently considered less important than UNTEA's aim of leaving the territory without any awkward incidents of major public dissent. This goal was to be a central feature of UNTEA's overall policy in WNG.

Vickers' advice seems to have been followed. On 22 November, Robertson met two senior Papuan policemen, Womsinor and Sarwon. He discussed the consequences of the procession taking place, the threat of anti-nationalists provoking trouble and holding bigger and better organised processions. Womsinor responded that he was doing all he could to get it cancelled, but that Indonesian military harassment of Papuans was making his job impossible. He even warned that major uprisings were possible if this harassment continued. However, with regard to 1 December, Womsinor still felt that the marchers might be persuaded not to bring Papuan flags with them.⁴⁹

Four days later, Robertson's "reliable Papuan source" reported on the conclusions of a meeting by nineteen Regional Council members. These men, who were the procession's unofficial organisers, decided that with or without a permit, a peaceful procession with Papuan flags and "UNTEA must stay till May" placards would go ahead on 1 December. Robertson advised UNTEA that a permit should be given if asked for.⁵⁰ His informer also commented that the underlying reasons for the discontent were the people's anger at the pro-Indonesian declarations of the West New Guinea Councillors in Jakarta, and the continuing interference by Indonesian troops in their daily lives.⁵¹ A mere two days later the informer reported that interest in the procession had dwindled and that if it went ahead it "will not amount to much".⁵²

For its part, Indonesia took the threat of this nationalist Papuan procession very seriously. Arnold Runteboy, its main organiser, flew to Jakarta on about 17 November, following an invitation from the Indonesians. Unless their intelligence was better than UNTEA's, this invitation would have been made soon after news of the planned procession reached them.⁵³ They also shared access to Robertson's "source", who informed the police chief that Indonesian intelligence officers had also been asking him to use his alleged influence to get the procession called off.⁵⁴ A few days later, Robertson reported that Indonesian intelligence were very active in the Hollandia area, contacting Papuans who "mattered" and building up friendly relations.

Finally, when it seemed that pressure on the Papuans by both UNTEA and Indonesia was not going to be sufficient to prevent the procession, Jakarta turned its attention to U Thant. In a cable on 1 December, the UN representative in Jakarta relayed a message on behalf of Subandrio to the Secretary-General. Subandrio stated that he was aware of the proposed Papuan procession, which he claimed was organised by certain "Dutch colonialist diehards". He had also been informed that although Abdoh had tried to persuade the organisers to call it off, he did not wish to prohibit it. In the

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light of this information, he wished U Thant to know that both Sukarno and Subandrio were greatly concerned about the consequences of such demonstrations:

If these anti-Indonesian demonstrations are permitted by UNTEA, pro-Indonesian West Irianese will also demonstrate, which may lead to physical clashes. In event of such disturbances Indonesian troops in territory will protect legitimate Indonesian interests. As of tonight Indonesian troops will be alerted to such eventuality. In these circumstances Republic of Indonesia may abandon its earlier intention to resume diplomatic relations with Netherlands...such demonstrations should be prohibited in the interests of all parties.⁵⁵

It was a direct threat of violence from the Indonesian Foreign Minister to the UN Secretary-General and it illustrated vividly the extent to which Jakarta was prepared to go to prevent any expressions of Papuan dissent, even while UNTEA was still in charge.

The New York Agreement is unambiguous on the issue of Papuan rights, particularly during the UNTEA period:

The UNTEA and Indonesia will guarantee fully the rights, including the rights of free speech, freedom of movement and of assembly, of the inhabitants of the area.⁵⁶

If the UN was to fulfil its responsibilities in this regard then it had little choice but to allow the procession to take place. In fact, despite assuring the Papuan leaders that a permit would be issued, at the last moment UNTEA refused to do so. At the time, Somerville's official explanation was that the "more responsible leaders" of the procession had agreed to call it off after being persuaded that it would have led to bloodshed due to "other political elements in the population also demonstrating".⁵⁷ A more accurate summary of events was confidentially cabled to Abdoh by Robertson:

Long discussions took place between the Chief of Police and Papuan leaders, and arrangements were in hand to issue a permit for the procession which would have been adequately protected from interference by other elements, but at the eleventh hour information was received by the police that a counter-demonstration was being planned and in view of this, no permit to either side was in fact issued.⁵⁸

Van der Veur later remarked that Robertson "understated the case" when he described the agreement to abandon the procession by the "more responsible" leaders: "These leaders were told in no uncertain terms that if they proceeded with the demonstration the Pakistani contingent of the United Nations security force would be used if necessary."⁵⁹

In the event, no procession took place on 1 December, although Papuan flags appeared on official buildings and leaflets supporting UNTEA and the right to a plebiscite were widely distributed throughout Hollandia the night before. To Robertson, it illustrated that the Papuans were unlikely to offer much resistance when transferred to Indonesia and would obey all “lawful” orders if properly explained: “they are more than prepared to settle down with the Indos. in the hope and belief that they will have the opportunity in 1969 to decide their own future”.⁶⁰

However, there were some disturbances in the Hollandia area on 1 December between pro- and anti-Indonesian Papuans, mainly centred around the activities of Martin Indey, a well-known pro-Indonesian Papuan. At 9 a.m. some Papuans in a vehicle stopped a group of Indey’s Papuan supporters, who were on foot. Indey’s group were carrying Indonesian flags which were taken off them.⁶¹ Shortly afterwards, Indey and a plain-clothed Indonesian colleague armed with a Sten gun stopped a vehicle near Sentani and removed a Papuan flag. The three Papuan occupants of the vehicle later reported the incident to the police.

This second incident was particularly awkward for UNTEA, which was in the process of removing firearms from Papuan security forces, presumably to prevent them from attacking Indonesians. This now had to be justified in the knowledge that plain-clothed Indonesians were intimidating civilians with automatic weapons.⁶² Later on in the day, Indey threw a hand grenade (fortunately with the pin still in) at a crowd of Papuans who had gathered outside his house to shout abuse at him. He also fired a pistol shot in the air to disperse the crowd.

Two days later, Robertson and an Indonesian police inspector visited Indey who told them that Rikhye had given him the gun to defend himself. This was very unlikely, but by this time the weapon had disappeared. Afterwards, Robertson reported: “No immediate action was taken against Indey [straight away] as this might have resulted in a serious clash, for it is known that Indo. troops frequent his house at times.”⁶³

Given that all senior UNTEA officials involved had opposed an outright banning of the 1 December procession, it is possible that the last-minute decision not to issue a permit was largely a reaction by the UN Secretariat in New York to Subandrio’s threat. If so it was a key example of the Secretariat’s appeasement in the face of Indonesian intimidation, and it must have given a clear message to the UNTEA leadership that it could expect little support from U Thant in any dispute with Indonesia

Further evidence of UNTEA’s attitude towards the political rights of the Papuans preceded the 5 December session of the New Guinea Council. By this time, most remaining members had publicly expressed support for Indonesia’s position on the territory, but Van der Veur claims that Abdoh still required those wishing to speak at the session to submit their speeches in advance to Vickers, the legal adviser:

Vickers noted that the speeches of [Council members] Tanggahma and Poana contained a number of sections which, in his view, did not seem pertinent in a closing session and might not be liked by the Indonesians. Rather than have their speeches censored, both councillors retracted their request to speak.⁶⁴

If this allegation is correct, it was another clear breach of the Agreement's Article XXII guaranteeing the population's right to free speech.

Such appeasement of Jakarta was not confined to political matters. On 21 December, Donald Clump, manager of a construction company, alleged that he had lost valuable business in the territory because of collusion between UNTEA and Indonesia. Clump claimed that he had submitted a carefully worded estimate to UNTEA for the completion of the Council Chambers and the Hall of Justice left unfinished by the Dutch. A UNTEA official promised him at least half the work and he had travelled to Hollandia to finalise the arrangements. But, on arrival, the same official informed him that the Indonesians would now be given the whole contract. Clump claimed that Indonesia had vetoed UNTEA's earlier promise to him. Furthermore, he had managed to get hold of the Indonesian estimate and found it to be a virtual carbon copy of his own except that the cost was slightly less.⁶⁵

Increasing tension and outbreaks of violence

It is important to remember that the tensions created by Indonesian interference and Papuan anxiety developed in a pre-existing atmosphere of mutual hostility between many of the Papuans and the Indonesians. In the first weeks of UNTEA, Papuan protests had often been symbolic. Papuan flags were flown throughout the territory and on at least one occasion, Indonesian officials arriving from Jakarta refused to ride on the UNTEA vehicles provided because they had been decorated with Papuan flags. In reaction, Jakarta demanded that UNTEA take firm action to prevent such "dangerous escalations".⁶⁶ Although the Dutch had certainly encouraged these nationalist feelings and the anti-Indonesian sentiment, the Indonesian troops had done nothing to undermine this Papuan prejudice once they arrived in the territory. As the last Dutch troops departed on 22 November 1962, the confidence of the Indonesians in their own growing power became more apparent as clashes between themselves and Papuans increased.

In early November, tension grew between the Papuan police and Indonesian troops over the question of guarding Sentani Airstrip near Hollandia. This was officially a police responsibility, but Indonesian soldiers had apparently decided to usurp them. Despite assurances from Colonel Soedarto, the Indonesian (UNSF) Military Commander, that the police would be allowed to carry out their duty, a Papuan police inspector, along

with six of his men and an Indonesian police inspector, arrived at the airstrip on 20 November to find it surrounded by armed Indonesian soldiers. The police were then held at gunpoint by the troops and prevented from entering the area. They also witnessed the troops stopping two Papuan boys with Papuan flags on their bikes. The flags were removed and ripped up. Following protests by UNTEA, Soedarto again promised to deal with his troops and apologised for the incident.⁶⁷

This incident may have been prompted by the previous day's actions of New Guinea Council member Hendrik Joku.⁶⁸ Joku had gone to the airstrip on the same day that Subandrio's wife had flown out, and distributed Papuan nationalist leaflets to all incoming passengers, regardless of nationality. The leaflets called for Papuan freedom no later than 1970.⁶⁹

On 15 November, in what appeared to be a show of authority, Indonesian troops based near Sorong took over the public highway in front of their camp and commenced morning physical exercises. Passing vehicles, including a Papuan police jeep, were ordered to slow down or stop. One police motorcyclist was kicked and beaten with a belt by the soldiers because he failed to stop on time. The troops then attacked the two policemen in the jeep. On hearing of the incident, an armed Papuan police detachment (the UN report does not give its strength), accompanied by 300 Papuan civilians, prepared to attack the Indonesian camp. This was only prevented by a police inspector who managed to order the police back to barracks and disperse the civilians.⁷⁰

Further violent clashes occurred between Indonesian troops and Papuans in late November but more serious incidents took place in the final weeks of 1962. On 10 December, Indonesian troops at Merauke Airstrip opened fire on a group of Papuan demonstrators, injuring two. Two days later, following an argument between a Papuan policeman and an Indonesian soldier, Indonesian troops attacked a police station in Sorong killing one policeman and injuring three. They also injured two Dutch civilians in a separate attack. Some of the troops involved were irregulars from a battalion known as "Pattimura", described by an Indonesian army officer present as being out of his control.⁷¹

In response, UNTEA protested to the Indonesian military, arguing that regular troops should rapidly be brought in to replace the irregulars. Indonesia's Commander-in-Chief, General Ahmed Yani, apologised and agreed to the request.⁷² Abdoh also protested to the Indonesian Mission in the territory. With regard to the Mission's own activities, he informed Narasimhan:

The Indonesian Mission has been opening their sub-offices in the Territory and in order to have a closer watch on the movements and activities of the personnel of these offices, I have formally requested the Mission to give us advance information of the itinerary of travels of these officials, ostensibly to give protection and facilities to them, but in

fact to have a regular and timely watch on their activities which, I have reason to believe, are somewhat responsible for stirring up feelings among the population.⁷³

By using the Pattimura Battalion as a scapegoat, both sides were able to divert attention away from the uncomfortable fact that regular Indonesian troops had been involved in even more violent incidents with Papuans. Divisional Commissioner Wilson had actually witnessed the incident involving paratroops at Merauke Airstrip. In a letter to Somerville, he condemned the attack as unauthorised by himself and therefore a direct breach of the Agreement. He also recommended that compensation be paid to the injured:

During the attack by the paratroops I personally witnessed from a distance of approximately 30 yards an Indonesian soldier pointing his gun at a Papuan by the name of Lucas Mahuze who was about 5 yards distant from him. The Papuan was unarmed and had his hands up and his back half turned towards the soldier. I saw the soldier, for no apparent reason, fire at the feet of the Papuan wounding him in the ankle. There was absolutely no justification for the soldier to fire at this man.⁷⁴

Finally he noted that “in normal circumstances”, an incident of this nature would result in an official inquiry to determine responsibility. However, in this case “for reasons which are known to you”, no formal inquiry was conducted by UNTEA.⁷⁵

The incident at Sorong started when a Papuan policeman visited the quay-side to investigate a Dutch ferry captain’s complaint that Indonesian troops “had cut his motor”. The Indonesians’ reaction to being questioned was to beat the policeman up. The police then detained one soldier and this had precipitated the attack on the police station by the Indonesians. Later in the day, Indonesian troops opened fire at the quay-side on a car carrying the ferry captain and three Dutch colleagues. The Dutch got out and sheltered in a ditch while the troops continued firing at them, despite repeated orders to stop by an Indonesian paratroop lieutenant.⁷⁶

A week before the assaults, Chief of Police Robertson had observed that the Papuans in Merauke disliked the Indonesian soldiers and provoked them on the slightest pretext.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly the Indonesians also blamed the Papuans for the tense situation. Colonel Soedarto observed that the Papuan police and military (the Papuan Volunteer Corps) had an “ideology and doctrine” totally different from the Indonesian Army’s. To solve this problem, he suggested that the entire Papuan police force and the PVK be sent to Indonesia “to pursue education commensurate with their ranks and functions”, presumably leaving more security responsibilities in the hands of the paratroops and the Pattimura Battalion:

I assure you that when coming back to this territory, the said forces will have fully understood the actual functions of the police and armed forces in general.⁷⁸

Soedarto was less inclined to repatriate any of the Indonesian soldiers involved in violence. He felt that this would not solve any problems as long as the Dutch-created forces had “not been indoctrinated in accordance with the spirit of the Agreement”.⁷⁹ What his interpretation was of the “spirit of the Agreement” can only be imagined.

The “problem” of the Papuan police and the PVK was an issue that had been brought up by the Indonesians before. In late October 1962, General Nasution in Jakarta had expressed anxiety to Brigadier Said about the “loyalty” of the Papuan police and suggested taking some to Indonesia to visit Indonesian police units.⁸⁰ Said felt that this was a reasonable request, and also agreed with Nasution’s idea of putting security personnel at the ports and airports to “prevent any undesirable elements amongst civilian officials and visitors establishing themselves in the territory”.⁸¹ Whether Nasution meant Indonesian personnel is not clear, but Said’s sympathy for the idea seems unfortunate in the light of the Indonesian violence that took place at the airfield two months later.

Summary

The year 1962 ended with WNG increasingly under Indonesian control, despite the presence of UNTEA. From the start, Indonesians both inside and outside the territory had worked to undermine UNTEA’s authority, while at the same time building up their own position of power. It was made clear that any Papuan resistance to Jakarta would not be tolerated and could expect a violent Indonesian response. What Papuan leadership there was had been targeted by Indonesia so that most members of the New Guinea Council, once a symbol of West Papuan nationalism, became simply mouth-pieces for the official Jakarta position. This is not to say that Papuan nationalist opinion had been silenced, but rather the nationalists were not adequately organised, and that without UNTEA’s protection, they found it more and more difficult to confront the Indonesians’ increasingly aggressive and confident campaign.

Abdoh and the UNTEA administration also quickly realised that Indonesia would not be content to allow their symbolic presence in the territory to run its course. The first three months of their administration had been taken up with Sukarno’s campaign to remove them from power. They had operated in an atmosphere of constant pressure from Jakarta for further concessions, with little support from the UN in New York. It had become clear that the most they could achieve would be to finish their mission in WNG without an obvious breakdown in their authority. Despite the efforts

of sections of the security forces on the ground, protection of Papuan rights was not a priority.

Time had moved on. In the month that UNTEA began, the international community was gripped by the Cuba missile crisis and the possibility of nuclear annihilation. Put in this context, it is easy to understand why the UN, and the world in general, was untroubled by events in New Guinea and the undermining of an agreement that was, in reality, only a face-saving device for a minor European power.

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The New Year and the issue of flags

Over the New Year period UNTEA's main concern remained the growing tension between Papuan nationalists, including those in the police and PVK, and the Indonesian military, along with their pro-Indonesian Papuan allies. Much of this tension centred around the issue of flags, in particular the official raising of the Indonesian flag alongside the UN's on 1 January. This symbolic act, which coincided with the final lowering of the Dutch flag, was a concession to Jakarta by U Thant and allowed Sukarno to fulfil his pledge that the Indonesian flag would fly over West Irian before the "cock crowed" on New Year's Day 1963.¹

Jakarta was determined to mark the New Year with an orchestrated campaign to raise the Indonesian flag throughout the territory, despite initial opposition from UNTEA. Divisional Commissioner Harold Luckham described the situation in Fak Fak following the arrival of the Indonesian liaison officer and his assistant at the end of 1962:

My instructions had been and were to discourage the erection of flag poles and the flying of flags other than those at a limited number of official buildings....The liaison officer knew of this, but continued to organise flag raising, although I reminded him forcefully of his duty to help me. However, the Administrator [Abdoh] gave way about the matter in the end just in time for me to be able to authorise the flag flying by official instructions.

It was...clear from this campaign that the Indonesian liaison officer had instructions to work against the UNTEA, establishing to some extent an alternative administration and using force to compel obedience: the people who did not fly flags were threatened and Indonesian soldiers were sent round to talk to them.²

UNTEA's inability to prevent Indonesian flag raisings, despite its concern at Papuan nationalist reaction, illustrates Abdoh's lack of authority over Indonesian UNTEA officials. In the event, there were various clashes over

the New Year period but they were not as serious as some in UNTEA had expected.³

Nonetheless, some pro-Indonesian Papuan marches took place without prior permission from UNTEA. There were also several incidents of Indonesian flags being ripped down and of Papuans stoning the Indonesian military. The Indonesian Army's response was to arrest fifty-three Papuans illegally before releasing them following police intervention. Most of those arrested were students from the Agricultural College in Hollandia, two of whom had been involved in stoning vehicles bearing Indonesian flags. Others were arrested for leading anti-Indonesian demonstrations and flying the Papuan flag. In the village of Sere, fourteen houses were allegedly attacked, resulting in the destruction of some Indonesian flags and a portrait of Sukarno. The Indonesians had handed out these flags and portraits of Sukarno in time for the New Year, although sometimes the tactic backfired.

In one case, the Indonesians gave Hendrik Joku 125 flags to distribute. He was a curious choice, particularly as he had already openly distributed Papuan nationalist leaflets at Sentani Airport the previous November. On 3 January, however, Joku was placed under illegal arrest by the Indonesian military, following his arrival at their camp at Ifar to enquire about the students in their custody. Under "Reason for Arrest", the Indonesians had written:

Although he expressed his willingness to pacify the people yet in the background he instigates and plays the people off against each other. He is responsible for 125 Indonesian flags which he received not all of which were issued and many of them have been torn into pieces.⁴

Over the next few days, further incidents of vandalism to Indonesian flags occurred and all Divisional Police Commandants were instructed to take vigorous measures against "Flag offenders".⁵ Robertson discussed recent events with Hartono, his Indonesian deputy. His report of the discussion sheds some light on the thinking behind Indonesian actions at the time:

the Indonesian attitude towards these events is that the Indonesian troops regard themselves as a conquering army, and having fought for possession of this Territory they do not intend to stand by idly and watch Papuans insult their National Flag....They also feel that the police are being inactive concerning insults to the Indonesian flag.⁶

While the clashes and illegal arrests further entrenched hostile Papuan opinion towards the Indonesian military, the prestige of the police went up in the public's eyes. They had been active in securing the release of those illegally detained and were generally seen to be a force constraining the Indonesian military from taking the law into their own hands.⁷

Unfortunately, this popularity would count against them as complete Indonesian control of the territory drew nearer.

Meanwhile, those Papuan “leaders” who had declared support for Indonesia during their visit to the Republic in October 1962 took up the issue of flags. Although previously an advocate of Papuan independence and the Papuan flag, Herman Wajoi, leader of the moderate Nationalist Papuan Party, Parna, returned from Jakarta a firm supporter of the unitarist Indonesian state.⁸

These Papuans also now dismissed the Papuan flag as a propaganda “timebomb” left behind by the Dutch.⁹ But while Jakarta was encouraging its visitors to denounce the Papuan flag, there is some evidence that initially at least Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio had considered allowing it to remain on display as a provincial flag. In response Robertson commented that this would do more than anything else to ease tension and suggested that if the report was true, an immediate official announcement on the offer was advisable.¹⁰

However, no further mention of this alleged offer appears in UNTEA’s records. On the contrary Vickers, UNTEA’s legal adviser, noted on 17 November 1962 that the Indonesian representatives in the territory were calling for UNTEA to prohibit the sale or hoisting of the Papuan flag under any circumstances. Although he advised against this, he suggested that steps should be taken to ensure that the Papuan flag was not shown or displayed by anyone or at any place officially associated with UNTEA.¹¹

As the New Year period ended, there were continuing minor incidents of disorder in the territory. In Biak, two separate incidents were reported of Indonesian flags being torn down, one by a Papuan and another by a Dutch employee of the Postal Service.¹² In another, more bizarre incident, a Papuan government cook wearing a Papuan flag entered the government’s hotel in Hollandia while a number of UNTEA officials were eating their mid-day meal. He walked up to their table and stuck a knife in it, and then began shouting that all Indonesians were poor and should go home. De Hass, a police inspector, who was present, immediately arrested him.¹³

A UNTEA report on the incident stated that the cook would be charged under Article 154 of the existing Dutch law for the territory. This law was quoted in the report as stating that it was an offence to give public expression to feelings of enmity, hate or disdain against the government of the Netherlands or Indonesia, and carried a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment.¹⁴ All UNTEA police commanders were instructed to take “vigorous action” against individuals committing offences under Articles 154, 156 and 207, all of which made it a serious offence during the UNTEA period to speak out publicly against Indonesia or Indonesians in general.¹⁵

UNTEA did have the authority under Article XI of the Agreement to introduce new laws or adapt existing ones: “To the extent that they are consistent with the letter and spirit of the present Agreement.”¹⁶ However, it is hard to see how UNTEA’s adaptation of Articles 154, 156 and 207 from

the existing Dutch legal code was in any way consistent with the letter and spirit of the Agreement's commitment to free speech in the territory as laid down in its Article XXII.¹⁷ Nor was it consistent with U Thant's guidance to Abdoh that he should ensure that Article XXII of the Agreement be "scrupulously observed".¹⁸

Pro-Indonesian demonstrations

In the middle of January, a more serious challenge to UNTEA's authority arose when a series of coordinated pro-Indonesian demonstrations took place. UNTEA does not appear to have had any forewarning about these marches, which suggests that the authorities were less successful in recruiting informers from the pro-Indonesian side than they had been from amongst the Papuan nationalists.

One of the first of these demonstrations occurred in Hollandia on 14 January led by Herman Wajoi. Permission was only sought on the morning of the march leaving the police commander little choice but to issue a permit. The procession of about 1,000 mainly unemployed men from the surrounding area then headed to the administrator's residence where a pro-Indonesian petition was delivered. The marchers then dispersed peacefully.¹⁹ On the same day other pro-Indonesian demonstrations took place in different parts of the territory including one of about 800 civilians in Manokwari and a 200-strong march in Biak.

Elsewhere in Hollandia, a Biak man spat at an Indonesian paratrooper provoking retaliatory attacks by paratroopers on any Biak civilians they came across in the capital, including one policeman. One civilian was also abducted before the Divisional Police Commander intervened to secure his release. The police commander then had to confine his men to barracks in order to prevent them retaliating against the paratroops.²⁰

The following day, another pro-Indonesian demonstration took place, this time in Merauke. Commissioner Wilson only learned about it from worried local villagers shortly before the start. On arrival at Merauke Police Station, Wilson faced a 200-strong crowd shouting and waving Indonesian flags and banners. The crowd, led by Martin Indey, was asked to withdraw to a nearby football pitch where Wilson intended to address them. However, Indey's supporters did not withdraw but instead halted in front of the Commissioner where they continued to shout.

At this point, one policeman, described in the UNTEA reports as "mentally retarded", opened fire over the heads of the demonstrators causing panic. Seven of his colleagues then joined in firing into the air for about five minutes, in spite of Wilson's order to stop. In response, the Commissioner called for Pakistani troops to restrain the eight policemen and restore order. While these events were taking place, a second group of pro-Indonesian civilians began advancing on the police station from a different direction before being halted by Indonesian police officers. Both

groups of demonstrators were finally diverted to the football pitch where Wilson addressed them and accepted a petition.²¹ Robertson's report into the incident praised Wilson for preventing any bloodshed and established that no order to fire had been given to the police. However, both Wilson and himself accepted that the police understandably felt very threatened by the two noisy demonstrations, and this had contributed to the panicked reaction of seven of them to the initial shots.²²

The Indonesians reacted swiftly to the events in Merauke. On 17 January, Colonel Soedarto, the commander of Indonesian military forces in the territory, sent a strong protest to Wilson:

I deeply regret and am shocked to receive reports from my contingent in Merauke that you have allowed the use of force to break the democratic demonstration conducted by the local people....I, therefore, as the Commander of the Indonesian contingent in West Irian, cannot tolerate such an inhuman action and will in no way be responsible for any eventual consequences.²³

Abdoh protested to the Indonesian Mission in the territory about Colonel Soedarto's threats and warned that he would urge U Thant to take the matter up with the government in Jakarta. He also reminded the Indonesians that their military contingent remained under his authority. Soedarto then agreed to withdraw his threat and Abdoh declared the matter closed.²⁴

The incident at Merauke provoked a strong response from Antara, the official Indonesian news agency. Wilson was condemned as an apologist for "irresponsible" Papuan police action. The report then went on to criticise the general attitude of several other senior UNTEA officials from British Commonwealth countries, including Robertson and Rawlings but, interestingly, not Luckham. They were described as being most unsympathetic towards Indonesia, which was certainly true, and accused of trying to "obstruct the progress made by Indonesia in the territory". Finally Abdoh himself was criticised for being "indecisive".²⁵

On 22 January, Abdoh reported to Narasimhan that he believed it was Indonesian policy to crush all opposition, and added that he was in no doubt that they were behind the organised demonstrations and attacks on Papuan nationalists.²⁶ It is also clear that the UN Secretariat shared this view. In a report in late January Plimsoll, of the Australian Mission to the UN, informed Canberra of a conversation between himself, Narasimhan and U Thant:

Narasimhan said that the UN had had to keep constantly in mind the fact that it needed Indonesian co-operation if it was to get through the UNTEA period without serious incident. He said the UN did not want big disturbances if it could avoid it, and it was quite clear from the information they had that in West New Guinea the Indonesians could

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turn demonstrations on and off like a tap. U Thant said that he had no doubt at all that demonstrations or representations by Papuans were Indonesian inspired and were not spontaneous.²⁷

Further details of these Indonesian tactics are revealed in Luckham's subsequent report to the Foreign Office. Describing the actions of his Indonesian Police Commissioner in Fak Fak, he wrote:

The Commissioner of Police received instructions to organise anti-UNTEA and anti-plebiscite activities in early January. He went on a visit to Kokonao, the HQ of the Mimika district, together with the Indonesian who had been appointed as my deputy, and my Indonesian Public Works Engineer in middle January, and as soon as they got there, there was an anti-UNTEA demonstration. I expected this to happen in view of the instructions and it was a good place to start as they were 300 miles away and well out of my reach. They were joined on the latter part of their journey by air by another Indonesian official carrying a large bag, which must have contained a collection of anti-UNTEA and plebiscite banners, as those in the procession were written in Indonesian language with many words quite unfamiliar to the Papuans... Most of the local people would know nothing about the outer World: those who did for the most part were anti-Indonesian. We also intercepted a message by radio instructing one of my officers to organise demonstrations.²⁸

Luckham's antipathy towards the Indonesians was to bring him into conflict with Abdoh following another incident in his area on 13 January. On this occasion the violence seemed to have arisen because a Papuan policeman removed an Indonesian flag in Kaimana that had been raised by a local civilian. Unarmed skirmishes broke out between pro- and anti-Indonesian Papuans, but when night fell the Indonesian military commander in the area threatened to escalate the conflict by bringing sixty troops into the town. Luckham reported to Abdoh that the Indonesian commander had contemplated direct armed action against the police but had been prevented by a Pakistani UNSF patrol.²⁹ Robertson's police report of the incident comments that "The Indonesian army is in town, and the police in their barracks fear for their lives."³⁰ In Luckham's opinion, the presence of the Indonesian troops in Kaimana was a threat to the peace and he asked Major Oentong, the local Indonesian military commander, to withdraw them. Oentong refused, and Luckham reported to Abdoh that peace could not be guaranteed until Oentong and his unit departed. In the same report Luckham stated:

[Oentong] is quite unreliable and still set on trouble....Flag raising Sunday intended provocation [by] pro-Indonesians...Continued interference by Paratroopers makes administration impossible.³¹

Reporting on the incident later, Luckham described how a demonstration was “ordered for my benefit” as soon as he arrived in the town:

They already had the nucleus of a procession, because the people living round the mosque at Kaimana were muslims, pro-Indonesian and anti-Dutch; but, as there were not enough for a reasonable sized procession, the organisers pushed anybody they could find into it and beat up those who refused. It was not however, a very enthusiastic procession, and stopped and dispersed when met by a Pakistani Officer....Armed Indonesian soldiers had been urging them on from behind up to this point. The procession carried no banners and most of them did not know what it was about.³²

Abdoh’s reaction to Luckham’s telegram suggests that he had little time for the Commissioner’s frustration with the Indonesians. His overriding priority was to prevent a breakdown of the territory’s administration while UNTEA was still responsible and, as Narasimhan had commented in New York, this required Indonesian cooperation. Consequently, Abdoh refused to support Luckham’s call for the troops to leave Kaimana. Instead he appointed two Indonesian officers to command the local police unit and instructed the Indonesian divisional commander to remain in Kaimana.³³ It was then made clear to Luckham that his priority was to prevent anti-Indonesian activity. With regard to the removal of the Indonesian flag by the Papuan policeman, Abdoh stated:

Please ensure police unit thoroughly lectured on policy concerning flags and importance of not insulting in any way to Indonesia. Ensure also civil administration personnel thoroughly briefed on policy re: flags and importance of not giving insult in any way or form to Indonesia....Must emphasise your duty as resident is to maintain law and order despite presence of Indonesian troops. Please confirm you feel competent to ensure this.³⁴

Luckham resented Abdoh’s reaction and continued to support his Papuan district officer in Kaimana. In his letter to the Foreign Office he described how Indonesian officials and army officers bullied the district officer and often walked into his office to read whatever correspondence was on his desk. The letter also detailed Luckham’s dispute with Abdoh over the affair:

During the affair at Kaimana the Indonesian commander was in communication with the [Indonesian] Mission in Hollandia and I was getting instructions to dismiss the police concerned in the incident and the district officer....It was clear that my HQ were accepting what the Indonesians said and were not waiting for me to complete my enquiries. I protested strongly and did not take the disciplinary action suggested as

it was quite wrong and might well have provoked the further trouble which I was trying to avoid.³⁵

Attacks on Papuan nationalists and pressure on the Papuan police

During mid to late January, the Indonesians and their Papuan supporters also carried out a number of attacks on Papuans considered to be hostile. On 17 January, several pro-Indonesian Papuans entered the government's School of Administration in Hollandia and began searching for Papuan flags. They found none but a Papuan student was beaten up.³⁶ On the same day, Indonesian paratroops attacked several Papuan nurses at Hollandia hospital. Indonesian nurses at the same hospital had apparently informed the paratroopers that their colleagues were inciting locals to flee to TPNG.³⁷

A more serious incident involving pro-Indonesian Papuans took place in January following the return home from TPNG of forty-four Papuan students of Hollandia's Administration College and Teacher College, and Kota Baru Junior High School. Port Moresby's refusal to allow them to remain in TPNG stemmed from an Australian decision in 1962 to grant residence only to those refugees who had fled as a result of political activities undertaken before the Dutch withdrawal. The reasoning behind this was that:

To allow permanent entry...to those motivated by general discontent with the Indonesian Administration could lead to mass migration which PNG couldn't handle, could create ill will with the Indonesians and a breakdown of respect for the border.³⁸

The students arrived back in Hollandia on 21 January aboard an Australian launch. UNTEA organised a short ceremony to welcome them back and assure them of their safety. That evening the college students were attacked in their dormitories by around thirty pro-Indonesian Papuans, some armed with large knives. Papuan students at a nearby junior high school were also attacked and two needed hospital treatment before the police and some Indonesian teachers intervened.³⁹

In support of this campaign of intimidation, Indonesia dispatched more troops to the territory despite opposition from UNTEA which was supposed to have the authority to determine troop numbers. On 22 January, Abdoh and UNSF Commander Said cabled Narasimhan:

Indonesians have been trying to increase strength of troops in the territory surreptitiously with excuses that they need sufficient supply and logistics support for troops. This being reasonable, we gave ceiling figure 1500 but they tend to exceed permitted numbers....Present strength of troops as given on 12 January, 1101 and according to Soedarto by end

of month will be 1150 combat troops, 173 staff, 270 naval logistic group and technicians and 40 airforce logistics group and technicians... We are trying to persuade them to keep down influx of troops but have no means of verifying or stopping.⁴⁰

Abdoh and Said concluded that this increase was partly to ensure that they outnumbered the police with whom they shared a mutual hostility. On this issue, the Indonesians made their position very clear to Said. He was warned that if there was further "police harassment" of pro-Indonesian groups, they would take the law into their own hands and bring in even more troops.⁴¹ It is clear from Abdoh's firm stand with Luckham over the incidents at Kaimana that these threats had the desired effect.

Although he joined Abdoh in seeking to reassure Indonesia about police behaviour, Said's opinion of them had not altered since he and Rolz-Bennett had described them in October as helpless and ineffective.⁴² In the 22 January cable to Narasimhan, Abdoh wrote:

Said feels that every incident resulting in use of firearms has been triggered off by Papuan police. He feels convinced that Indonesian apprehensions were largely justified....Said questions discipline and dependability of Papuan police and feels that disorders if any would most probably be started by police.⁴³

The UNSF Commander's assessment of the police contrasted starkly with his attitude towards the Indonesian troops. From a report he wrote on them for Abdoh, it appears that his main concern was to explain, or even justify, their habitual disregard of UNTEA's authority. Commenting upon the problem of Indonesian involvement in UNSF he wrote:

The loyalty of Indonesian troops in the territory will naturally be more towards their high command at Jakarta....In cases where the policy of UNTEA is in conflict with that of Jakarta they will naturally look towards their own high command.⁴⁴

Said then went on to explain how the political nature of the Indonesian Army meant that it was bound to get involved in pro- and anti-Indonesian disputes among the Papuans: "the Indonesian troops feel it to be their moral duty to protect the life and property of their friends".⁴⁵

Having played down the seriousness of both Indonesian disobedience of UNSF and the Indonesian active involvement in intimidation and inciting disorder, Said concluded:

I feel the Indonesian troops in the territory have conducted themselves creditably....They have not openly defied the authority of the UNSF or the Administrator. It is hoped that payment of allowances and issue of

a directive will bring about a slight change in their behaviour, but it should not be expected that they will completely change themselves into an impartial United Nations Force.⁴⁶

While the vast majority of Pakistan's UNSF troops tried to remain neutral, it is obvious from the record that their commander was more sympathetic to the Indonesian position than his UN role should have allowed. By necessity, Abdoh was intolerant of anti-Indonesian bias from Luckham or any of his subordinates, but it should have been a matter of concern to him that his senior military official considered police ill-discipline to be a greater threat to stability than the systematic intimidation of the administration by Indonesia and its supporters within the territory.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Chief of Police Robertson did not share Said's opinion of his force. In his view, Indonesian suspicions about the police were based on two facts. First, they were the only organised body of Papuans who possessed modern firearms and were trained in how to use them (it is unclear why he omitted to mention the PVK) and, second, he believed that they retained much more of the Dutch "indoctrination", because of their "above average intelligence" in relation to the general Papuan population.⁴⁷ He also saw a link between the Indonesian-organised campaign of intimidation against Papuan nationalists, particularly the students, and the "campaign of belittling and undermining the Police, except that with the Police direct assault could not be attempted".⁴⁸

Furthermore, Robertson's assessment of where the blame for the violence lay contrasted starkly with Said's. Whereas the UNSF Commander blamed the police for every incident involving firearms that they were party to, Robertson only accepted their culpability on one occasion, and that was the incident in Sorong on 13 December which had resulted in one policeman being killed.⁴⁹ While accepting that this clash was initiated by a policeman, he remarked that the subsequent mortar attack on the police station by Indonesian troops was completely unjustified.⁵⁰

Unlike Said, Robertson believed that the Indonesians were culpable for much of the violence. He reported to Abdoh that incidents initiated by Indonesian soldiers or civilians, "which were effectively and efficiently either prevented or brought under control by the police", were too numerous to mention.⁵¹ However, he supported his argument by mentioning two examples, the first being the incident on 15 November when Indonesian troops took over a public road near Sorong and assaulted several Papuan policemen.⁵² The second concerned an incident, apparently started by the Indonesian Army, which had resulted in two villages in the Hollandia district nearly going to war with each other. This had then been quickly resolved by one unarmed platoon of police.⁵³ In defence of the police, Robertson went on to state:

the Police Service has proved that it can be relied upon to maintain, or restore, law and order under the most difficult conditions, with a

modern army, heavily armed and antagonistic to them at all times. And it is wrong to generalise to the point of stating that the loyalty or discipline of the Police could not be depended upon when only 69 policemen out of a strength of over 1,600 have defaulted.⁵⁴

He concluded with the rather over-optimistic assessment that discipline was improving daily with the influx of Indonesian police officers, and loyalty towards the Dutch was swinging rapidly towards Indonesia.⁵⁵

Robertson understandably resented Said's antipathy towards the police. A criticism of them was, to an extent, an attack on him as Chief of Police. It was also true, as Indonesia claimed, that UNTEA officials from the "Old" Commonwealth were much more inclined to sympathise with the Papuans rather than with the anti-Western regime in Jakarta. In contrast, their UNTEA colleagues from Asia and the Middle East appeared to identify more with Jakarta and this appears to have created a division within the UNTEA leadership in its final months.

Sukarno was aware of this division and, according to British documents, on one occasion approached Narasimhan "as a fellow Asian" to ask if they could "come to some little arrangement" to assist Jakarta's campaign for an early withdrawal by UNTEA: "after all the others are constantly fixing things amongst themselves". Narasimhan declined.⁵⁶

Indonesian acceptance of the 1 May handover date

By the end of January the Indonesians seemed to have abandoned their campaign to curtail UNTEA. Luckham reported another "anti-UNTEA" and "anti-plebiscite" demonstration in Kaimana in early February but after that the campaign "petered out".⁵⁷ Jeffrey Peterson at the British Embassy in Jakarta also sensed a change of mood by the end of January, noting that the Indonesians "seem to have lost some of their crusading fervour".⁵⁸

Finally, on 6 February, Subandrio stated that, following recent discussions with Narasimhan, Indonesia accepted 1 May as the date of transfer. He added, however, that both sides had agreed informally that authority would be transferred to Indonesia prior to this date.⁵⁹ To facilitate this informal transfer, it was agreed to accelerate the phasing in of Indonesian officials into the administration. Soon afterwards J. D. Legge observed:

The campaign for the cutting down of the interim UNTEA period seems particularly odd. The New York agreement would appear to have given Indonesia all that it had asked for....At the very least the campaign was a piece of bad public relations and one wonders what sort of purpose could have been served by it.⁶⁰

The UN leadership itself was unclear as to why Indonesia had launched this campaign. Like Rolz-Bennett, U Thant and Narasimhan initially

suspected that Jakarta's motivation had been financial. By shortening the UNTEA period, they perhaps hoped to reduce their financial contribution to the administration. However, in late January the two men confessed to the Australian diplomat Plimsoll that they simply did not know the reason.⁶¹

Van der Veur concluded that it was "a political balloon" to test the UN and part of the overall Indonesian policy of undermining the Agreement in order to achieve more realistic concessions, such as an abandonment of any UNTEA plans for the "second phase" after 1 May.⁶² This was a view also shared by Henderson, but it is very doubtful that an abandonment of the second phase was the motivation since this had already been privately agreed to by the Dutch in July 1962.⁶³ The campaign was, however, certainly part of Jakarta's general effort to undermine the Agreement. It was a policy typical of Sukarno. Like many charismatic leaders, his attitude towards international relations had more to do with grand gestures and maintaining an atmosphere of crisis than sober diplomacy and negotiation. While attempts to curtail UNTEA were unreasonable, illogical and unlikely to succeed, this was not important to Sukarno. It was not reason and logic that had won him WNG, it was brinkmanship and an illogical preparedness to risk more for the territory, in terms of national stability and military expense, than was prudent at the time. With this attitude and a belief in his own propaganda, there was no reason to abide by any agreements. On the contrary, Indonesia was in a powerful position, and with sufficient posturing and intimidation of the UN and the Papuan people, it believed that anything was possible.

Coinciding with the failure of their campaign to hasten UNTEA's departure, there is evidence that at least some Indonesians were beginning to lose interest in the territory now that the initial euphoria was over. On 30 January, British diplomats in Jakarta noted that civilian and military officials were already expressing reluctance to serve in the territory:

The President has scarcely uttered a public word on the subject of West Irian since his threat [reported 21 December 1962] to use force if there was the least delay in the hand over by the United Nations and it would be entirely in character if his interest was rapidly fading.⁶⁴

Despite a possible loss of interest by Jakarta, and an acceptance that UNTEA would remain until 1 May, the general Indonesian effort to undermine UNTEA continued to achieve noticeable results. Peterson at the British Embassy wrote:

I have little doubt that the degree of control exercised by Dr. Abdoh and his handful of non-Indonesian helpers is by now nominal. Their sole preoccupation must be to avoid a complete breakdown of the economy and the social services, such as they are, in the next three months.⁶⁵

On the same subject, Warner at the Foreign Office commented a few days later: "The task of UNTEA...has been exceptionally hard. They have lacked adequate staff and have only been able to administer the more civilised fringes of this immense and jungly territory."⁶⁶

Narasimhan's February visit to WNG

Following his discussions with Subandrio in Jakarta, Narasimhan paid a three-day visit to WNG beginning 9 February. During his stay he had discussions with Dutch and Indonesian UNTEA officials as well as members of UNSF, but only one meeting was planned with the Papuans. This was scheduled to take place on the last day of his visit at the administrator's residence in Hollandia. Members of Regional Councils from villages around the capital were supposed to have been invited but none turned up. The reason for this was given in a handwritten note in the margin of a UNTEA file: "Did not show up as they were scared of the Indonesians."⁶⁷

Van der Veur, however, gives a more detailed explanation for Narasimhan's failure to meet any Papuan representatives. According to him, three members of a Regional Council from the Hollandia area asked Benedictus Sarwom, a Papuan UNTEA official, to relay a request to his superiors for a meeting with Narasimhan. This request was passed to Aly Khalil (the head of UNTEA's Information Section), who discussed it with his Indonesian deputy. The next evening, an Indonesian intelligence officer visited Sarwom and informed him that:

a discussion about the status of West Irian was now "an internal matter which should not be discussed with foreigners." A request such as the regional council members made was "very unwise" and could have repercussions after May 1. The three members of the regional council's executive committee did not receive an official response to their request and did not meet the United Nations dignitary.⁶⁸

In another attempt to alert Narasimhan to Papuan nationalist opinion, the DVP, organisers of the failed 1 December march, sent a written statement to him on 10 February. In it they denounced the Agreement and called for Indonesia to leave and UNTEA to remain until the territory was ready for independence. They also complained of attacks by Indonesian-backed groups and specifically called for the activities of Martin Indey's "army" to be restricted.⁶⁹ It is not known whether Narasimhan read the resolution during his stay, but he ended his visit by stating at a reception in his honour:

From the very beginning, although there were so many differences between our Netherlands and Indonesian colleagues, they were agreed on this: that the interests of the Papuan population must come first. This recognition of a common interest is reflected in every clause, every

article and sub-article of the Agreement and I have no doubt that when the administration of the Territory passes on to the Republic of Indonesia, they will do all they can to advance the welfare of the people in the letter and in the spirit of the Agreement...I hope that...the United Nations has not been just concerned in this operation like a ship passing through the bay of Hollandia; that we have acquired, by our temporary presence here, a deep interest in the welfare of the people and that it will be our duty, in co-operation with our partners, to serve the population of Irian Barat, so that in the years to come they will remember the United Nations was really and truly interested in their economic development and their continuing welfare.⁷⁰

Even allowing for the fact that official UN statements need to be phrased in diplomatic terms, Narasimhan's comments bore no relation whatsoever to the reality of WNG's situation, a fact that he was only too well aware of. Furthermore, with regard to UNTEA's date of withdrawal, he publicly gave credence to Indonesia's version of events:

After 31 December 1962, there was considerable pressure from the people of West Irian, that the period [from 31 December to 1 May] should be shortened...[this was not feasible but] the Secretary-General had decided that we would hand over to the designated representative of the Republic of Indonesia on 1 May....it is in recognition of this public pressure that this date has been set....This second stage [beginning 1 May] we have curtailed to a matter of a few hours. This is our response to the wishes of the people.⁷¹

This declaration, made by such a senior UN official, was remarkable in that it was so obviously untrue. Narasimhan knew this, the UNTEA officials knew it too, as did everyone else who had any knowledge of the situation. While such distortions of the truth are hardly uncommon in international affairs, it is reasonable to argue that the Papuans had a right to expect a greater degree of honesty from the UN than they did from individual states.

There was, of course, a sound political motive for Narasimhan to act as he did. He could not reveal that the 1 May handover date had already been agreed upon by the Dutch and Indonesians the previous July. He also did not wish the UN to appear weak in the face of Indonesian pressure. But by stating that the decision was made in recognition of the popular wishes of the Papuan people, he could appear flexible and responsive to reason. Furthermore, it is possible that U Thant privately welcomed the Indonesian-orchestrated campaigns against the UN because, fearing an embarrassing breakdown of UNTEA control, he wanted the UN out of the territory as quickly as possible after 1 May.

Narasimhan may have been a skilled diplomat, but at least one senior UNTEA official privately condemned his policies. Commenting to a friend

afterwards, Commissioner Wilson described Narasimhan as “a rogue” who treated the UN’s responsibilities for the territory as something to be jettisoned as rapidly as possible.⁷² Nonetheless, Narasimhan’s behaviour was simply a reflection of the attitude of the UN Secretariat as a whole.

The agreement to speed up the replacement of all other officials and military personnel by Indonesians marked the beginning of the end of UNTEA. The plan included the removal of all remaining Dutch officials by 31 March and the progressive replacement of UNSF by Indonesian troops to be completed by 1 May.⁷³ As the British Ambassador to Jakarta was to comment following UNTEA’s withdrawal:

The changeover was apparently effected with little trouble. By 1 May over 1,600 Indonesian officials were already occupying the senior administrative positions in West Irian and some 15,000 Indonesian troops were already present in the territory to maintain order and security – indeed the Indonesian contingent commander and the head of the Indonesian Mission had virtually been running the internal affairs of the territory for several months past.⁷⁴

The Papuan Volunteer Corps (PVK) mutiny

In Manokwari on 17 February, the last major incident took place of Papuan resistance to the coming handover to Indonesia. It was significant because it involved a mutiny of around one-quarter of the 450-strong Papuan Volunteer Corps (PVK), the only military-trained group of West Papuans in existence. Although originally led by Dutch officers, these had been totally replaced with Indonesians by 21 January 1963.⁷⁵ The arrival of the Indonesian officers did nothing to ferment PVK loyalty towards Jakarta and according to Cameron, Manokwari’s Divisional Commissioner, the underlying motive for the revolt was the PVK’s continuing deep discontent with the situation in the territory.⁷⁶

The catalyst for the mutiny appears to have been a clash between a small number of PVK troops and Indonesian soldiers from (the East-Java-based) Battalion 521 stationed in the area. Manokwari’s Indonesian Police Commissioner blamed the clash on provocative behaviour by the PVK troops, but they in turn accused the Indonesians of opening fire on them. Following the initial clash, the PVK troops involved informed their colleagues back at barracks. About a hundred of them then broke into the barrack armoury and armed themselves before heading into town, declaring that they were going to attack the local Indonesian army camp.

Throughout the night, PVK troops ignored pleas from their officers and senior UNTEA officials to return to barracks. Instead, they patrolled the town, accompanied by supporting Papuan civilians, while the Indonesian troops retreated to their barracks. The PVK troop’s central demand was the expulsion of all Indonesians. According to Cameron, the mutiny was well

organised, phone lines to the Indonesian PVK officers were cut, while the patrols in town were coordinated by the two ringleaders, Sergeants Frits Awom and Namrey. This suggests perhaps that the mutiny had been planned in advance, with the clash in town merely a pretext to take action. Nonetheless, there were only a few injuries and the PVK troops did not carry out their threat to attack the army camp. The next morning Cameron called in two platoons of Pakistani troops, but by this time the PVK troops had returned to barracks and returned most of their weapons, although twenty rifles and a number of hand grenades remained unaccounted for.⁷⁷

Cameron's recommendations to Abdoh following the mutiny were unambiguous. He stated that the PVK was a menace to public order and had to be disarmed and disbanded as soon as possible, certainly before 1 May. It is also clear that Cameron objected to the PVK because, like the police, its anti-Indonesian attitude gave encouragement to Papuan civilians who shared its views. While little could be done to alter Papuan antipathy towards Jakarta, UNTEA could at least deprive them of any confidence that they gained from having their own corps as a potential defence against Indonesian military intimidation. The more the Papuans accepted that events were out of their hands, the less likely it would be that UNTEA's last months would be threatened by disorder. Cameron concluded by stating:

It must be realised that only good fortune saved us from a very bloody clash....I have no doubt that had fighting begun the PVK would have been joined by civilians some of them armed and I regret to say, by the police. Accounts that Arfaks tribesman were gathering I discount, this is a popular bogey, nevertheless any large-scale fighting would probably have repercussions beyond the immediate inhabitants of Manokwari. For this reason we cannot afford to retain the PVK as a focus of discontent.⁷⁸

Two days after the mutiny, Captain Karim, the Indonesian Acting Commander of the PVK, asked Cameron to disarm the corps. This request was repeated by Major Tuisita, another Indonesian who replaced Karim as Acting Commander of the PVK on the same day. Cameron supported their request, but refused to act until authorised by UNSF Commander Khan.⁷⁹ Once Khan's permission was received, Cameron and the Indonesian officers discussed how they could get the arms off the Papuan troops without incident.

Eventually it was decided to use deception to obtain the weaponry. On the morning of 20 February, the PVK was ordered to parade. The troops were then told to lay their arms on the ground so that UN officials could inspect them. While the inspection took place, the men were ordered out of their camp for a run. Once they had departed, Pakistani UNSF troops arrived and confiscated all the arms and ammunition. The Indonesian PVK officers were allowed to retain their side arms but agreed not to wear them. Furthermore, at the request of the Indonesian officers, Cameron agreed to

tell the PVK that the decision to disarm it was his, not the officers'. When the PVK troops returned from their run, there was a predictable outcry and anti-Indonesian chants, but no violence. Cameron addressed them and told them that some UNSF troops would remain at their camp for a while to ensure their protection.⁸⁰

A Special Commission was established to interview members of the PVK about the incident. Those interviewed denied that the PVK was to blame and most complained that their access to firearms was restricted while the Indonesians' was not.⁸¹ The Commission also hoped to encourage as many of the corps' "trouble makers" to resign voluntarily. Each man was interviewed privately and offered the chance to leave, but this did not go as UNTEA had planned:

Some 348 members of the Papuan Volunteer Corps were interviewed. 342 indicated that they wished to remain in the Corps. Six indicated that they wished to leave. In view of recent happenings, these results are surprising, the more so because none of those listed as ringleaders of Sunday night's mutiny said they wished to leave, neither did any of those whom Capt. Karim wishes to discharge.⁸²

Eventually, in addition to the six volunteers, twenty-two men were compulsorily dismissed and a further fourteen disciplined. Although it was not disbanded by UNTEA, the now unarmed PVK was no longer a potential threat to the Indonesians.

The final period of UNTEA and international opinion

As time went on, pro-Indonesian Papuans became increasingly confident. On 21 February, Abdoh was informed that a letter had been sent to Shell New Guinea, threatening to attack any Dutch civilians who remained after 1 May.⁸³ Abdoh advised the company not to take these threats seriously, but pledged that UNTEA would provide the Dutch with adequate protection.⁸⁴ However, since the leaflet warned of violence after, rather than before, UNTEA's departure, Abdoh's assurance was of little comfort. A Jakarta-based British diplomat noted in late February:

Dutch reports from Amsterdam said that there are now only about 500 Dutchmen left in West Irian, 200 of whom are in UNTEA, and that very few will remain by May 1.⁸⁵

By this stage of the administration the vast majority of non-Papuan UNTEA employees were Indonesian. Figures for 1 March give the total as 1,200 Indonesians, 200 Dutch and 80 from other countries.⁸⁶

British concerns over the territory, such as they were, mainly related to growing tensions with Jakarta over Malaysia. Aware of this fact, the Dutch

informed the British in early February that Goedhart, their Hollandia-based liaison officer, had reported a concentration of Indonesia's best paratroopers at Biak, to be moved at short notice to an undisclosed destination. Furthermore, senior officers, including future President General Suharto, were being replaced by less important personnel, the inference being that their abilities were now needed elsewhere. Goedhart surmised that it could be linked to increasing tension over British Borneo.⁸⁷

As further evidence of the growing strains between London and Jakarta, the Foreign Office noted Luckham's comment in early April regarding the gradual withdrawal of UNTEA personnel that: "whether by coincidence or through Indonesian pressure the British [UNTEA] officials seem to be the earliest to be sent off".⁸⁸

For the Australians, the imminent arrival of an Indonesian administration in WNG continued to stimulate debate within the government. By late January, the Department of External Affairs seemed to have become less enthusiastic about maintaining an Australian representative in Hollandia, principally because it would probably result in there being a reciprocal Indonesian presence in Port Moresby. This, it was feared, would give Indonesia the opportunity to make contacts with local leaders, disseminate propaganda and partake in "under-cover intelligence activity".⁸⁹

On the other hand, the hostility of the Department of Territories towards cross-border representation with Indonesia appeared to have receded since the previous September.⁹⁰ The UN also believed that the Australian representative in Hollandia was "a great asset", a view shared by Plimsoll of the Australian UN Mission in New York who saw him as a good source of information about the territory during the transition period.⁹¹ UNTEA, however, was not so enthusiastic about Australian press coverage of its administration. On 25 March, Abdoh brought the subject up with Hutton, the Australian representative, who "promised that on his return to Canberra he would do his best to correct the attitude of the erring newspapers".⁹²

Meanwhile, Indonesian UNTEA employees continued to deal with any remaining Papuan opposition. Paul Van der Veur writes that by 30 March they had forced the Biak-Numfor Regional Council to draft a new resolution apologising to Sukarno for its December resolution that had criticised Indonesia and called for genuine Papuan self-determination. This was still rejected by the Indonesian officials in Biak so the Council drafted a third resolution on 2 April which withdrew the December resolution, but still emphasised Articles XVIII and XX of the Agreement referring to Papuan self-determination.⁹³ This too was rejected by the Indonesian officials:

At this point Indonesian "gentle pressure" made room for Indonesian "guided democracy." Stunned council members were told that they no longer had to worry about drafting an acceptable resolution at all – a prepared statement would be given them for signature.⁹⁴

The Council members protested to Commissioner Carter that, by this action, the Indonesians were totally ignoring the terms of the Agreement. Carter promised to inform Abdoh of this “political crisis” and, on 5 April, UNTEA Internal Affairs Director Somerville arrived in Biak to meet the members. Somerville apparently wasted little time in reminding them of the reality of the situation. He declared that while this Agreement was the “guiding document” of UNTEA, its task ended on 1 May.⁹⁵ In essence this meant that once the Indonesians took over, the UN accepted that they would do whatever they pleased, regardless of anything promised in the Agreement. The Papuans were to be abandoned by the international community.

Following this discussion, the Council members signed the Indonesian-prepared statement and retracted their original resolution. However, the matter was not yet closed because the authorities in Jakarta then intervened and demanded a new resolution be signed, even more supportive of the Indonesian position than the first one drafted by their officials in Biak. Consequently, on 10 April, a final version was drafted by the two most senior Indonesian UNTEA officials in Biak and addressed to the Chairman of the UNGA:

This resolution not only withdrew the December 3 resolution but declared loyalty “with complete sincerity and honesty” to the “Unitary Republic of Indonesia which is based on the 1945 Constitution.” Members of the regional council’s executive committee signed the document, though they did so under protest....One high UNTEA official commented: “The astonishing aspect is that they [the Indonesians] are doing this right under our noses. They don’t even wait until the first of May.”⁹⁶

If accurate, Van der Veur’s allegations illustrate the UN’s complete abrogation of its responsibilities under the Agreement to defend the rights and freedoms of the Papuans. It also gives credence to the British Ambassador’s observation that Indonesia had been effectively running the internal affairs of the territory for several months before 1 May.⁹⁷

The fate of the Biak–Numfor Council also puts into context a British report from Jakarta in early March, suggesting that this incident was part of a general Indonesian campaign, shortly before the handover, further to demonstrate Papuan loyalty to Indonesia:

The press have given publicity to a series of statements made by various groups of West Irian leaders. These statements are said to represent the unanimous view of the entire West Irian people....One such statement was described as the West Irian Charter. This...expressed loyalty to the Proclamation of August 17 1945...[recognised] the legal authority of the

Indonesian Republic as of 1 October 1962 and rejected the holding of a plebiscite in 1969.⁹⁸

This not only contradicted earlier British assessments that Jakarta was already losing interest in the territory; it also signalled a build-up in Indonesia's campaign against any plans to hold an "Act of Free Choice" in WNG to decide its final status.

For the Netherlands, the main concern now was to forget WNG, a policy facilitated by Jakarta's agreement on 13 March to re-establish diplomatic relations with The Hague. For the UN, this was a positive step for which the UN, as peace brokers, could claim some credit and U Thant applauded it as a "fitting and happy outcome".⁹⁹ Goedhart, who had been Dutch liaison officer with UNTEA, confirmed The Hague's position to Australian diplomats in June 1963:

Goedhart indicated that Dutch had little if any interest left in West New Guinea. He said that Luns who had pushed the matter hardest and longest could not bear even to mention the subject to such an extent that Schurmann and Goedhart were "in the dog house" with him simply because their duties had required them to be so active in this matter here. Goedhart also said that the Dutch correspondingly had little interest in arrangements in respect of any act of self-determination and were only concerned that some facade of respectability should be maintained...if such an arrangement could be cloaked with air of respectability referred to, Dutch would be satisfied.¹⁰⁰

In the last week of UNTEA, Abdoh opened the 1963 session of the New Guinea Council in its newly constructed building in Hollandia. At the opening, Abdoh expressed the hope that this "seat of democracy would reflect the will of the people".¹⁰¹

Thontje Meset, the Council's Chairman, declared that a great deal of responsibility had been placed on the members who "hand in hand" with the government of Indonesia would focus their minds on the existing problems in order to overcome them.¹⁰² This was to prove rather optimistic. Six days later, twelve of the twenty-eight members turned up to vote by seven to five to dissolve the Council and request:

His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia...Soekarno to return as soon as possible a People's Representative Council for the District of West Irian.¹⁰³

Four days after Abdoh's speech at the Council's inauguration, he attended the "roofing ceremony" of the Court of Justice, another public building project by UNTEA:

In his speech, Dr. Abdoh expressed confidence that fundamental freedoms, rights and liberties would be upheld by the court because “the Universal declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations have this purpose in view and the United Nations has been directly concerned with this Seat of Justice which will be the means of enforcing these very objectives.”¹⁰⁴

International reaction to the 1 May handover

Finally, on 1 May 1963, a public ceremony was held in Hollandia to hand the territory over from UNTEA to Indonesia with Elizar Bonay, a Papuan (and spokesman for the Papuan party Parna), as its first governor. At 12:41, local time, a Pakistani sergeant lowered the UN flag while a predominantly Papuan crowd of around 5,000 stood to attention.¹⁰⁵ The UN was represented by Abdoh and Narasimhan. Indonesia’s representatives were Foreign Minister Subandrio and the Chief of the Indonesian Liaison Mission with UNTEA, Dr Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro. Sukarno had decided to delay his arrival until several days after UNTEA’s departure. The Netherlands’ representative was Goedhart.

Among those making speeches, Abdoh thanked the Indonesian contingent and expressed confidence that the new administration would protect and promote the welfare of the people of the territory, although he did not specifically mention self-determination. Sudjarwo thanked the Papuans for the “numerous resolutions which have been forwarded to me by the people from various places and by various groups...expressing the growth of their awareness of the new situation”.¹⁰⁶

Neither of the Indonesian speakers, however, made any reference to a plebiscite or any other opportunity for Papuan self-determination. Mention of this was left to Narasimhan who read out a message from U Thant to the “people of West Irian”. In it he announced that as agreed in Article XVI of the New York Agreement, a few UN “experts” would visit the territory “as often as may be necessary and spend such time as may be required to enable them to report fully to me”. Their function would be to “advise and assist” in preparations for carrying out the “provisions of self-determination”. He concluded by stating:

I am confident that the Republic of Indonesia will scrupulously observe the terms of the agreement concluded on 15 August 1962, and will ensure the exercise by the population of the territory of their right to express their wishes as to their future.¹⁰⁷

Narasimhan later wrote how he, and the remaining 100 UN staff, then got out of the territory “that very night”. Narasimhan himself flew straight to the Netherlands where he met the Dutch queen. She apparently expressed

her concern to him for the Papuans and hoped that they would be allowed a proper act of self-determination.¹⁰⁸

Official international reaction was little more than a repetition of established positions. President Kennedy praised the transfer as “a notable event both for Indonesia and the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes between nations”.¹⁰⁹ Khrushchev described it as a victory in Indonesia’s just struggle for the territory. The North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong declared “we extend our warm congratulations to the brother Indonesian people for their recovery of West Irian”.¹¹⁰ A different view of events was given by the *Fiji Times* which commented in its editorial that the halted progress of the West Papuans towards choosing their own destiny had “caused deep rooted misgivings in Fiji”.¹¹¹

Fijian interest had also been aroused because four West Papuan students studying in the British colony had asked, and received, permission to remain following an Indonesian request for their immediate return. The students told the authorities that they disliked the new Indonesian administration and wished to stay on after their studies were over. In public, the colonial Fijian government announced that the students only wanted to stay to finish their studies and made no mention of their political motives. Shortly afterwards, however, local media leaked the real reasons, to the annoyance of the authorities.¹¹² The Australians also received similar requests from West Papuans asking to continue their studies in Port Moresby. A Canberra official informed the Fijian government: “Australians are asking Indonesians not to press for their return. But should Indonesians insist, we understand that decision in principle has been taken that they shall be allowed to stay.”¹¹³

Meanwhile, the Indonesian newspaper *Warta Berita* claimed to have exposed a US/Dutch plot to “wrest” West Irian from Indonesia, using, among other things, the “loophole” of the so-called plebiscite due in 1969.¹¹⁴

In reality, Washington’s position on WNG and Sukarno had altered little since the New York Agreement, although there were growing concerns within the Kennedy administration about the Indonesian President’s hostility towards Malaysia. Despite continuing calls from some analysts to “get tough” with Sukarno, the accepted policy remained one which sought to woo rather than confront him. In mid-January 1963, Robert Komer of the National Security Council staff wrote:

Given all the anti-Sukarno emotionalism rampant these days, I was delighted to find the Governor [Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs] thoroughly statesmanlike (I didn’t have to do any selling). He says we’re just going to have to “sweat out Sukarno,” alternatively using the carrot and stick, but essentially living with this guy and trying to box him in.¹¹⁵

In a telegram to the State Department in March, US Ambassador Jones in Jakarta gave his assessment of the current situation in Indonesia and its relevance to US interests. In a telegram review that supported Komer's position, Jones wrote:

Sukarno is one of our biggest problems in Indonesia but we must approach Indonesia's needs and role we play here in terms importance US places upon Indonesia and not on basis that Sukarno is eternal....As result New Guinea settlement Indonesians temporarily drew back from Soviets and attempted halt flow massive military assistance as Soviet military technicians left in droves. Indonesians turned toward US hoping for massive economic assistance, and for renewal military shipments.¹¹⁶

Jones, however, remained concerned that Indonesian interest in Malaysia and the recent left-wing rebellion in Brunei against the Sultan (which British troops crushed in December 1962) would give the Soviets a further opportunity to expand their influence in Indonesia, particularly if the issue deflected Jakarta's attention away from economic stabilisation policies. His advice was to combat this threat by continuing to work with Jakarta and provide substantial economic assistance.

In contrast to this approach, the right-wing US analyst Guy Pauker expressed alarm at a continuing influx of Soviet military aid into Indonesia and recommended "a tough US stance toward Indonesia in enforcing the WNG settlement and in protecting Timor, Borneo and Malaysia".¹¹⁷

Komer and Harriman, who described Pauker as very "dim", condemned this stance:

All these guys who advocate "tough" policies towards neutralists like Nasser and Sukarno blink at the fact that it was precisely such policies which helped influence these countries to accept Moscow offers in the first place. The best way to keep Nasser or Sukarno from becoming prisoners of the USSR is to compete for them, not thrust them into Soviet hands.¹¹⁸

Although Komer dismissed Pauker's view, he was concerned that British policy was following a similar line now that Sukarno was threatening their plans for Malaysia. On 11 January, the British Ambassador in Washington had delivered an aide-memoire from London to Secretary of State Rusk stating that Britain believed Sukarno's territorial ambitions would not stop with WNG. Borneo, Portuguese Timor, greater Malaysia and the rest of New Guinea were also at risk. It added that while the British understood US policy in Indonesia, they feared that it would aid Indonesian expansionism.¹¹⁹ Komer remarked, "I can see we're going to have a tough time

defending our Indo policy for the next few months (especially with the Brits taking a “head-in-sand” attitude).”¹²⁰

While broadly supporting US policy regarding WNG, Britain’s attitude towards Jakarta was entirely different when its own interests were threatened. In late January 1963, Earl Selkirk, the UK’s Commissioner for Singapore and Commissioner-General for South East Asia, had written to the Foreign Office commenting:

we have too long regarded Indonesia as a rather spoilt child whose aberrations had to be tolerated with a mild sense of regret. In reality Indonesia has now reached the status of manhood in the form of a robust, ill-disciplined gangster. We know she is making active military preparations in Kalimantan south of the North Borneo/Sarawak border and is considering taking certain preliminary steps which will probably lead to incidents in Timor. If she does not think she can get away with it, no doubt these will be represented as purely defensive measures otherwise I have no doubt she will try another West Irian.¹²¹

Although Selkirk does not comment on the source of his information, MI5 were allegedly intercepting communications between Indonesia’s London Embassy and Jakarta throughout the period of confrontation over Malaysia.¹²²

This opposition to further “appeasement” of Sukarno was also shared by British Ambassador Gilchrist in Jakarta. He remarked that, although the Australian and American Ambassadors would probably accompany Sukarno on his first visit to West Irian, he had no intention of listening to “a diatribe on Malaysia and neo-colonialism” and, if invited, would decline.¹²³

This difference of approach was to remain an issue in Anglo-American relations as Sukarno’s *Konfrontasi* with Malaysia developed. In January 1964, Britain’s Foreign Secretary R. Butler commented in a memorandum to the Cabinet:

we should continue to attempt to persuade our reluctant allies, the US first and foremost, and the Germans, our other NATO allies and the Japanese, that the possibility of influencing Sukarno does not rest in pandering to his threat to turn Communist but rather that failure to stand up to him now will only increase the risk of Indonesia becoming Communist later.¹²⁴

The growing dispute with Jakarta meant that London now had greater interest in Indonesian policies regarding WNG, but only so far as they could be related to the issue of Malaysia. At the time that UNTEA was pulling out of WNG, Indonesia was demanding that the people of British Borneo

be allowed a plebiscite to determine whether or not they wished to join Malaysia. Britain and Malaya's Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, were determined, however, that Borneo would join the new Malaysian state and had no enthusiasm for this demand. Consequently, the British were keen to highlight Jakarta's contrasting attitude on self-determination with regard to Borneo and WNG.

Shortly after the transfer, at a British-hosted diplomatic dinner in Jakarta, Abdul Gani, the Indonesian Minister for Information, made some "off the record" comments on WNG:

[Gani] stated categorically that it was not the intention of the Indonesian Government that United Nations-supervised plebiscite should be held. The people of West Irian would be encouraged to declare that it was not necessary, and if they did not want it who could force it on them? Abdul Gani conceded that he was being "naughty" and jocularly expressed the hope that Narasimhan would not be cross with him.¹²⁵

Gilchrist felt that if Gani's remarks were made public, it would undermine Jakarta's campaign for a plebiscite in Borneo. The problem was how to arrange the leak without the source being revealed. In a communication to London, an embassy official wrote:

there would be considerable advantage for us in leaking Gani's post-prandial remarks about the West Irian plebiscite...to publicise the Indonesian attitude to plebiscites and to their pledged word can only be helpful to us at present. The difficulty is that, in the circumstances, any obvious leak is almost certain to come home to roost....The problem is, therefore, to find someone else whose opportunity and interest is as obvious...I am sorry to have to say that only the Australians fill the bill completely.¹²⁶

A month later, in a handwritten note on the cover of a report on the transfer, a Foreign Office official remarked:

Perhaps we need not shed too many tears over the Indonesian attitude towards the 1969 plebiscite since this may make it easier for the Tunku to shuffle/fudge (?) over the plebiscite which may be promised in the Borneo territories as a result of the Manila talks.¹²⁷

Conclusions

The official UN history of UNTEA describes it as a success, based upon the premise that its primary tasks of maintaining law and order and public services were accomplished. Indar Jit Rikhye, U Thant's senior military

adviser in the territory before October 1962, went further. In a book written over ten years after UNTEA, he commented: “in terms of success the WNG experience comes high in the order of merit on the list of UN achievements in the sphere of peacemaking”. He also predicted (accurately) that in the future the UN might again be required to provide a temporary administration for a territory until it was in a position to manage its affairs for itself. “The experience of UNTEA should not be wasted but should serve as a model for the future”.¹²⁸

Henderson also defended UNTEA’s record, particularly against Van der Veur’s charges that it was dominated by the Indonesians, failed to achieve its plans for public utility projects and did little to fulfil its obligations to publicise, and explain to the population, the terms of the transfer and provisions for self-determination.¹²⁹ While Henderson accepted that there was a lot of truth in all the charges:

they overlook the crucial fact that UNTEA was conceived primarily as a device to lubricate the transfer of power of West New Guinea...and to do so in a very short period of time.¹³⁰

The basis of the argument of those who defend UNTEA’s record is that it did as well as could be expected under very difficult circumstances, and allowed the Dutch to surrender their colony with some semblance of dignity and without serious bloodshed. Central to this is the fact that there were no major breakdowns of law and order and UNTEA was able to maintain the appearance at least of being in authority throughout. The success of UNTEA in this respect was a success for the West and a setback for Soviet Bloc policy in Indonesia.

But with regard to its official responsibilities, as laid down in the New York Agreement, UNTEA did not succeed. It patently failed to defend the rights and freedoms of the Papuan people and did little to confront the systematic and ruthless campaign of intimidation carried out by the Indonesians throughout the entire period. Through UNTEA, the UN allowed itself to be party to a cynical betrayal of a people who had no one left to defend their interests except the UN. However strong the argument is that UN involvement helped prevent a war that was not in the West’s interests, this betrayal should not be counted among the UN’s great achievements. Rather, it remains a useful example of how the West used the UN to further its Cold War objectives, and in the process was prepared to endorse the deceit and double standards that permeated every aspect of the Indonesian takeover of WNG. In his conclusions on the UN’s involvement, Van der Veur observed that the Agreement was drawn up in an atmosphere of intimidation and therefore implicitly rewarded the threat of force. Therefore one could interpret its declarations on freedoms and rights as merely a way of saving Dutch “face”. This being the case, then the UN, as party to the settlement:

must have acted with tongue in cheek when it placated unrest and incipient opposition among the inhabitants of West Irian with specific reference to the Agreement and the future “act of self determination.” Even if one assumes that the “realists” are right and that the parties to the Agreement did not expect its self-determination provisions to be taken seriously, one is left to wonder whether the UN should have been the maid of honor in such a marriage of convenience.¹³¹

5 The first years of Indonesian rule 1963–1967

Indonesian rule begins. Article XVI ignored

Three days after Indonesian administration began, Sukarno arrived in West Irian for a triumphal two-day visit. By all accounts he enjoyed his trip, taking time to rename eight mountain peaks (renaming the largest, Mount Carstensz, after himself). He also conferred the title of “Paramount Son of West Irian” on the new Governor Eliezer Bonay. Indonesia was now, he said, the fifth-largest country in the world and would one day be the second largest; “though we can never be the first since the Chinese breed like marmots”.¹ Although publicly stating that he had no more territorial ambitions, he pledged Indonesia’s continuing support “to the last drop of blood” for all nations fighting for independence, such as Angola and North Borneo.²

Shortly after the visit, Sukarno issued two decrees banning all existing Papuan political parties and prohibiting all political activity not sanctioned by the authorities, both clear breeches of the Agreement.³ In defence of these restrictions, the British academic M. A. Jaspán wrote soon afterwards:

that Indonesia was faced with an exceptionally difficult and delicate task, and that this would not be made easier if deliberately hostile critics or destructive influences were given freedom of access into or movement within West Irian.⁴

Writing in 1965, he added optimistically that Jakarta did not regard this quarantine as either permanent or inherently desirable unlike Australia’s “strict entry permit system” for TPNG which he described as appearing “both permanent and relatively inflexible”.⁵

Political quarantine also meant that the territory was effectively closed to the outside world making it extremely difficult for foreigners to gain an accurate impression of the internal situation. In the first few years, except for official information, journalists and academics relied mostly upon eyewitness accounts from West Papuans who crossed into PNG, or from Indonesians willing to pass on information. Although there were several

hundred foreign missionaries in West Irian, there is no evidence that they were a particular source of useful information. In fact, the US missionaries and their families, who made up the largest group (256 resident in the interior in 1964), were described as having excellent relations with local government officials,⁶ which perhaps explained their unwillingness to do anything that could jeopardise their future.

This absence of any clear picture of the situation in West Irian was another fundamental breach of the terms of the Agreement. Article XVI specified that once the UNTEA administration ended, a “number of United Nations experts” would be designated to remain to advise and assist the authorities in preparations for carrying out the provisions for self-determination. On 30 May 1963, the Dutch informed Britain that Indonesia had agreed, in principle, to the implementation of this part of the Agreement. Nonetheless the British noted, “the Dutch are rather astonished that the Indonesians have agreed to this proposal but are sceptical as to how effectively the Indonesians will permit it to operate”.⁷ Their scepticism was well founded because Article XVI was never implemented. U Thant’s original suggestion was for the establishment of a panel of six UN officials under the supervision of Narasimhan and Rolz-Bennett.⁸ But in 1964, a memo by the Australian Mission to the UN reported:

the failure of the Secretary-General to give effect to his intention to send Article XVI experts to the Territory. In a letter to Mr Palar (Indonesian Ambassador to the UN) of 14th May 1963, Mr Narasimhan named the experts (some of whom have since been withdrawn) and added “it is the intention of the Secretary-General that two or three of these experts will visit the Territory at intervals of six months or so and submit reports to him under Article XVI of the Agreement”. While the terms of this letter have not been made public, a public statement in similar terms was made to the press by Narasimhan on 16th May, 1963. To our knowledge, none of the Article XVI experts has visited West Irian and other experts have been obliged, in order to ensure freedom of movement, formally to dissociate their visits from the purposes of Article XVI.⁹

A British report three years later echoes the Australian memorandum, and notes that following the Secretary-General’s request, “we seem to have heard no more”. Describing the situation up until Indonesia’s withdrawal from the UN in 1965, the report continues:

In 1964 a U.N. representative Mr. Rolz-Bennett did visit West Irian. It appears that he was the only U.N. representative to do so apart from FUNDWI [UN Fund for West Irian] personnel who seem to have been resident in the territory. According to a statement made by Indonesia’s Special co-ordinator for West Irian affairs, no permanent U.N. observer

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ever reached West Irian before August 1964 and we can trace no record of one arriving between that date and February 1965 when all U.N. personnel were withdrawn from Indonesia when she left the U.N....“The personnel in West Irian” referred to by the Secretary-General consisted apparently of only one person, as a New York telegram to the Foreign Office said “FUNDWI representative in West Irian is now at Jakarta expecting to leave”.¹⁰

As an important part of the Agreement’s preparations for Papuan self-determination, one might have expected some form of protest from the Secretariat at Jakarta’s refusal to abide by Article XVI. But, following a conversation with Rolz-Bennett in June 1964, an Australian diplomat remarked that the Under Secretary-General was “disinclined to discuss Article XVI in detail and left me with the impression that the Secretary-General did not intend to make too much of [it]”.¹¹

The only UN presence permitted in the first years of Indonesian rule were officials involved with FUNDWI. The fund had been established in November 1963 with a US\$30 million grant from the Dutch and its purpose was to assist in the economic and social development of West Irian. Under the arrangements for the operation of the fund, the UN was authorised to:

appoint special staff to Jakarta (to come under the jurisdiction of the UNTAB Resident Representative in Jakarta) and to appoint (through executing agencies) project managers and experts as necessary for agreed Fund projects.¹²

Only a small number of FUNDWI officials actually visited the territory before February 1965 when an Australian report noted:

Mr. Rapaport, the Executive Director of FUNDWI, visited West Irian in March 1964 to discuss the implementation of FUNDWI projects, and occasional visits have been made by the United Nations personnel stationed elsewhere in Indonesia. However, no development work under FUNDWI has yet begun, although the Indonesians have submitted lists of projects.¹³

Conditions in the territory. Armed rebellion begins

Unhindered by independent observers, Indonesia’s first few months of administration were nonetheless criticised by some Papuans such as Herman Wajoi, who had campaigned for them during UNTEA. Wajoi, by now President of the Indonesian National Party (PNI) in West Irian, sent a resolution to the government on behalf of his officially sanctioned organisation. The resolution reported that young Papuan government employees were

being harassed and dismissed from their jobs and possessions such as radios, refrigerators and clothes were being “stolen in a big way or robbed with the strength of firearms”. The resolution concluded by calling for an end to the recent corruption and theft, and asking for a curtailment of the flow of non-Papuan officials into the territory so that more use could be made of existing Papuan officials.¹⁴

In 1963, Foreign Minister Subandrio had pledged that West Irian would not be “colonised” by the Javanese and there would be no transmigration to the territory from other provinces of Indonesia. It was, according to the British Ambassador, a logical enough decision “in view of the already serious problem of feeding the existing population”.¹⁵ By 1964, however, the resident Indonesian population was estimated to be 16,000, twice as large as the maximum pre-1963 Dutch population. A 1964 US report remarked: “the very size of the Indonesian influx has, of course, created problems. Housing has become very tight.”¹⁶ The next year an Australian diplomatic memorandum referred to “recent press reports about large-scale emigration of Javanese to West New Guinea”.¹⁷ The same communication quoted the exiled Papuan nationalist Markus Kaisiepo noting that ex-Governor Eliezer Bonay had:

recently been appointed as Vice-Minister for the interior in Djakarta and his main responsibility was the movement of Javanese to West New Guinea. Kaisiepo remarked on the irony of this as Bonay’s opposition while Governor to the settlement of Javanese in the territory was one of the reasons for his removal from this post.¹⁸

Although the numbers of transmigrants in the 1960s were small compared with later massive settlement programmes in West Irian, the Anti-Slavery Society records that in 1966, 100 transmigrant families were settled in both the Merauke and Jayapura regions; “in neither of these cases is there any record as to how the land was acquired from the West Papuans.”¹⁹

Papuan antipathy towards Indonesia was witnessed in 1964, when, after twelve months of delay by Jakarta, a team of two US Embassy officials was permitted to enter West Irian for a ten-day field trip. On their return they reported that Jakarta wished to portray an image of eternal union with West Irian and wanted to avoid a plebiscite. The officials also claimed that “the cream of its crop” of Indonesian bureaucrats had been sent to the territory, but:

Initial Papuan reaction to Indonesian administration was largely wait and see. After fifteen months, however, it has changed to a major degree of alienation. Even those Papuan leaders who were instrumental in promoting union with Indonesia are adamant that the provisions for a plebiscite to be held before the end of 1969 must be fulfilled...latent Papuan nationalism fostered actively during the latter part of Dutch rule seems to have received a new lease of life.²⁰

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They then noted that several different informants had revealed that a “near insurrection” had almost broken out the previous month in Manokwari.²¹

Despite the Indonesians being the “cream of the crop”, the Americans also observed that they patronised the Papuans in an almost “classical colonial sense” and were quick to complain how lazy the locals were and how “like children they must be led”. Furthermore, the report remarked that there was a steady flow of consumer goods leaving the territory and estimated that only 25 per cent of these goods shipped and invoiced to West Irian were actually unloaded there. Non-Papuan officials served in the territory for two years only, which the report stated:

discourages any tendency by the Indonesians to consider Irian their home and the individual tends to count the days until his going home, much as many a colonial administrator in the past.²²

Significantly they also remarked “except for the figurehead of the Governor at the top, few Papuans are to be found in the government civil service positions and this is resented”.²³ In support of their assessment, they revealed that an Australian ABC journalist had, perhaps uniquely, managed to visit the territory in both May 1963 and August 1964. In his opinion, the political situation had markedly deteriorated since the previous year to the point of being “explosive”.²⁴

Although the US report acknowledged grave problems in West Irian, American assessments of the situation tended to be more optimistic than those of the Australians or British. An Australian governmental briefing from early 1965 predicted that the territory would stagnate and deteriorate economically.²⁵ In October 1967, the British Embassy in Jakarta interviewed a German agricultural officer, one of the few non-missionary foreigners to remain in the territory after 1963. He estimated that over 90 per cent of the Papuans wanted independence, and this applied to the governors and government officials as well as the common villagers:

Naturally, however, no Papuan expresses nationalistic sentiments openly since the present governor’s predecessor [Elizer Bonay] was dismissed two years ago for doing just that, and a number of leading Papuans have been in gaol since 1965 for petitioning for independence.²⁶

He also revealed that rebellion had been going on intermittently since 1965, reaching a peak in January 1967 when the air force had bombed guerrilla camps. Accusing official reports of greatly underestimating the casualties, he added:

In his town alone [on the Bird’s Head Peninsula] 20 Indonesian soldiers have been killed in ambushes and a very large number of Papuans, mostly ordinary villagers rather than guerillas, have since been killed by

way of reprisal. Although the government now controls the main towns, thanks to a great increase in the military contingent which now includes units of the crack West Java “Siliwangi” division and RPKAD (para-commandoes) as well as the less disciplined Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) and the West Irian (non-Papuan) “Tjenderawasih” division, government forces are always liable to ambush outside of town.²⁷

Explaining the reason for Papuan nationalism, the German concluded that it was simply due to Indonesian mal-administration. He also echoed earlier Western reports by stating:

Many officials go to West Irian solely to enrich themselves through embezzlement or, in the case of many of the soldiers, by simply stealing. Most Javanese in any case have an almost Afrikaner attitude towards “those black men” and social mixing between the two races is rare.²⁸

Elsewhere, an Australian journalist resident in PNG during 1964 wrote that the “interior” of West Irian appeared to be completely neglected by the Indonesians. The “natives had reverted to headhunting” and serious tribal fighting had broken out in the Baliem Valley with hundreds reported killed.²⁹

According to Van der Kroef, increasing Papuan discontent led in 1965 to the founding of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM – Free Papua Movement) on the Bird’s Head Peninsula, where sporadic rebellion against the Indonesians had been continuing since 1963. In May 1965, OPM members were arrested in the area following attempted raisings of the Papuan flag.³⁰ Papuan rebels were also reported to have attacked Shell Oil Company installations on Biak.³¹ In August 1965, the British Ambassador in Jakarta telegraphed the Foreign Office to forward information given to his Embassy by the Americans:

there had been an uprising in the vicinity of Manokwari in the Bird’s Head of West Irian. Rebellious tribesmen have killed members of the Police Mobile Brigade stationed in the area. Airforce PGT troops were then parachuted in to restore situation but nothing has been heard from them. One battalion of the army parachute commando regiment was to be flown from Djakarta to Biak on 12 August. U.S. AAA [Assistant Army Attaché?] obtained information from a member of this battalion believed reliable and passed information to us without knowledge of his superiors. Please protect.³²

According to an official Indonesian military history, the deployment in Manokwari of Infantry Battalion 641 and Battalion 642 of the Cendrawasih Division in late 1964 led to:

disturbances demonstrations and the display of posters in Manokwari, Sorong, Ayamaru, Teminabuan, Bintuni, Fak Fak, Kaimana, Kokonao and several other places. This was followed by an attempt by separatists on 16 December 1964 to steal weapons from the local police.³³

On 26 July 1965, Papuan government employees attacked and killed a number of soldiers during a Papuan flag raising ceremony, before fleeing into the bush with stolen weapons. Two days later, rebel leader and ex-PVK sergeant, Frits Awom, led several hundred men in an attack on Battalion 641's barracks in Arfai, Manokwari. The Indonesians responded on 4 August by launching their first counter-insurgency operation, Operation Sadar.³⁴

Despite this operation, rebellion continued, particularly in the Manokwari region. According to the Indonesian Army, in 1966 the rebels went on the offensive attacking numerous military posts. They also gained support from the local people, and from Papuans in the army, police and civil service.³⁵ In April 1967, the Indonesians publicly admitted that their air force had strafed Manokwari town the previous January, killing forty people. This, they said, was in response to Awom declaring a "Free Papua State" and taking virtual control of the town.³⁶ The same year, Johan Ariks, a 75-year-old local Arfak "Big Man" (a non-hereditary leader who achieves status through his own actions and charisma), was captured by the military after leading a two-year guerrilla campaign in the area. He died in prison in 1969.³⁷

P. Szudek, writing for the pro-Papuan Anglo-Melanesian Aid Committee in 1968, gives further details about these disturbances. While the allegations are serious enough to warrant mention, it is important to note that Szudek does not give his source of information. In the Baliem Valley during 1966, he alleges that eighty males, some as young as 10, were shot by troops in the village of Gulunu and a boy of 10 was publicly hanged. The reason given was that the people had refused to call themselves Irianese. In the districts of Sukarnapura, Manokwari and Teminabuan at least fifteen men were publicly hanged by military police in 1967, including a Papuan police inspector called Nico Jacadewa, and a number of his Papuan constables. In the district of Ayamaru in February 1967, the army launched a "military" operation shooting and executing numbers of Papuans and burning down villages. In the same month on the Bird's Head Peninsula, villages were shelled and bombed by the Indonesian Navy and Air Force.³⁸

Szudek also records that Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik travelled to West Irian in August 1966, accompanied for the first time by foreign journalists. Quoting one of the correspondents, the Dutchman Frank de Jong, he wrote: "Where ever he went, Mr. Malik was greeted by people shouting...Where is the plebiscite?"³⁹

UN reaction

The response of the international community to these events was muted. Crucially, it appears that neither the Dutch nor the UN ever intended to argue the case for a plebiscite in West Irian. As early as 21 May 1963, Australia's Washington Embassy forwarded information from the Americans, concerning some "impressions" on the issue that they had recently received from Narasimhan:

The Dutch and Indonesians have apparently been sounding each other out on the question of the form of the self-determination exercise. The Dutch apparently are prepared to agree to the exercise taking some form other than a plebiscite if this is acceptable to other parties to the West New Guinea Agreement. Narasimhan's view is that the Act might take the form of consultation with local councils and village representatives. Regarding timing, the Dutch, with an eye on their relations with Indonesia, are understood to be anxious to get the act of self-determination over in 1965 or 1966.⁴⁰

In May 1964, Rolz-Bennett arrived in Jakarta for talks with Sukarno and Subandrio before flying on to West Irian where he met Sudjarwo, the Indonesian government's representative for West Irian affairs. He also embarked upon a brief tour of Biak, Sukarnapura (Hollandia) and Manokwari. At the talks in Jakarta, Rolz-Bennett claimed that the Indonesians "responded positively" to his arguments in favour of a plebiscite, although his overall impressions of the visit were, according to Australian diplomatic reports, "negative". In the written text outlining his case, he refers to the need for "some form of plebiscite", and in his discussions in Jakarta he recommended a system whereby each district would elect an enlarged council. This would then meet to decide, on behalf of the population, whether or not to remain with Indonesia.⁴¹

Significantly, apart from a reference to the importance of a free and secret vote by each council, Rolz-Bennett's suggestion is remarkably similar to the method eventually adopted by Jakarta. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, this chosen method was publicly presented in 1969 as an Indonesian plan without any mention of the UN's long-standing support for the idea.

It is also relevant to note that the word "plebiscite" was misused by Rolz-Bennett. A plebiscite, as defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is a "direct vote of all electors of state on an important public question". The election of representatives to decide upon an issue on the population's behalf is not a plebiscite, no matter how democratic the selection process.

As well as encountering a small number of Papuans at the airport bearing "no plebiscite" placards, Rolz-Bennett later informed his UN colleagues that he had received four anonymous letters urging a return of the Dutch. Australian documents state that "the Indonesians were pleased when he told them that he had received the letters and that he was, of course, ignoring

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them.”⁴² Among Szudek’s allegations of Indonesian brutality, he asserts that in February 1967, three men were taken from Teminabuan Jail (on the Bird’s Head Peninsula) and publicly executed. The reason given was that they had handed anti-Indonesian petitions to Rolz-Bennett during his 1964 visit.⁴³

Although very flexible on how the Act was to be conducted, the UN was firm on the point that some form of self-determination was necessary. An Australian government document from early 1965 predicted that the Indonesians were unlikely to risk an act of self-determination if they could avoid it. However, Narasimhan informed the Americans in May 1963 that he had warned Subandrio:

that if the Indonesians thought they could avoid carrying out the self-determination element in the agreement, he could assure them that on the day they said that publicly, the Secretary-General would immediately inform the UN that Indonesia had broken the Agreement.

However, the same document continues:

N.S. Subbaram of UNTAB in Djakarta told the [Australian] Embassy in March, 1964 he thought there was a possibility that Indonesia and the Netherlands would come to some arrangement about the plebiscite, and if they agreed it was not necessary, the U.N. would not be able to interfere.⁴⁴

The Australians assessed that U Thant would not make a stand on such an Indonesian/Dutch decision “unless he knew that a majority of Afro-Asian and Latin Americans were crusading for self-determination for West Irian”. The Australian report concluded that such a protest would be unlikely,⁴⁵ noting incorrectly that no states had spoken out against the Agreement in the UNGA meeting of September 1963.

From the evidence, the UN’s attitude seemed to be that, while genuine Papuan self-determination was both impractical and undesirable, an appearance of self-determination was necessary in order that the issue could be legitimately concluded. Indonesian threats to this process were to be resisted so long as the UN still had a responsibility under the Agreement. However, a decision by the two signatories to abandon the process would release U Thant from his obligation and was therefore acceptable. As with the international community generally, the emphasis on appearance, rather than substance, would be a characteristic of UN policy on Papuan self-determination throughout its involvement in the issue.

Dutch reaction

The Hague’s attitude was broadly similar to the UN’s. In addition to sharing the Secretariat’s position that direct voting was unnecessary, the Dutch had

little enthusiasm for any continuing involvement in the issue. On the one hand, Foreign Minister Luns had rejected repeated private suggestions by Subandrio in April 1964 that he announce to the Dutch Parliament that an act of Papuan self-determination was no longer necessary.⁴⁶ On the other hand, two months previously, De Beus, the former Dutch Ambassador to Australia, had informed Australia's Ambassador in The Hague "on a personal basis" that:

the Dutch Government was moving towards the point of view first, that an effective plebiscite would never be held in West Irian, and second, that it should be prepared to be very elastic about coming to an agreement with the Indonesians and the U.N. for self-determination, including substitutes for a plebiscite or even waiving it altogether.⁴⁷

On 9 April 1965, Australian diplomats in Jakarta referred to "political activities in West New Guinea" in a discussion with Dutch Ambassador Emile Schiff and asked him:

what the Dutch Government was doing about this, and whether he felt that it would be quickly buried. He has had instructions to raise this matter (which he does not like), and is apprehensive about the matter becoming something of a political football in Holland. Schiff can see no point in making a fuss about all this. It all stems from what he regards as an executive mistake which the Dutch made, which was to give [the Papuans] the idea that they could have an independent political future with a hostile Indonesia next door. Schiff regards such an idea as nonsense, and hopes that the Ministers all forget it.⁴⁸

On this evidence, it is not surprising that the Australian assessment of the Dutch position at this time was that:

Self-determination could be the one final stumbling block in the way of the resumption of genuine Netherlands/Indonesian co-operation, and, subject to some restraints imposed by continuing but dwindling Dutch public feeling about the issue, the Dutch Government is clearly anxious to come to an amicable arrangement with Indonesia about it.⁴⁹

Dutch sensitivity towards relations with Jakarta also affected The Hague's attitude towards the Papuan nationalist community in the Netherlands. This was despite the active involvement of the Dutch in ensuring that leading nationalists were settled in the Netherlands before the Indonesian takeover.⁵⁰ A British document from June 1965 notes:

There are some indications that the Dutch are becoming increasingly embarrassed by the activities of these emigré organisations in the

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Netherlands, and it is believed that they may have instructed the more active organisations to remove their HQs elsewhere.⁵¹

Although Papuan nationalist organisations have remained active in the Netherlands to this day, Jouwe's group, the "Freedom Committee for West Papua", did move its HQ to New York in 1967.⁵² But it is not clear whether this was as a result of Dutch pressure, or simply a practical step to be nearer the UNGA in preparation for the 1969 Act of Free Choice.

British reaction

The British also took note of the attitude of Luns towards the loss of West Irian. In conversation with Oliver of the British Embassy in The Hague, the Dutch minister made clear that he was still bitter, and blamed the Americans: "If they had wanted to, they could have stopped Sukarno right at the beginning of the West Irian affair."⁵³

The British themselves were preoccupied with Indonesia's confrontation policy towards the creation of Malaysia, and had no wish to involve themselves with West Irian. In February 1963, the first armed Indonesian infiltrators crossed into Sarawak as part of Jakarta's campaign to "confront" the planned incorporation of the British Borneo territories (North Borneo and Sarawak), and their predominantly non-Malay population, into the new Malaysian state. In late August and early September, a small UN team conducted a brief "survey" of public opinion in the territories, before deciding that the majority wished to join Malaysia.⁵⁴ Although more comprehensive assessments of public opinion had already been conducted (specifically the 1962 Cobbold Commission), this exercise obviously bore no relation to an act of self-determination. The Indonesians, who had previously demanded a plebiscite on the issue, subsequently refused to accept the result, despite previously having agreed to do so. On 16 September, the state of Malaysia came into being and the next day, the British Embassy in Jakarta was stormed and ransacked by a mob.⁵⁵

The effect of this crisis on British attitudes to West Irian, such as they were, was summed up in June 1965 by Sir Paul Gore Booth, the Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office. In a letter to Lord Avon, he wrote:

Although the [Papuan] emigré organisations sometimes evoke sympathy it will not surprise you to hear that we invariably recommend those who ask our advice not to involve themselves in correspondence with them....It is not that we are moved by fears about Indonesian susceptibilities or that we suppose that such correspondence could make our relations with Indonesia very much worse than they are. But one of our main objectives, in which we have so far had a fair measure of success, is to enlist the support of Afro-Asian countries for Malaysia as an independent Asian state. To do this we have to combat propaganda alleging

that Malaysia is only a puppet employed by Britain to harass Indonesia. Such propaganda would be assisted if we were to take up the cause of the Papuans with whom African and Asian governments (most of them with their own minority problems) feel little or no kinship or sympathy. British support for the Papuans would be widely regarded as a specifically anti-Indonesian move lending credence to Indonesian charges which otherwise command little acceptance.⁵⁶

Interestingly, despite Gore Booth's belief that the Papuans had little support in Asia, there is evidence that, initially at least, Malaysia itself disagreed with Britain's policy of non-interference in West Irian affairs. In October 1963, the Papuan nationalist Jouwe visited Malaysia and to the concern of the British appeared to receive a warm welcome from his hosts. During the visit, a British diplomat from the High Commission reported meeting Jouwe and a colleague by chance in the office of Tar Nurdin Sopiee, the Malaysian Director of Government Information Services. In a telegram to the Commonwealth Relations Office on 18 October, the diplomat warned:

Malaysians are allowing themselves to become embroiled. Jouwe and his colleagues have already met Ghazali and are apparently scheduled to see Tunku on 21 October. Malaysians are considering printing 30,000 copies of a brochure for this organisation. Jouwe is anxious to contact Australian High Commission here and hopes to go on to Australia. We have warned Critchley [of the Australian High Commission] who is trying to keep out of his way. We shall do our best to avoid Jouwe. We are also ensuring that no British counter-subversion funds are used by Malaysians in anyway connected with this body.⁵⁷

The next day, the British High Commission contacted London again on the issue:

To put it mildly, the Malaysians seem to be acting most indiscreetly and unwisely. We have considered whether we could profitably intervene. We have decided that it would be better not to make any attempt at this stage to sober down the Malaysians. Clearly, however, if at a later point in time it did seem appropriate to mount a wider exercise aimed at reducing the Malaysian's ebullience this would be high on the agenda.⁵⁸

Whether or not the British did act to reduce Malaysian "ebullience" is unclear, but Kuala Lumpur's brief flirtation with the Papuans, motivated by Jakarta's confrontation, seems to have been short-lived and there appears to be no further reference to it in de-classified British documents.

While the British could see no advantage in involving themselves in the issue of Papuan self-determination, they did, at times, acknowledge that there was something to be gained on the issue with regard to Indonesia. On

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7 January 1965, Indonesia withdrew from the UN in protest at the appointment of Malaysia as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Five days later a handwritten minute from the British Prime Minister's Office remarked:

It would be in our interests to see that publicity is given to the dissident Papuans and, even though Indonesia is no longer a member of the U.N., it would presumably help to [harm/tarnish (?)] the Indonesian image at the U.N.⁵⁹

Of more interest, however, was the perceived threat (felt by sections of Australian opinion in particular) posed by Indonesia towards TPNG. It was a scenario exploited by London in late 1963 in its efforts to gain support from Western powers for British policy on confrontation. This seems to be particularly the case in Britain's dealings with Washington. The United States was pledged to defend TPNG under the ANZUS Agreement. Because of this the British emphasised the argument that "The first line of defence of Australian New Guinea lies in Malaysia."⁶⁰

Australian reaction

As West Irian's neighbour in New Guinea, Australia had a particular interest in events within the territory. First of all it had no illusions about the Papuans' future. In early 1965, one Australian document declared:

It was fairly clear before Indonesia announced its withdrawal [from the UN] that Indonesia would not carry out the obligations under the Netherlands/Indonesia Agreement in a manner that could be genuinely represented as offering a meaningful exercise of freedom of choice. The prospect was (and is) that West Irian would be absorbed into Indonesia without adequate respect for the choice of the people.⁶¹

Apprehension about the new neighbour was heightened in the weeks following Indonesia's takeover of West Irian as a result of several incidents along the border. In May/June 1963, fearful of Indonesian reprisals for their previous cooperation with the Dutch, 220 refugees from the Merauke region crossed the border into the Western District of TPNG. On 20 June 1963, an Indonesian military patrol searching for refugees crossed the border near the south coast. Unable to induce 150 refugees to return, an Indonesian officer remarked to the local Australian official that he would soon "persuade" them to change their minds if the latter turned a blind eye. The same document lists other relatively minor incidents such as threats by Indonesian troops to locals in TPNG, and disputes over Australian-erected border signs.⁶² At the same time, there were reports that an Indonesian radio station in West Irian had begun referring to TPNG as "East Irian". Another

report claimed that Subandrio informed visiting Australians in Jakarta that although Indonesia had no territorial claims on TPNG, it would support any emerging indigenous liberation movements.⁶³

In retrospect, none of these incidents was particularly serious and the rumours of Indonesian aggression towards Australian New Guinea now seem far-fetched. But at the time, some Australians and Papua New Guineans did genuinely fear attack, particularly during the period of confrontation in Borneo where Australian troops were involved in armed clashes with Indonesian infiltrators. One Australian journalist, writing in 1965, spoke of government plans for a large increase in expenditure on military installations and infrastructure in TPNG:

Indonesia's withdrawal from the United Nations this year ended the last flickering hopes that the [West Irian] plebiscite might be held. Now the gloves are off and Australia, while continuing to hope for the best, is preparing for the worst in her New Guinea territories.⁶⁴

Commenting that the territory had been given the status of a "full military command", the journalist explained that the aim was to provide a basis for rapid expansion in the event of all-out attack when British and US support would be expected. But in the case of "Borneo-style" infiltration by small bands of guerrillas "headed by some renegade native", defence would be largely in the hands of the local Pacific Islands Regiment, numbering less than 3,000 men.⁶⁵

Papuan nationalists who hoped to benefit from deteriorating Australian/Indonesian relations were disappointed. In October 1963, Australian missions were instructed to avoid official contact with Jouwe and his colleagues. The missions were also told not to issue them entry visas without reference to Canberra. As the British High Commission in Canberra observed at the time, "they do not want to see them in Canberra and it seems likely that they will impose considerable administrative delays on any applications for visas".⁶⁶ In the event Canberra did more than simply delay the applications. An Australian Department of External Affairs paper from 1968 reveals:

Australian contact with nationalists abroad has been kept to the unavoidable minimum. Correspondence from nationalists has not been acknowledged and their applications to visit Australia and TPNG have been consistently refused.⁶⁷

Even after the end of confrontation, West Irian remained an uncomfortable issue for Canberra. A British diplomat in Jakarta wrote in October 1967:

It may be worth recording that [Australia's] attitude [on West Irian] in Djakarta is one of extreme caution verging on embarrassment. Their

main concern is “not to get involved”, since this is the one issue which could seriously jeopardize Indonesian/Australian relations as 1969 approaches. Already some Indonesian officials suspect Australia of backing the O.P.M. because political refugees from West Irian have crossed into Papua/New Guinea on many occasions and the Australians feel they cannot send them all back. In addition there was the demonstration against the Indonesian Ambassador, Kosasih, at Port Moresby in April; it is also true that many of the letters between Holland and the Papuan nationalists are smuggled out via Papua/New Guinea.⁶⁸

Australian policy-makers were well aware there was no international interest in challenging Indonesian activities in West Irian, and that it was “alone in its serious continuing concern over what happens” in the territory.⁶⁹ In particular, they came to the assessment in 1965 that:

On the information available the United States does not wish to engage itself further in the question. West New Guinea was a major irritant in American-Indonesian relations and the State Department also hoped that after acquiring the territory...Indonesia would develop greater stability. Although these hopes were not fulfilled, there is no disposition on the part of the Americans to reopen the policy issues.⁷⁰

Furthermore, a “strong stand” by Canberra on the implementation of Papuan self-determination could, it was felt, “produce awkward complications” for the Australians with regard to the West Papuans. Such a move would encourage Papuans to expect a “more liberal policy” towards refugees and jeopardise the existing policy of “keeping them to their side of the border and not allowing a tradition of asylum to grow”.⁷¹ There were also concerns that if Indonesia refused to hold an act of self-determination, a “strong stand” on the issue would result in Canberra being unable for domestic political reasons to then recognise Jakarta’s sovereignty of West Irian once the 1969 deadline had passed. This, it was felt, could create tensions over the border which would then be exploited by its “unstable and possibly aggressive neighbour”.⁷² For this reason, Australia shared the UN’s favoured option of persuading Indonesia to permit an appearance of Papuan self-determination to take place. This could then produce the inevitable result in favour of remaining within the Republic, the Agreement would be legitimately fulfilled, and an important potential cause of instability in Canberra’s relations with Jakarta would be removed.

The only situation where Australia could see an independent West Papua, or one linked to PNG, as feasible was, according to the 1965 paper, one in which Indonesia were to fragment following a loss of control of its territories by the central government. Finally, the paper also speculated that Australian policy towards Papuan nationalists could change, but only in the event of a PKI (Communist Party) takeover in Jakarta “In these

circumstances resistance in the outer provinces to accepting the rule of this kind of government in Java could be to Australia's advantage."⁷³

It is also worth noting that the importance some Australian diplomats and politicians attached to placating Indonesia expressed itself in their attitudes towards other areas of potential dispute. Evidence of this appears in British documents from early 1963 on the military threat posed by Indonesia to Portuguese Timor. One, dated 4 January 1963, warns "our intelligence shows that the Indonesians are undoubtedly plotting some action against Portuguese Timor, though we still can not predict how or when they might act".⁷⁴ While the British were not prepared to provide military assistance to Portugal in the event of an attack (despite having a treaty obligation since 1707 to do so), a Foreign Office official advised: "we cannot go as far in the opposite direction as the Australians who want the Portuguese out and are studying the idea of some form of U.N. trusteeship for Timor".⁷⁵ While such a solution could have facilitated de-colonisation and eventual self-determination, Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia, K. C. O. Shann, appeared to view it as an opportunity for a settlement along the lines of that adopted for West Irian. Mention of this is made in an internal communication by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in January 1963:

It may be that Timor is an anomaly. But in my judgement the sort of charade suggested by the Australian Ambassador in Djakarta, i.e. of arranging a play as a result of which the Indonesians ended up with Timor in their possession, is full of danger.⁷⁶

Suharto comes to power

Following the failure of the alleged PKI-backed coup of September 1965 and the right-wing military backlash, political power in Indonesia moved from Sukarno to General Suharto. Although Suharto did not formally become President until March 1968, his pro-Western policies took effect much sooner. Confrontation ended in 1966 and in September of that year Foreign Minister Malik travelled to the UN in New York to arrange Indonesia's re-entry to the organisation. He also announced on 30 September that Jakarta would permit an act of self-determination in West Irian, something which Sukarno had ruled out as recently as May 1965.⁷⁷ It was a controversial statement domestically and Malik had to repeat his assurance on 12 December to counter an assertion by Rahmat, the Home Affairs Minister, that it would not take place.⁷⁸

With the prospect of a Papuan act of free choice back on the agenda, Jakarta had some renewed interest in the on-going issues in West Irian of economic neglect and anti-Indonesian sentiment. In March 1967, during a session of the Indonesian Provisional Peoples' Consultative Congress (MPRS), Karubuy, a West Papuan member, made an impromptu speech accusing the authorities of bombing the Papuans and treating them like

enemies. He added that the people were in a state of revolt because of economic neglect. Although soon afterwards he retracted his statement in front of the press, the government was concerned enough to reply publicly to the accusations.⁷⁹ At a press conference on 15 March, Malik described Karubuy's accusations as exaggerated. Nonetheless, he admitted an unpleasant state of affairs existed in West Irian and pledged that every effort was being made to improve the economic situation.⁸⁰

However, British reports from February 1967 state that, while economic relief was getting to West Irian, most of Indonesia's available economic resources were still being devoted to Java for "political reasons" and Sumatra for longer term economic ones.⁸¹ In addition, information from the US and Canadian Embassies in Jakarta suggested that Papuan dissatisfaction with Jakarta was still widespread and growing. Government officials, particularly the Javanese, were distrusted and economic development was at a virtual standstill.⁸²

Eight months later, the British predicted that the biggest hope for investment in West Irian in the near future was the US\$30 million provided by the Dutch under FUNDWI. This aid had become available again following Jakarta's re-entry into the UN. But, quoting Powers, the fund's American administrator, the prospects for the money being well spent were very poor: "his gloom about the future appears to be justified by a recent report that, of the 3 Otter aircraft already bought under the Fund, one has already been commandeered by the Military".⁸³

As 1968 began, the prospects of economic and political stability in West Irian were not favourable. Furthermore, with no Indonesian or international interest in a genuine act of self-determination, it was clear that the UN's return to the territory would be unlikely to fulfil the nationalist aspirations of thousands of Papuans, or safeguard the political and human rights of the population as a whole.

6 West Irian 1968

Part 1

The economic, political and security situation

In the last years of Dutch rule, A\$30 million was spent annually on subsidising jobs and economic development in WNG. By the late 1960s, the Australians were spending over A\$120 million annually on subsidising the economy of Eastern New Guinea. In West Irian, up until 1968, the annual Indonesian allocation of funds was US\$4 million. This shortfall in development funding had been greatly magnified by Indonesia's withdrawal from the UN in 1965 causing the territory to lose annual UN funding of up to US\$30 million. In 1968, UN funding resumed and US\$30 million were again made available to West Irian. However, in the words of one US Embassy official who toured the territory in March:

it will disappear like a snowball in Hell. A hundred times this sum would probably go the same way, not because of corruption, although this does exist on quite a large scale, but because of the enormity of the problem...The sort of sum required for a proper development of the country is, and will remain, completely beyond Indonesia's means.¹

The economic problems in West Irian were also highlighted by the Australian journalist Peter Hastings, despite his firm support for continued Indonesian rule in the territory. In August 1968, in the first of a series of articles on the subject he wrote:

The simple fact is that, since the Dutch departure, the Indonesian Government has done little or nothing until this year to develop the country or to give the Papuans any substantial economic development projects or any real degree of political participation. Papuan feeling is high.²

Significantly, Hastings also briefed an official at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta on his arrival back from West Irian, informing him that the territory's basic problem was political, not economic, and that the Papuans felt that they had been "sold down the river" by the Indonesians. He also

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remarked that the OPM guerrillas were well financed and stronger than he had expected with possible connections in Australian New Guinea.³

Hastings' assessment of the OPM was also shared by Reynders, a US consular official who visited West Irian in March 1968. Described by Morgan of the British Embassy as "a reasonable person, not given to flights of fancy",⁴ Reynders concluded that security was a major problem, particularly in the north west where the Arfaks were determined to drive the Indonesians out. He estimated that a conservative figure for the number of armed Arfak insurgents was 400, but in the whole territory he believed that up to 50,000 dissidents could "take to the hills and jungles" at any time. He also suspected, perhaps unrealistically, that the rebels could, if necessary, obtain arms from Communist China via the large Papuan community in Japan. But for the present, he believed that they were adequately supplied with captured weapons and homemade explosives. Reynders added that there were in total around 100 Indonesian Army garrisons dotted throughout West Irian and supplied by air. However, these garrisons were small and their influence only extended "within tough walking distance of the camps". Reynders concluded:

The Indonesians have tried everything from bombing them with [US-supplied] B-26's, to shelling and mortaring them, but a continuous state of semi-rebellion persists...it would be beyond the capacity of the Indonesian army, let alone its financial resources, to eradicate them.⁵

It is important to qualify Reynders' opinions by bearing in mind the limited foreign access to accurate information on West Irian at this time. This was despite US use of informants in the territory, including Indonesian Army personnel and possibly employees of the UN development programme for West Irian, FUNDWI.⁶ Nonetheless, to an extent these assessments were also shared by the Indonesians, although not publicly at that time. An official Indonesian military history of West Irian up to August 1969 describes the security threat still posed by the OPM in 1967 and 1968 following a major military operation to destroy them:

The basic force of the enemy was not paralysed at all. Many remnants roamed the forests, attacking our posts and patrols, then vanished into the forests. Their actions intensified even further at the start of 1968 and they were able to employ the principles and tactics of guerrilla warfare to great effect: the tactics of appearing-and-vanishing, of laying mines...of having their agents close to our own positions and waging psychological warfare so as to fuel tension.⁷

This armed resistance to Indonesia was to continue throughout the whole period leading up to the Act, despite intensive Indonesian military activity including air-strikes against positions that had come under OPM control.⁸

In addition to the OPM's armed resistance, there was widespread antipathy towards the Indonesians from the small group of educated Papuan elite. One consequence of this, according to Dr Ali Gritly, the UN representative in Jakarta, was that nearly all the FUNDWI-funded Papuan students who had gone to the Netherlands and elsewhere to study had chosen not to return.⁹

There was also anti-Indonesian feeling among those Papuan students who remained in the country. At the Cendrawasih State University of West Irian, a 26-year-old Papuan law student called Jacob Prai was actively involved in covertly maintaining links with other anti-Indonesian youths in the provincial capital Sukarnapura. As the son of a tribal "Big Man" from the border region, and founder of the Papuan Youth Movement in 1962, he was already known to the Indonesians.¹⁰ In 1968 he was arrested before escaping and becoming a senior figure in the OPM.

Established by the Indonesians in November 1962 during the UNTEA administration, Cendrawasih State University was a politically important project for Jakarta. Its primary aim, according to the Hull academic M. A. Jaspan writing in 1964, had been to demonstrate, within the first few years, Indonesia's ability to provide quality education for the Papuans. He also inferred that, as a result, by 1969 Jakarta hoped that an indigenous educated elite would exist who would support them and provide leadership for the population during the act of self-determination.¹¹ But from the beginning, it was clear that Cendrawasih University would not tolerate ideas that did not fit in with this goal. At an address given during the University's inauguration, the Jakarta-based academic Professor Soegarda warned against "unlimited freedom and liberal democracy".¹²

Indonesia's failure to win over the Papuans was brought home to Jakarta during a visit to the territory by a senior ministerial delegation led by the Sultan of Yogyakarta in May 1968. The Indonesian press reported on the delegation's "success" at resolving the various problems that had arisen in West Irian, but Sutherland of the British Embassy in Jakarta noted:

the visit was chiefly significant in providing members of the Cabinet with a first hand account of the immensity of the economic problems and a demonstration of the unpopularity of the military and civil authorities which rule the territory. Members of the mission have told me that they were appalled to find that there was very little co-operation or, indeed, contact between the authorities and the local Papuans and that the administration was generally corrupt or apathetic.¹³

No mention of a plebiscite

Indonesia's widespread unpopularity in West Irian was a problem for both Jakarta and the UN. References in the Agreement to "ascertaining the freely expressed will of the population" and to the opportunity to "exercise

freedom of choice” would be difficult to ignore if there was any international interest in the Agreement’s proper fulfilment. Nonetheless, the absence of the critical words “plebiscite” or “referendum” was important,¹⁴ and it was a point acknowledged by Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik at a Jakarta press conference in early June 1968.¹⁵ At the same time, the wording was such that the Dutch felt able to claim that, by signing it, they were still safeguarding the Papuans’ right to decide their own future. In defence of his government’s position, Dutch Foreign Minister Luns conceded that the wording on self-determination was “somewhat vague”. But at a press conference in late June 1968, he remarked that the Indonesian negotiators in 1962 “would not accept any other wording”.¹⁶

Nonetheless, as early as November 1962, Abdoh, the UNTEA Administrator for West New Guinea, had told a press conference that “he knew of no other machinery for self-determination, other than a plebiscite, which is a normal means of ascertaining the wishes of the people”.¹⁷ Such candidness would not have gone down well with the UN, Indonesia or the Dutch and there would be no more public repeats of this view by UN officials.

However, Abdoh’s interpretation of the Agreement may have been prompted by Article XVIII, which stated that all adults from the territory were to be eligible to participate in the act of self-determination, “to be carried out in accordance with international practice”.¹⁸ Although, importantly, it did not define what was meant by this phrase, it remains relevant when considering whether or not the terms of the New York Agreement were ever legitimately fulfilled.

International attitudes

Crucially, there was now no significant international governmental opposition to Indonesia’s claim to West Irian. It was a point made prophetically in April 1968 by the Jakarta-based British diplomat I. J. M. Sutherland:

The strength of the Indonesian position lies in the fact that...even if there are protests about the way they go through the motions of consultation, no other power is likely to conceive it as being in their interests to intervene. There will be protests from the Papuan exiles in Holland, Japan and at the United Nations. I understand that the exiles may find some support in the Australian press. But I cannot imagine the US, Japanese, Dutch or Australian Governments putting at risk their economic and political relations with Indonesia on a matter of principle involving a relatively small number of very primitive people.¹⁹

Sutherland also seemed more dismissive than the Indonesians themselves of the threat posed to them by Papuan rebels. In the same letter he concluded that there was not even an embryonic liberation movement for the Soviet Union to support against Suharto’s anti-communist New Order regime.

Sutherland's conclusions were echoed by the Foreign Office in London. In July D. Murray of the South East Asian Department stated bluntly:

The plain fact is that there is no other solution than for Indonesia to keep West Irian; no one is thinking in different terms; and no responsible Government is likely to complain so long as the decencies are carried out. This is confirmed in the letter of 24 May from Canberra, which clearly demonstrates that this is the Australian view.²⁰

The letter to which Murray was referring was sent by D. J. Wyatt of the British High Commission in Canberra. In outlining Canberra's acceptance that West Irian's only future was with Indonesia, he added that from Australia's point of view, "the more quietly the act of self-determination passes off next year the better".²¹

Of particular concern for Canberra at this time was the issue of refugees from West Irian crossing the border into Australian-controlled New Guinea. In 1967, 866 were reported to have arrived and by April 1968, a further 200 to 300 had followed.²² As far as possible, Australian policy was to disperse the refugees throughout TPNG to facilitate assimilation. Although some of the OPM members who crossed over were able to provide the authorities with useful intelligence, in general this influx of political refugees was an embarrassment.²³ A visiting British colonial official at the time observed that, in view of the relatively good relations between Canberra and Jakarta, the TPNG administration was coming under fairly strong pressure from the Australian government not to do anything on the border that would unduly strain this relationship.²⁴ Canberra also agreed with the British assessment that Japan, or any Western government, would not risk damaging its improved relations with Indonesia on the issue of Papuan self-determination.²⁵

Nonetheless, Papuan nationalists may have hoped for some support for their campaign from the Netherlands. Dutch public interest on the issue during this period was such that, by March 1969, a planned visit by Suharto had to be postponed because of fears in The Hague over the level of public hostility towards the Indonesian President.²⁶ But as far as the Dutch government was concerned, the issue of West Irian belonged in the past. At a press conference in Jakarta in July 1968, Luns expressed his government's concern for the Papuans' well-being, but made it clear that The Hague "now had no political interest in West Irian" and was in any case not in a position to protest, particularly as there was insignificant international interest in the question.²⁷ In reality, The Hague had no intention of risking its developing relationship with Suharto. As Marshall Green (US Ambassador to Jakarta) had privately noted the previous year, the Dutch were "playing the most constructive role of all the Europeans" in supporting the new regime in Indonesia.²⁸

Hastings' articles in *The Australian*

Without the support of Western powers, Papuan nationalists still received some foreign assistance and Hastings speculated on its origins in a series of articles for *The Australian* in August 1968. Commenting on the strength of the rebellion in the Arfak region, he estimated that it was holding down between 4,000 and 5,000 Indonesian troops. This level of operation, combined with the OPM's overseas political lobbying campaign by Kaisiepo and Jouwe, required considerable finance. He concluded that most of this finance came from powerful right-wing religious, political and business organisations in the Netherlands who still felt guilty and bitter at the loss of West Irian. However, Indonesian officials with whom he spoke believed that most of the money originated from communist China. Despite acknowledging the Suharto government's preoccupation with the communist threat, Hastings agreed that this was not an unreasonable possibility:

Pro-Peking communist parties anywhere in the World...would certainly have a strong vested interest in sabotaging the Indonesian Government's belated but genuine efforts to redress the sins of the past by seeking administrative reform and a new and more genuine deal for Papuans in West New Guinea.²⁹

Hastings' speculations on possible communist motivation for supporting the OPM also demonstrate his own views on Indonesia generally. Although there was considerable sympathy in the Australian press for West Papuan nationalism, many Western commentators at the time saw the New Order as a very welcome, and long overdue, change of direction for Indonesia away from the irresponsible anti-Western adventurism of the Sukarno years. In Hastings' case, sympathy towards the new regime seems to have been translated into an assumption that because, from a Western perspective, the Suharto government appeared more economically and politically responsible, this would somehow mark a positive change in Indonesian policy towards West Irian. It is not clear what the basis of this belief was because at no point did Hastings provide any explanation for it.

Like most Western supporters of the Indonesian takeover, Hastings' priority was regional stability rather than the welfare of the West Papuans. So it is probable that, rather than being reasoned analysis, his optimistic assessment of Jakarta's plans for the territory was motivated more by his desire to move sceptical Australian public opinion into line with Canberra's position.

Hastings certainly had little sympathy for Papuan nationalist aspirations, which he dismissed as "pathetically naive" while chiding the Papuans for not comprehending the "magnitude of the present Indonesian effort" to help West Irian, or understanding "just how explosive an issue" the territory could be in Indonesia's domestic policies.³⁰

If West Irian was to remain with Indonesia, Hastings accepted that a

solution to Papuan discontent had to be found. In his opinion the underlying cause of the unrest was a lack of economic development:

If West Papuan political discontent can be damped down by Australian and other foreign economic aid then for heaven's sake let us find a way of giving aid. With the establishment of the UN West Irian Fund organisation, FUNDWI, we have a perfect vehicle for aid disbursement.³¹

This conclusion that Papuan dissent could be bought off by improved economic conditions was to be a familiar argument in the years following the Act. In 1970, paratroop officer Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, West Irian's military commander, published an article claiming that all Papuan opposition to Indonesia stemmed from underdevelopment.³² In 1979, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar announced that more development would be initiated in Irian Jaya to remedy the problem of illegal border-crossers entering PNG.³³ In 1984, an Indonesian military document also commented that anti-Indonesian sentiments were prompted by better economic conditions over the border, while no mention was made of Papuan nationalism.³⁴ UN officials in PNG during the mid-1980s also emphasised this argument, following the arrival of around 9,000 West Papuan refugees in 1984. Writing on the subject in 1989, Beverley Blaskett notes that UNDP staff in PNG agreed with Indonesian assessments that the flight of these refugees was motivated mainly by economic reasons.³⁵

While economic stagnation was certainly a factor, the fundamental flaw in Hastings' public position and the arguments of those who echoed him in the years that followed was that they ignored or gravely underestimated the importance of nationalism as a factor in Papuan resistance to Indonesian rule. Jakarta's position had always been that the Papuans wanted to be part of Indonesia and that any expression of Papuan nationalism was simply a Dutch-created invention with no basis in reality. This standpoint, however, did not originate from any genuine consideration of events in West Irian. Instead, it arose as a necessity borne out of internal Indonesian politics and the inherent instability of a multi-ethnic Javanese-dominated unitary state. Consequently, it was this Indonesian denial of Papuan national identity, rather than anything else, that ignored reality.

It can be argued that nationalism is only properly expressed in more developed nations. However, it can also be argued that West Papuan villagers in 1968 did not need to be politically sophisticated or possess some developed sense of Melanesian identity to recognise that they had little in common, culturally or otherwise, with the 12,000 to 13,000 Indonesian officials and military who administered their land and violently suppressed any expression of dissent. Even in these early years of Indonesian rule many Papuans who had experienced the new administration would have begun to recognise that passive acceptance of the political situation condemned them

to the status of second-class citizen with little or no significant role in their own country's future.

Ortiz Sanz and General Sarwo Edhie Wibowo

This was the situation facing the 53-year-old Bolivian diplomat Fernando Ortiz Sanz when UN Secretary-General U Thant appointed him United Nations Representative for West Irian (UNRWI) on 1 April 1968. Fluent in four languages including English (but not Indonesian), Ortiz Sanz was a man with an impressive background. As well as being his country's Permanent Representative at the UN since 1964, he had worked as a lawyer, journalist, MP, academic, award-winning novelist and poet, and also served for a time as Bolivia's Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.³⁶ Despite this, an Australian diplomat who met him in New York shortly after his appointment, sent a cablegram to Canberra portraying him as a rather naive character:

Roeslan Abdulgani, who was with us, gave him promise of Indonesian Governments support, which encouraged Ortiz Sanz perhaps more than it should....Ortiz Sanz is a man of goodwill and integrity but I am not sure that he has much conception of the sort of environment in which he will find himself working in West Irian.³⁷

Under the terms of the Agreement, Ortiz Sanz's responsibility was to "advise, assist and participate in arrangements" for the Act.³⁸ To help him in this task, he was to be accompanied by an indeterminate number of UN experts, some of whom should have been in the territory already as part of a UN presence which was supposed to have remained following UNTEA's withdrawal. Under the Agreement, their function was to "advise and assist" in general preparations for self-determination throughout the period leading up to 1969.³⁹ Such experts, with several years' experience in the territory, would have been an invaluable asset to Ortiz Sanz on his arrival. Unfortunately for him, since this part of the Agreement never took place, he was left to appoint staff that like himself had no experience of the conditions in Indonesian West Irian. This point was made bluntly by Ortiz Sanz in his subsequent report to the UN General Assembly in November 1969:

I had to begin with the collection of basic information about the territory and its population, trying to fulfil in a few months...the important and complex functions which under article XVI of the Agreement should have been carried out during the preceding five years by a number of experts.⁴⁰

Despite announcing that he was ready to travel to the territory as soon as he was appointed, his departure was postponed at the official request of the

Indonesian government. He did not arrive in Indonesia until 12 August and it would be a further eleven days before he set foot in West Irian.⁴¹ Ortiz Sanz's report to the UNGA did not explain why Jakarta had delayed his arrival. The official Indonesian explanation was that further "technical and administrative preparations"⁴² were necessary first.

The real reason, according to a Western journalist in West Irian, was that the Indonesians were still facing on-going revolts in Arfak and other areas, and wanted to end them before allowing the UN in.⁴³ In July, the Indonesian press even debated whether the Act should be postponed until "conditions returned to normal". At the same time, reports in the Dutch press, denied by Jakarta, claimed that Indonesia had unsuccessfully tried to persuade U Thant to agree to a delay of the whole exercise.⁴⁴ In response to the security situation, West Irian's military commander requested additional troops to counter the insurgency⁴⁵ and a special combat task force was transferred from Manado, North Celebes, to the territory in late May 1968.⁴⁶ In addition, Indonesian Army HQ sent six major-generals to West Irian in early June to report on the military situation there.⁴⁷

One result of this visit was the dispatch in mid-June of another Indonesian combat force to West Irian, this time from South Celebes. At the same time, an army spokesman was quoted in the Indonesian press appealing to Papuan leaders to "persuade your wayward brothers to return from the jungle.... We must complete security operations by the end of this year."⁴⁸

Another result of the major-generals' visit was the replacement on 29 June of the incumbent West Irian military commander by Brigadier-General Sarwo Edhie.⁴⁹ The Brigadier-General was a paratroop commander with a reputation for ruthlessness towards those considered opponents of Suharto's New Order. He had first come to prominence while still a colonel, following the apparent coup and counter-coup in October 1965. In the following two months he played a leading role in the killing of alleged communists in Central and East Java before being transferred to Bali in December to continue the campaign.⁵⁰ On 11 March 1966, it was Sarwo Edhie's paratroopers who had surrounded Sukarno's Presidential Palace in Jakarta, prompting him to flee by helicopter to Bogor where he had been forced to sign an order effectively giving control of the country to Suharto.⁵¹ A pro-Suharto journalist lauded his activities at this time, describing him as an "officer with an almost legendary reputation for his success in rounding up political fugitives". The same journalist also described how the populations of several villages in Bali, including women and children, were halved because of the mass killings.⁵² Another writer commenting on his activities in Java described how Sarwo Edhie "acquitted himself with great distinction by unleashing a campaign of terror and extermination against all elements traditionally opposed to the central government in Jakarta".⁵³

Sarwo Edhie's appointment can therefore be viewed as a clear demonstration by Jakarta of its determination to prevent any form of Papuan dissent

during the build-up to the Act. Foreign Minister Malik made this position clear when he announced that Sarwo Edhie's task would be to ensure that West Irian gave a clear verdict in favour of permanently joining Indonesia. Asked to elaborate, he commented that his appointment would contribute to gaining "the desired results".⁵⁴ This position was well understood by the Western diplomatic community in Jakarta. At the British Embassy, Sutherland commented: "The Government can be confident that he will have no sympathy towards any local aspirations towards independence."⁵⁵

Sarwo Edhie acted quickly launching a new pacification campaign in June 1968 against Papuan rebels, particularly the Arfak tribesmen. This particular Arfak uprising had begun in May 1967 and was led by two brothers, Lodewijk and Barends Mandatjan, who deployed their forces in the far west of the territory on the Bird's Head Peninsula. As Sarwo Edhie launched his campaign, he would have been aware of Indonesia's 7 June joint memorandum with the UN stating that Ortiz Sanz could depart for Jakarta in early August.⁵⁶ Although no date was mentioned for his arrival in West Irian, a prolonged delay in Jakarta would have embarrassed both the UN and Indonesia. It is reasonable then to surmise that the Brigadier's instructions were to complete most of his "pacification" by mid- August at the latest.

Internal pressures on Suharto and Third World attitudes towards West Irian

Suharto's desire to minimise the disruption caused by the Act was reinforced by domestic political considerations. Any perceived threat to Indonesia's possession of West Irian, Sukarno's great victory, could be of potential use to those hostile to the New Order. Van der Kroef comments that in addition to opponents from the Left, relations between a number of major, particularly Muslim, parties and Suharto had, for various reasons, become strained in the years immediately following Sukarno's downfall.⁵⁷ Consequently, on 23 May 1968, in an apparent attempt to embarrass the government, the executive board of the influential political party Nahdatul Ulama (Renaissance of the Ulama), declared that the holding of the Act would be "an act of treason to the proclamation of Indonesia's independence". The board further stated that under international law a nation already exercising *de facto* and *de jure* control over a certain region could not be subjected to "foreign intervention".⁵⁸

Suharto's reaction to critics of his decision to allow an "act of free choice" was to produce a variety of West Irian "leaders" that then publicly declared their loyalty to Indonesia. It was a familiar tactic and one much used by Sukarno during the UNTEA period.⁵⁹ This strategy, according to Van der Kroef, succeeded in undermining the efforts of the New Order's domestic opponents and allowed the government to "have its cake and eat it". Suharto could be seen to abide by the Agreement, while reassuring

critics at home that West Irian's leaders would obediently vote to stay with Indonesia in whatever form of "free choice" was decided upon.⁶⁰

Those leaders who questioned their assigned role were unlikely to be tolerated for long. In 1968, it was reported that thirty out of the fifty-four members of the territory's Provincial Council were dismissed by Jakarta because they wanted to debate preparations for the Act of Free Choice.⁶¹ Senior members of this council have since alleged that the vast majority favoured "one person one vote" for the Act and as a result many were intimidated by the authorities.⁶² The dismissal of the thirty members would have probably taken place during the early summer when Indonesia reorganised the Provincial Council and Representative Councils in preparation for the consultation process that was required under the terms of the Agreement.⁶³ On this subject, Indonesian Ambassador Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro had informed the UN in New York that:

the representative councils and the Provincial Council had recently been reorganised and had a larger membership than before. He added that the members of those councils had been appointed by the Government of Indonesia in accordance with the practice of Indonesian democratic methods.⁶⁴

Inevitably, these "Indonesian democratic methods" ensured that the new councillors would follow Jakarta's instructions more closely than those who had been dismissed.

In the weeks shortly before and after Ortiz Sanz's arrival in West Irian, Indonesian leaders reiterated that the process of Papuan "self-determination" would take place only on their terms. On several occasions Malik declared that the "one man one vote" system was not suitable for the primitive conditions of the people in West Irian.⁶⁵ In the West, there were some feelings of uneasiness in government circles at Jakarta's open stance on this issue, but only in so far as it affected other issues outside West Irian. In late June, a British Foreign Office document noted:

the principal point of concern is whether tacit acceptance of what may well be rather less than a "one man one vote" plebiscite could create difficulties for us; either with public opinion at home or through establishing an awkward precedent in a UN context...this is a point we shall need to watch.⁶⁶

Setting a potentially awkward precedent was also an issue for those, often newly independent, states in Africa and elsewhere who called for self-determination in Europe's remaining colonies, whilst supporting Indonesia in West Irian. Inferring that it was legitimate to ignore the Papuans' rights, these countries were quick to point out at the UN that the West Irian issue before the Assembly was not one of self-determination, rather it was "an affirmation of the national unity and territorial integrity" of Indonesia.⁶⁷

This, however, was an inaccurate statement, since the UN's consideration of West Irian in 1969 was governed by the terms of the New York Agreement, which specifically addressed the issue of Papuan self-determination, rather than Indonesian "national unity or territorial integrity".

Lest another similar "act of free choice" be proposed elsewhere, India declared at the UN General Assembly in November 1969 that West Irian was a special case:

the method used for the act of free choice there could not be considered under any circumstances a precedent for cases of self-determination in territories still under colonial domination.⁶⁸

The reason for this was clear. India was well aware that the method eventually adopted in West Irian did not result in an accurate reflection of public opinion in the territory. Consequently, while this unrepresentative conclusion was acceptable for West Irian, it would not be appropriate in those territories where a genuine exercise of self-determination was demanded. In these cases, only a system incorporating at least some form of direct voting was acceptable.

At the UN in 1969, protesting at Chinese and Pakistani occupation of parts of Kashmir, Delhi had reasserted its claim of sovereignty over the whole territory. This was no doubt an important factor in its long-standing support of Indonesia's claim on West Irian, which, like India's, rejected the redrawing of old colonial borders. It is also the case that like India, many developing countries felt able to ignore what some would describe as "brown on black" colonialism, with an ease that would have been inconceivable had the scenario been the more familiar and emotive "white on black".

7 West Irian 1968

Part 2

Ortiz Sanz's arrival and first tour of West Irian

In the second half of 1968, Antara reported uprisings in the southern border area around Merauke, with people fleeing over the border into Australian New Guinea.¹ In Bird's Head it was reported:

Near Sorong the death of fourteen soldiers in an OPM ambush was followed by shelling from the sea. Villages named Sausapor and Makbon suffered many casualties. Then marines were put ashore.²

There were also reports given by Papuans to UN officials of attacks on villages in Biak by Indonesian troops.³ Then on 12 August, after a special cabinet meeting to discuss security, the Indonesian government announced that recent operations against the rebels had resulted in 162 being killed and 3,200 surrendering. Nonetheless, although the Arfak rebellion had effectively been crushed, some of the rebels remained active, including the two leaders, the Mandatjan brothers.⁴

The day of the government announcement was also the day that Ortiz Sanz arrived in Jakarta from New York. Three days later he was invited to attend an address of state delivered by President Suharto who took the opportunity to reaffirm that Indonesia would implement the Agreement, although he stated that the Papuans had already made clear their strong desire to remain with Indonesia.⁵

Referring to Ortiz Sanz, he added that the UNRWI's role would be to cooperate and assist Indonesia in deciding how best to implement the final phase of the Agreement.⁶ In private, Suharto informed Ortiz Sanz that he could count on his personal support and cooperation in carrying out his responsibilities. In turn, Ortiz Sanz informed U Thant that he believed Indonesia intended to act in good faith in implementing the Act.⁷

Overall, Ortiz Sanz and his team found the Indonesian hospitality in Jakarta generous, in marked contrast to what he was to experience in West Irian. This reflected a deliberate Indonesian effort to ensure that the UN

based itself in Jakarta and spent only a limited time in West Irian. It was a tactic that Western diplomats⁸ and Ortiz Sanz⁹ were well aware of.

On 23 August, the UNRWI arrived in Sukarnapura to begin his first visit to West Irian. Three days later he and three of his staff left the capital on a ten-day, 3,000-mile (4,800-km) tour of the territory by air. Accompanying them throughout the trip were Sudjarwo and around eight Indonesian officials. The whole journey was planned and directed by the Indonesians, for which Ortiz Sanz was grateful, although he was aware that their presence ensured he was only shown “one side of the coin”.¹⁰ Nonetheless, he appeared to have been genuinely impressed with what he considered to be Indonesian achievements. Reporting back to New York he wrote:

if what we saw and heard could be indications of the success of Indonesian efforts in the Territory since its takeover, the Government must be given credit for progress in elementary education, the process of assimilation through use of a common language, school integration and apparent efforts at fraternization.¹¹

Ortiz Sanz’s apparent readiness to believe Indonesian accounts of their achievements is remarkable. Even Hastings did not attempt to defend Jakarta’s record, declaring in August 1968 that Indonesia’s administration of the territory had been “nothing short of calamitous”.¹²

It also seems surprising that while Ortiz Sanz’s first report to U Thant did acknowledge the existence of Papuan opposition to Indonesia, it made no mention of the rebellions and repression, or the economic and political stagnation described by other observers. While he was very unlikely to have witnessed any of this on his Indonesian-guided tour, he would have been aware of these allegations and should certainly have given some consideration of them in his report to U Thant. In addition, although he had had little opportunity to talk to ordinary Papuans, he did receive various reports and petitions during his visit and, if accurate, one in particular sheds some light on Indonesia’s orchestration of the visit:

[The petitioners] request the UN Representative to visit all prisons and free many Papuans who were...arrested on 23 August 1968 when they tried to demonstrate on the occasion of the arrival of the UN Representative in the territory.¹³

Nonetheless, Ortiz Sanz did report to the Secretary-General that the Papuans had not been given any information by Indonesia about the Act, and he stated that on his return to Jakarta, he would strongly recommend that an “enlightenment campaign” be initiated in the territory.¹⁴ On the central issue of the method to be adopted for the Act, Ortiz Sanz indicated that he was well aware of Indonesia’s intentions. His comments also reiterated the UN’s acceptance that a plebiscite was not an option for West Irian:

We know in advance that the ideal principle of “one-man-one-vote” cannot be applied in all areas of the Territory, both on account of the terrain and the lack of sophistication of vast segments of the population. This being the case, we may have no choice but to try to consult, in a collective way, the largest possible number of inhabitants of the Territory. We also know that the Indonesian Government, which seems not to be very sure about the results of the consultation, will try, by all means at its disposal, to reduce the number of individuals, representatives and institutions to be consulted.¹⁵

On this issue, Ortiz Sanz accurately predicted that he would need to struggle to ensure that there was sufficient genuine Papuan participation “to prove, that we did indeed try to provide as democratic a basis as was possible to ascertain the real will of the population”.¹⁶

Although the UNRWI appeared genuinely appreciative of Indonesian assistance during his first tour, he was aware that too close an association could leave him open to accusations that his presence simply bestowed credibility on the proceedings while failing to have any influence. With this in mind, he thanked Sudjarwo on 5 September for his invaluable help during the first tour and described it as a complete success.¹⁷ At the same time, he concluded by expressing his desire to conduct future tours of the territory without the benefit of an Indonesian escort.¹⁸

Papuan opinion and eyewitness accounts

The final matter to which Ortiz Sanz drew U Thant’s attention in his report was the petitions and complaints that he had received from Papuans during his tour. He described these as expressing opposition to either the Indonesian government, or the New York Agreement itself:

Regrettably, we, the United Nations, have not been given any executive authority by the Agreement to deal with these grievances under such circumstances....As this is one of the major issues with which I am faced, I would like to have the benefit of your views.¹⁹

In fact, by the time he drafted his report to U Thant on 6 September, Ortiz Sanz had recorded receiving a total of thirty-six “political communications” from various local individuals or groups. Eight were from pro-Indonesian tribal chiefs, or political parties or organisations. Their submissions were almost identical, referring to the unity of Indonesia “from Sabang to Merauke”, as proclaimed in August 1945, and rejecting the need for the Act. The other twenty-eight were anti-Indonesian, apart from one which simply requested a meeting with Ortiz Sanz.

These anti-Indonesian petitions, reports, resolutions and statements were similar in many respects. Virtually all of them called for the Act to be

conducted on a “one man one vote” basis rather than through the Representative Councils. This, they said, was because the councils were appointed by Indonesia and forbidden from criticising the administration. The point was also made that “one man one vote” was the most democratic method to use. Another frequent appeal was for the replacement of the Indonesian administration by the UN until the Act had taken place. Most also wanted the Indonesian military to be replaced by a UN security force in order to ensure political freedom.

Many communications additionally called for the release of all political prisoners estimated by one individual to number up to 900 detained around the territory. They also called for exiled Papuans to be allowed back to take part in the Act. The anti-Indonesian communications dismissed the pro-Indonesian petitions as the result of Indonesian coercion of various tribal chiefs and councillors. Accusations of Indonesian brutality and oppression were another frequent feature. In addition, quite a few of the communications offered particularly detailed assessments of the situation and made suggestions concerning the Act and West Irian’s future generally.²⁰

Other comments and suggestions received by Ortiz Sanz included one simply stating that the Papuans did not want to be part of Indonesia “with its chaotic economy which will only bring famine”. There were also calls for proper information and radio broadcasts on the Act and the establishment of a “National Papuan Army”, under the control of a UN administration. One organisation suggested that two political parties should be established, one for and one against retaining ties with Indonesia. They would then be permitted to campaign freely in advance of a general election. One letter accepted the need for some indirect method of voting, but only in a few isolated areas, such as parts of the highlands.²¹

No one would seriously argue that the wishes of the Papuan people could be accurately assessed from these thirty-six communications. But an experienced diplomat and politician like Ortiz Sanz would have been left in no doubt after his first visit that significant sections of the more politically aware population were prepared to risk the wrath of the authorities to offer him a variety of suggestions on how best to guarantee genuine self-determination.

Ortiz Sanz’s visit was not the only opportunity that dissatisfied Papuans had during August to alert the international community to their grievances. On 10 August, a Reuters correspondent arrived and spent two weeks in the territory. On his return he informed an Australian diplomat that every one of the thirty or so Papuans to whom he spoke was discontented with Jakarta, with the administration in West Irian, and with the absence of Papuan participation in the political and administrative process in the territory.²²

Ten days later, Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik began a four-day visit to West Irian accompanied by sixty-two journalists, thirty-two of whom

were from foreign agencies or newspapers. The purpose of this visit, according to Malik, was to show the world that Indonesia had nothing to hide in West Irian. Official statements emphasised that the journalists were able to talk freely with West Irian community leaders.²³ According to the journalists, however, there was almost no time to seek contacts of their own, and that when they did they were accompanied or soon found by Indonesian soldiers.²⁴

Commenting upon Malik's dialogue with the West Irian "leaders" and coverage of this in the official reports, the Australian Ambassador Jockell noted that Malik emphasised that the Act was not meant to give the Papuans freedom because they had already gained freedom as Indonesians when Indonesian independence was proclaimed in 1945.²⁵

Official reports then went on to describe how the Foreign Minister was given two pro-Indonesian resolutions by the "Movement to Maintain the August 17 Proclamation of National Independence", and the "Sukarnapura chapter of the 1945 Generation". Both pledged loyalty to Indonesia and described the Act as unnecessary. These reports, however, coincided with claims made by an Australian missionary that the army "with their rifles at the ready" had "persuaded" the Papuans to sign these petitions.²⁶

Also questioning Indonesia's official statements on West Irian were the foreign journalists who were present at the meetings with Malik. They reported that he was subjected to some bitter complaints and hard questioning about the lack of Papuan involvement in the Act, especially at a meeting with West Irianese members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly (DPRD), religious heads and other community leaders. Despite being hand-picked by the Indonesians, these leaders seemed encouraged by the presence of the press. Malik's response was to declare that:

he was "responsible before God" that West Irian remain part of Indonesia. It was God's will that West Irian stay within the Republic and all had to work together to ensure that this was so.²⁷

One correspondent present at a meeting in Biak added that Papuans, "who tentatively sought contact" with the journalists present, stated that the vast majority of the population were in favour of independence, but claimed that it was impossible to express themselves freely.²⁸

In late September 1968, Ian Morgan, Third Secretary at the British Embassy in Jakarta, also paid a visit to the territory. It was the first recorded visit of a British diplomat to West Irian and Morgan wrote a detailed report of the trip. Although he did not consider the Papuan rebels to be a serious threat to Indonesian rule, he made clear that their aspirations were shared by the bulk of the politically aware population:

Speaking to exactly 100 working-class Papuans in Sukarnapura [Jayapura] and Biak it became evident that the indigenous population is

overwhelmingly unaware of the issues at stake and overwhelmingly in favour of independence from Indonesia – probably in that order. We were approached by one or two Papuans, notably the mayor of Biak, Yappo (phon.) and his assistant who made it clear that they all wanted “freedom”. This was confirmed by every single Papuan who was questioned on the roads and in the market places.²⁹

He also spoke to Stein Rooerd, the Norwegian FUNDWI official. Rooerd discussed investment opportunities in the territory and lamented the failure of British industry to involve itself in this. Significantly he also revealed that the huge US corporation Freeport Sulphur was deliberately underestimating the value of the mineral wealth it was uncovering at Ertsberg Mountain in the Western Highlands. In what appears on the face of it to be a description of insider dealing, Morgan writes:

In strictest confidence Mr. ROOERD told me that Freeport Sulphur have really “struck it rich” in the Ertsberg. After investing [US]\$3 million in drilling operations, they disclosed samples of 2.5% copper omitting to mention that this was the mean content whereas the thick top level contains 4.6% copper. The same samples have 40% iron, 0.3% silver and 0.02 ounces of gold per ton. Over the past few months they have gloomily suspended operations which has caused their shares to drop on Wall Street. This is exactly what was expected and intended. These shares were then mysteriously bought by a person or persons unknown. Mr. ROOERD said that they are now ready to invest U.S.\$100,000,000 in one of the biggest operations this decade...The contract involves a complete tax holiday for 5 years, a further slightly penalised holiday for 15 years before paying full royalties. Profits are expected to be enormous and I have heard several stories and seen a sample which indicate that the gold content may be very much higher than has been stated in the Bechtel-Pomeroy Mining Consultants’ Report.³⁰

Freeport Sulphur was the first foreign company to invest in Indonesia after Suharto lifted restrictions in 1967. In 1970 the company constructed a 110 kilometre pipeline from the coast to Tembagapura, a new town built to service the Freeport mine. By 1973 the mine was in full operation and in the first seven years alone, US, Japanese and West German investors were receiving returns of 12.9 per cent. By 1990 an estimated US\$125 million in profits were leaving the territory every year, in addition to the 5 per cent in tax paid to Jakarta.³¹ As a FUNDWI official, Rooerd’s apparent complicity with Freeport’s alleged deceit was at the very least regrettable. One can also deduce that Freeport’s lucrative agreement with the Jakarta regime was a factor in the willingness of Western governments to accept whatever policy Indonesia chose to adopt with regard to Papuan self-determination.

Morgan believed that it was probably better that West Irian should remain with Indonesia which, with UN assistance, “may be able to make something of it”. He also added:

We have after all only just finished fighting a very expensive war to prevent the same chauvinistic nation grabbing two or three other small and defenceless countries. Besides it is simply no business of ours.³²

To conclude, the British diplomat reflected that both parties must have known that the Articles of the New York Agreement guaranteeing freedom of assembly and the eligibility of all adults to take part in the Act were “absurd” and impossible to carry out:

Naturally one sympathises with the natives but colonialism is not always such a bad thing, indeed it is often beneficial and it may be that in the fullness of time, many years hence, Indonesia will feel that West Irian is ready to go it alone supported by the wealth beneath and above her soil, perhaps in partnership with her eastern neighbour, and forget the delusions of grandeur which she can ill afford. It may be but I doubt it.³³

UN staffing

Following his return to Jakarta on 13 September, Ortiz Sanz raised concerns about the lack of accommodation and office space provided for him in Sukarnapura. In reply, Sudjarwo claimed that sufficient accommodation was very difficult to provide in West Irian.³⁴

Ortiz Sanz wrote back to the Indonesians on 7 October stating that he needed three houses in Sukarnapura immediately and warning that the lack of accommodation was effecting his team’s ability to operate effectively.³⁵ He also reminded Sudjarwo that accommodation had not been a problem for 130 UN staff and the Pakistani UNSF during the UNTEA administration.³⁶ Three weeks later Ortiz Sanz was again obliged to bring the subject up. Referring to the arrival in November of two more of his officials in West Irian, he informed Sudjarwo that the UN mission’s housing need had become even more acute.³⁷

Meanwhile, in New York, the Indonesian Ambassador to the UN invited Rolz-Bennett to lunch in order to complain about Ortiz Sanz. He accused him of treating West Irian as a “colonial matter” and protested at the “inconvenience” caused by his desire to spend time in the territory. Relaying the substance of the conversation to Ortiz Sanz, Rolz-Bennett wrote:

while the Indonesian Government understood your desire to be in West Irian as much as possible, it also felt that you should spend sufficient time in Djakarta for consultations with several high officials who were involved in the West Irian question. The method of discussing matters

through Ambassador Sudjarwo who had to travel frequently for this purpose between West Irian and Djakarta, was not entirely satisfactory.³⁸

Finally, the Indonesians objected to the UN's presence in the territory on the grounds that it served as a focus of attraction for those who were "dissatisfied" with the Indonesian administration. This then created a "certain excitement" which obstructed the smooth running of the administration in West Irian.³⁹

Ortiz Sanz continued to defend his position on this, and the issue of UNRWI staff numbers, but on the latter in particular, Indonesia to a large extent succeeded in its aims. In his final UNGA report, he cited financial and accommodation problems as the reason for his final staff total being reduced from an intended figure of fifty to twenty-five and finally sixteen.⁴⁰

In retrospect, it seems incredible that the UN agreed to this token staff presence. By way of comparison, in June 1999 the UN and Indonesia agreed to the deployment of approximately 1,000 UN officials to organise and oversee the East Timorese referendum of August that year. This included 270 police, 50 military liaison officers and hundreds of electoral officials and administrators.⁴¹ Although the UNRWI's role was more limited, his fifteen officials were still supposed to "advise, assist and participate" with the Act in a territory many times the size of East Timor. Both territories were engaged in an exercise of self-determination, but the comparison illustrates the immense difference between a genuine attempt and one that was not.

Ortiz Sanz's suggestions for the Act of Free Choice

Apart from accommodation and staff numbers, Ortiz Sanz spent the last three months of 1968 dealing with two main issues. The first concerned the actual method to be adopted for the Act, and the second dealt with his efforts to persuade Jakarta to improve the political freedoms and the human rights situation in West Irian in the period leading up to the Act.

With regard to the first issue, Sudjarwo sent the UNRWI a working paper on 1 October entitled "Some Preliminary Thoughts Regarding the Method of the Act of Free Choice – 1969". This paper contained proposals for the implementation of the Act through a body of around 200 representatives, including 60 new members from the Provincial Council, 80 from the eight Representative Councils and 60 appointed tribal chiefs. In a rather delayed response on 4 November, Ortiz Sanz argued that this method was a departure from the terms of the New York Agreement, in that it seemed to bypass the requirement in Article XVIII(a) to hold consultations with the Representative Councils as to the appropriate methods to be followed for the Act.⁴² Instead, it appeared as if Indonesia alone was making that decision.

On 14 November the two men met to discuss the matter. At the meeting, Sudjarwo assured Ortiz Sanz that there had been a misunderstanding and

that Indonesia intended to abide by Article XVIII(a). The UNRWI was pleased with this response and appeared to take a conciliatory stance when discussing other proposals for implementing the Act. He informed Sudjarwo that, in his capacity as UN representative, he could suggest no other process except “the democratic, orthodox and universally accepted method known as ‘one-man, one-vote’”. However, having observed the “geographical and human realities” of the territory, he conceded that this method would only be appropriate in urban areas. Other areas could rely on “collective consultations”.⁴³ In support of his argument, Ortiz Sanz stated that this “mixed” system would have the merit of being nearest to perfection:

It would also have the practical value of enabling the Indonesian Government, as well as the United Nations, to declare unequivocally that the orthodox and perfect method “one-man, one-vote” was used in the act of free choice to the maximum extent, compatible with reality...if we are in a practical position to say in the final report to the General Assembly that the perfect method was used where ever practicable, your Government would not only be shielding the final results from any future criticisms by the interested parties, but it would also be satisfying the demands of the newly independent nations for the use of the perfect system of “one-man, one-vote”.⁴⁴

To conclude, Ortiz Sanz reminded Sudjarwo that he was prepared to take his share of responsibility for adopting a system which involved a “slight departure” from the Agreement’s stipulation that the Act should be conducted “in accordance with international practice”. He went on to say that “It is then up to you to ‘meet me half way’ by agreeing that my preliminary suggestion represents the minimum requirement to satisfy world public opinion.”⁴⁵

Whether or not it was appropriate for a UN official to endorse a method which not only broke the terms of the Agreement, but by his own admission only represented the “minimum requirement” to satisfy international opinion, is a matter for debate. Furthermore, if Ortiz Sanz really believed that Jakarta was likely to “meet him half way” on his proposal, then he was vindicating the Australian diplomat’s comment seven months previously that he was politically naive. Additional evidence that he underestimated Indonesian determination to win the Act comes from an Australian Embassy report of a reception given for Ortiz Sanz on 28 September by a government minister in Jakarta:

on several occasions I heard [Ortiz Sanz] telling Indonesians and others that if it transpired, that the people of West Irian preferred to leave Indonesia it would be in Indonesia’s own interest to let them go rather than trying to create a result that kept them in Indonesia. Understandably this fell very flat although no one took him on in my presence....In another conversation General Alaxjah [Alamsyah?], who

is against [the Act], commented to me that Ortiz Sanz had been very U.N.-ish when he arrived but “was coming around”.⁴⁶

It is also possible that Ortiz Sanz simply wished to give the appearance of impartiality for the benefit of the other diplomats present.

More importantly, if Ortiz Sanz’s “mixed method” system was a serious proposal, it perhaps suggests that there was a lack of adequate communication between the Secretary-General and his West Irian representative. Otherwise, Ortiz Sanz would have been aware that Narasimhan, Rolz-Bennett and the Dutch had already indicated to Jakarta five years previously that the Act could be decided by a small group of “representatives” without any direct voting on the issue by the general population.⁴⁷ Alternatively, it is also feasible that the UNRWI did know about this, but felt, possibly with U Thant’s backing, that it was in his and the UN’s interests to be seen to be advocating a more democratic method, even if privately this had been rejected from the outset.

Either way, it is understandable that the Indonesians were unimpressed with the UNRWI’s offer and there is evidence that Sudjarwo was angered by it to the extent that it soured relations between the two. A letter from the British Embassy in Jakarta to London in July 1969 reported that the problems between Sudjarwo and Ortiz Sanz began when the former learned that the idea of the “mixed system” was Ortiz Sanz’s and did not originate in New York.⁴⁸

Following his meeting with Sudjarwo, Ortiz Sanz immediately dispatched a report to U Thant outlining the practical difficulties involved in implementing the Act in accordance with “international practices”.⁴⁹ He also cabled Rolz-Bennett suggesting that both Indonesia and the Netherlands be requested to release statements, in the form of official UN documents, to the effect that they recognised that conditions in West Irian prevented the adoption of these “international practices”. In support of this suggestion he ended by claiming that he had learned from Sudjarwo that the Dutch were prepared to express agreement with Indonesia on “any realistic methods chosen to ascertain wishes of population [if correct] I am confident that Sec Gen and parties would find my ideas worthy of consideration”.⁵⁰

This move by Ortiz Sanz was an understandable attempt to get the two signatories of the Agreement, particularly the Dutch, to condone officially his own position that a fundamental breach was both acceptable and the best practical solution. Again, it is reasonable to ask whether it was appropriate for the UNRWI to lobby, privately or otherwise, for a change to the Agreement that would inevitably undermine further the Papuans’ right to genuine self-determination. One can of course argue that he was at least advocating a system that gave a far greater opportunity for genuine Papuan participation than the methods agreed to by his superiors five years previously. Their private acceptance to dispense with any direct voting suggests that the Secretary-General’s November 1969 report to the UNGA on the

Act gave a less than honest account of the UN's responsibility for the eventual method adopted. Today, Ortiz Sanz defends the system adopted as "the most democratic possibility there was".⁵¹

Political freedoms and human rights

With regard to political freedoms and the human rights situation, Ortiz Sanz had concerns on a number of issues. The lack of information about the Act which he had noticed on his first tour led him to write to Sudjarwo on 11 October requesting that Indonesia produce an information paper outlining, in simple terms, what the Act would entail and what it would mean.⁵² In Sudjarwo's response, which came just over a month later, he stated that Indonesia was also concerned about this issue, but needed to proceed with care because the Act was a source of conflict and controversy among politically minded Papuans.⁵³ Ortiz Sanz reassured him that he was not suggesting anything which might endanger internal security. He simply believed that, for the Act to be meaningful, the people needed to be given adequate information and sufficient time to consider it.⁵⁴

In his final report to the UNGA, the UNRWI gave a reasonably accurate account of these exchanges with Sudjarwo.⁵⁵ What was not included in the report, however, was the final section of his second letter which commented upon the numerous anti-Indonesian statements which he had received. To tackle this "problem" Ortiz Sanz urged Sudjarwo to make clear to the Papuans that the UN was in no position to deal with their appeals for help.⁵⁶

Efforts by the UNRWI to press Jakarta on the subject of basic rights and freedoms were initiated in a letter that he sent to Sudjarwo on 5 November. In it, he reminded the Ambassador of Indonesia's obligations under the Agreement to "guarantee fully the rights, including the rights of free speech, freedom of movement and of assembly, of the inhabitants of the area".⁵⁷ Commenting upon the numerous complaints which he had received from Papuans on this subject, he reminded Sudjarwo that, without these rights and freedoms, the international community would not be satisfied that a "fair and truly democratic judgement" had been made by the people.⁵⁸ Nine days later, the two men met and Ortiz Sanz handed Sudjarwo a list (without names) outlining forty-nine "political communications" which he had received between 12 August and 12 November. Of these, eight supported Jakarta's policies, one was neutral and the rest were anti-Indonesian, mostly calling for genuine self-determination and complaining about various human rights abuses. Claiming no authority to act himself, he asked Sudjarwo to comment on the petitions so that he could pass on the Indonesian response to the petitioners:

This way they will know that the United Nations is doing all it can to remedy the situation and that the Indonesian Government, much to its

credit, is acting in a democratic spirit towards establishing basic freedoms for the population of the territory.⁵⁹

In the same communication, Ortiz Sanz also broached the subject of political prisoners. However, he was quick to point out, as he had already done in his 5 November letter, that “the sovereign Republic of Indonesia has the absolute right to take all the measures it deems necessary to maintain internal order”.⁶⁰

Again, it is arguable that it was at the very least inappropriate for the UNRWI to make such a statement. Under the terms of the Agreement, Indonesia did not have the absolute right to take any measures it saw fit to maintain order, if by doing so, it undermined the rights and freedoms that it had agreed to guarantee. Jakarta must therefore have been gratified to receive the UNRWI’s acceptance that its security record in the territory since 1963 was in effect nobody’s business but its own. Sudjarwo specifically referred to this important point in his letters to the UNRWI of 21 and 22 November, commenting in the latter:

I am very appreciative of the fact that you don’t wish to question the sovereign rights of my Government to adopt whatever measures it deems necessary for the maintenance of internal security and peace.⁶¹

From the correspondence, it seems that Ortiz Sanz was simply trying to use his diplomatic skills to extract whatever concessions he could from Sudjarwo. As in the case of UNTEA, the UNRWI was in a fundamentally weak position and relied upon Jakarta’s willingness to cooperate. When it did not, his reaction echoed that of UNTEA. In the vast majority of cases he compromised, regardless of whether or not it broke the terms of the Agreement, or the UN’s own declarations on human rights and political freedoms. While this reaction was conducive to the UN’s priority of concluding its involvement in the territory with the minimum of international reaction, it also meant abandoning its responsibilities towards the Papuans.

Commenting further on the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Agreement, Sudjarwo argued that they were also guaranteed in the Indonesian Constitution which applied to West Irian as well.⁶² Putting forward “Asian values” arguments (that would be echoed years later by such figures as Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew), Sudjarwo then sought to deflect criticism of his country’s record in these areas:

The applications of these “rights and freedoms” are guided by the policy of the Government of the day, which may differ from country to country. As to Indonesia, our system of Government is not that of the Western democracies; no liberal (free-fight) democracy exists here....This is due to the specific condition, the internal social complexion and tradition of

society, and the level of advancement added to the philosophy of life of our people, all of which are quite different from those in Western countries.⁶³

Outlining what was meant by these special conditions, Sudjarwo went on to describe how the turbulent recent history of his country had undoubtedly had an effect upon the “thoughts, psychology and conduct of our security forces and indeed on the mind and policy of our Government”.⁶⁴ Added to this, he referred to the propaganda material of the “so-called Free Papua movement” whose “falsehoods” and incitement to rebellion had been produced abroad:

The difficult economic situation of the country is unfortunately a fertile ground for this kind of propaganda and agitation, especially for those whose capacity for intelligent judgement about many things is still very limited.... Many simple-minded people get easily effected by this kind of cheap propaganda and incitement.⁶⁵

With regard to Papuan allegations of military brutality, Sudjarwo conceded that in suppressing the armed rebellions, “errors” may have been made, but these had subsequently been corrected, and he emphasised that a humane policy was applied in the territory. “This policy of clemency and leniency, wherever possible, will be continued.”⁶⁶

To conclude, the Ambassador returned to the issue of rights and freedoms, explaining that:

There is freedom of speech to the extent of immunity from prosecution in all the representative councils in West Irian for all deputies.... Organisations, political or otherwise, have been allowed to be formed within the law of the country...[but]...freedom should go hand in hand with responsibility.⁶⁷

Continuing security problems

Meanwhile, armed Papuan rebellions continued, despite Indonesian claims to the contrary. Van der Kroef writes that in September 1968, Jakarta had reported the surrender of thousands of rebels, while one of their leaders, Lodewijk Mandatjan, was attempting to negotiate an amnesty offer.⁶⁸ In December, however, with the rebellion continuing, General Sarwo Edhie ended a visit to TPNG by announcing a new drive against the rebels involving around 6,000 Indonesian troops, supported by fighter aircraft. Faced with this, many rebels looked for an end to the conflict.

On 1 November, Sarwo Edhie released copies of a leaflet entitled “To our Brothers of the Arfaks Tribe who are still in the Jungles”, which was distributed in the Manokwari region and other areas with rebel activity.⁶⁹

Specifically, it mentioned some of the rebel leaders, including the Awom and Mandatjan brothers.⁷⁰ Included in the leaflet was a deadline of 30 November for rebels to report to the nearest military post.⁷¹ Although no mention was made of what would happen after this date, it was linked with the launch of the December military offensive.

In an attempt to get Ortiz Sanz directly involved in any negotiated end to the fighting, OPM activist Jacob Prai wrote to him on 22 November expressing concern at what would happen after 30 November:

If they [the rebels] do not obey this ultimatum of the 17th Military Commander the Indonesian Armed Forces are ready to launch an Offensive Attack by air using bombs with tear gas. This information we got from the Police Commander of Sukarnapura Regency, Mr. Karpono, on November 16.⁷²

Prai described rebel concerns that those who had already surrendered had been imprisoned in West Irian, or sent to concentration camps in Java where they were unable to take part in the forthcoming Act. To prevent this from reoccurring, he suggested that Ortiz Sanz should involve himself in any surrender process.⁷³

He concluded by making clear that the rebels were aware of the limitations of the UNRWI's responsibilities but "the presence of your Excellency among the Papuans in West Irian will make this sombre and gloomy situation a better and clearer one".⁷⁴

Although, in his own words, this was just "one of the many" petitions that he had received in the past month, Ortiz Sanz asked for an urgent meeting with Sudjarwo on the subject and also wrote him a "special unofficial letter", in which he wrote:

there are two elements which impel me to give this petition a special and urgent treatment. First, that it is in the interest of the Indonesian Government to put a quick end to the rebellion in the Manokwari area; and second, that it is everyone's duty to do whatever is necessary to avoid the risk of bloodshed.⁷⁵

As a solution, Ortiz Sanz offered to go personally to the rebel areas to witness the surrender of the rebel leaders, provided that Jakarta made an official request to him in writing and reaffirmed Sarwo Edhie's guarantees made in the leaflet of 1 November.⁷⁶ In his meeting with the UNRWI, Sudjarwo denied that the rebels had been threatened with bombing. He also denied that Papuans were interned in Javanese "concentration camps", although he conceded that some had "been put to work" on plantations in Java.⁷⁷

The next day, at Sarwo Edhie's request, the UNRWI visited him at his residence where the General was waiting with Sudjarwo. Sarwo Edhie briefed

Ortiz Sanz on the military situation, stating that so far 1,400 rebels had returned to their villages and denying that there were plans to bomb those that refused. He also informed Ortiz Sanz that total troop strength in the territory was 6,000, which was 2,000 more than the figure Ortiz Sanz had reported to U Thant. Sarwo Edhie assured the UNRWI that the rebellions were over and that there would be no more shooting. Instead, the army would begin a campaign of providing clothing, food and transport for the returned rebels who, Sudjarwo added, would be allowed to keep their weapons. The general concluded by inviting Ortiz Sanz to visit the Manokwari area after 30 November. The UNRWI reiterated that he would not accept without an official invitation. Sudjarwo's response was not recorded, but no official invitation was ever given and Ortiz Sanz did not visit. In conclusion, Ortiz Sanz declared that a peaceful settlement was both "nicer and quieter" and that pacification was important for the Act. He also expressed confidence that the general would ensure that the rebels were treated humanely.⁷⁸

Ortiz Sanz's decision not to visit Manokwari in December meant that he did not witness the new military campaign that succeeded, temporarily, in ending the rebellion. On 1 January, the Mandatjan brothers surrendered. The journalist Brian May described how the Indonesians gradually wore the rebels down "bombing them, cutting them into isolated groups and starving them from their hiding places...[Lodewijk] Mandatjan became ill and could scarcely walk".⁷⁹

Ortiz Sanz's second tour of West Irian

At the end of 1968, Ortiz Sanz reported to New York that he and members of his team had completed a second "extensive" tour of the territory, lasting from 18 November until 14 December. Splitting into three groups, they had visited different areas of the territory for several days at a time. The UNRWI seemed pleased with the tour noting "I believe that I have firmly established our presence in West Irian which I consider to be an essential foundation for the activities ahead."⁸⁰

Nonetheless, he informed Rolz-Bennett that their presence was still viewed with suspicion and uneasiness by the Indonesian officials who "shadow us wherever we go".⁸¹ Despite this, he confirmed the existence of anti-Indonesian feelings among the population but qualified this by a rather dismissive comment:

Of course, when the moment arrives, it would be very difficult, indeed, to assess the real importance of such [anti-Indonesian] feelings since, as you are very well aware, only a very insignificant percentage of the population is capable of or has interest in engaging in any political actions or even thoughts.⁸²

In conclusion he wrote that the tour had confirmed his initial impressions that implementing the Act “in accordance with international practice” as specified in the Agreement was “impossible”.⁸³

In his reply, Rolz-Bennett remarked that he was not surprised at this confirmation, “for the level of development of the population in the various areas of the territory – or the lack thereof – stands out all too clearly”. He also informed the UNRWI that he had requested an interpretation from the UN legal office of the phrase “in accordance with international practice”.⁸⁴

Conclusions on 1968

Jakarta would have been aware by this stage that to satisfy the Secretariat, it was only necessary for the Act to appear to include some element of genuine participation by the general population. This could then be presented to the international community to inspect, concur with and then forget.

Despite this, it was clear by the end of 1968 that this was not going to be a simple matter for Ortiz Sanz or his superiors in New York. While the rebellions appeared to be over, human rights abuses and the denial of basic political freedoms continued. These fundamental breaches of the Agreement threatened to undermine the whole process.

Furthermore, the Indonesians did not share the UN’s view of the importance of Jakarta maintaining the appearance of impartiality with regard to the Act. In conversation with Rolz-Bennett the Indonesian diplomat Anwar Sani had insisted that Indonesia could not be impartial.⁸⁵ When informed of this, Ortiz Sanz replied to Rolz-Bennett:

My views coincide with yours that Indonesia cannot be, understandably, “disinterested” in or remain “indifferent” to the act of free choice [but]...Indonesians must be able to see, in their own national interest, that while being “interested” in the act of free choice might be understood and sympathised with, no-one would excuse their country for being “partial” in that exercise.⁸⁶

Events would show that the UNRWI overestimated the international community’s interest in West Irian. But in the following months, his attempts to maintain some appearance of legitimacy for the Act would be consistently undermined by overt Indonesian manipulation of the exercise. However, Ortiz Sanz’s real role was well understood by foreign diplomats including one at the British Embassy in Jakarta who wrote in December 1968:

Tactically, his aim is to contrive a formula whereby the Act of Free Choice will result in affirmation of Indonesia’s sovereignty but will also represent a fair reflection of the peoples’ wishes and stand the test of international opinion. This is clearly going to be no easy task.⁸⁷

The fact was, as the British and other UN member states knew only too well, any “fair reflection” of the peoples’ wishes would certainly not result in a decision to remain with Jakarta. But with no significant interest in the issue from the international community, this inconvenient reality would be simply ignored by Jakarta and the UN.

US diplomats put it even more bluntly:

Ortiz Sanz recognizes that the problem facing both him and the GOI [Indonesia] is the risk that the Irian representatives, however they might be constituted, would vote against remaining in Indonesia. He concedes that it would be inconceivable from the point of view of the interests of the UN as well as GOI, that a result other than the continuance of West Irian within the Indonesian sovereignty should emerge.⁸⁸

8 January to May 1969

UN/Indonesian talks continue: Jakarta rejects the “mixed method”

The year 1969 began well for Indonesia. Following the surrender of the Papuan rebel leaders Lodewijk and Barends Mandatjan on 1 January, the security situation in the Bird's Head Peninsula appeared stable. On the island of Biak, which had been “troubled by terrorists”, the situation had also improved, although there was still local resentment at the recent burning down of houses by the army, during its Operation Sadar.¹ As a goodwill gesture, Biak tribal leaders received a New Year's gift from Suharto of 250 pigs and 200 fowl.²

By mid-January, however, rebellion in the peninsula erupted again as around 2000 Arfak tribesmen rose up under the leadership of Frits Awom.³ Awom had received his military training as a sergeant in the Papuan Volunteer Corps before being dismissed by UNTEA for leading the anti-Indonesian mutiny of February 1963. In response to the new uprising, Jakarta was forced to transfer two additional infantry battalions to the region from Makassar, South Sulawesi. According to their commander, the army's job was now to “win the forthcoming act of self-determination in West Irian”.⁴

In an analysis of the situation in late January, the British Embassy in Jakarta noted:

Most independent observers are convinced that, given a free choice, the majority of the local inhabitants would not vote for continued incorporation in Indonesia. This is certainly the view of Mr. Peter Metcalfe, a British Programme Officer [with FUNDWI] who was in Djakarta last week. Mr. Metcalfe told us of a belief held by many of the Papuans that the UN would protect them against injustice and ensure, by force if necessary, that their rights are not overlooked....But it is clear that they are going to be disillusioned when the Act of Free Choice leaves the territory, as it inevitably will, an integral part of Indonesia.⁵

Ortiz Sanz began the year by flying to Jakarta with his wife on the same flight that had brought the Mandatjan brothers. Once in Jakarta, he would not return to the territory for another two and a half months, spending his time instead exchanging letters with Sudjawo, and attending meetings with him and other government officials.

In Jakarta, Ortiz Sanz was keen to continue discussing UN staffing levels and the return of exiles. He reiterated that over the next five months his staff numbers would need to be increased from eleven to twenty-one. As he reminded Sudjarwo, "I will be working at the peak of the operation with less than one half of the fifty personnel originally intended for my mission."⁶ In fact, six extra observers that he had requested for June were cancelled, owing to "housing and budgetary restrictions",⁷ and the total UN presence never exceeded sixteen.

On the issue of exiles, Ortiz Sanz acknowledged Sudjarwo's argument that Indonesia was not obliged under the Agreement to invite exiles to return for the Act. He suggested, though, that this would be "the best answer" to accusations by exile groups that Indonesia was suppressing the basic rights of the population.⁸

The two men also corresponded concerning the political communications sent by Papuans to Ortiz Sanz. Sudjarwo dismissed the numerous allegations of military brutality, reiterating that Indonesia would take whatever measures it saw fit, "in the framework of law and order", to combat "terrorism and rebellion" and restore peace and order.⁹ Ortiz Sanz responded by making clear that he only attached a "preliminary informative" value to the petitions and did not take them into account when submitting proposals to Jakarta.¹⁰

The conciliatory nature of Ortiz Sanz's approach was noted by Sudjarwo, who in late January told the Australians that the UNRWI had been "difficult but now had a better understanding".¹¹

Throughout the rest of January, Ortiz Sanz wrote frequently to Sudjarwo, on the issues of political prisoners, disseminating information and the methods to be adopted for the Act. But he reassured Sudjarwo that "I am not at all suggesting the release of those detainees with background of anti-State activities."¹²

On the central issue of the procedure for the Act itself, Ortiz Sanz wrote in his report to the UNGA that he had learned from Sudjarwo that his "mixed system" proposal had been rejected on 10 February.¹³ In fact Jakarta had informed New York several weeks previously.¹⁴ In response, U Thant had then told Sudjarwo that he "made no repeat no commitment one way or the other".¹⁵ Nonetheless, Indonesia still claimed in its report to the UNGA that U Thant had considered its proposals regarding this decision "not unreasonable in the light of conditions existing in the territory".¹⁶

As well as seeking official UN support for the abandonment of any direct voting in the final Act, Sudjarwo was also anxious to prevent international discussion of the Secretary-General's report on the matter. In Jakarta's

opinion he explained, “the Assembly was not called upon to discuss or pass judgement on the report but merely take note of it”. U Thant responded that member states could not be prevented from commenting if they so wished.¹⁷

Nonetheless, Indonesia’s concern over potential international reaction was, according to Sudjarwo, selective. In talks with the Australian Mission to the UN in January he declared:

If the representative of Malta or, for example, one of the Caribbean countries wanted to raise the West Irian issue, Indonesia would take no notice of them. They were not important. On the other hand if the United States or Australia had queries to raise this would be important.¹⁸

Discussions in Jakarta continued the following month on the issues of political prisoners, exiles, information, and general rights and freedoms. At the same time, Sudjarwo reminded the UN team of his continuing concerns at the proposal to increase its number.¹⁹

At the meetings, the UN team was informed that the government intended to consult the nine “Representative” Councils of West Irian in order to obtain their approval for implementing the Act through the method recommended by Jakarta. These councils had been set up in 1963 after UNTEA’s departure and replaced the Regional Councils originally established by the Dutch. Whereas the original councils had been partially, and in some cases wholly, elected by universal suffrage, the “Representative” Councils were effectively appointed by the Indonesian authorities.

Jakarta’s recommended method was for these existing councils to be enlarged to form eight regional “Assemblies” (merging two of the nine councils). These would then each reach a collective decision on the questions posed in the final Act. Sudjarwo did not elaborate at the meeting on how the additional members would be selected, but in his earlier talks with U Thant he had “intimated” that universal suffrage might be allowed.²⁰ The establishment of these assemblies was to be the responsibility of the corresponding “Representative” Council Chairman in each area. To assist them, the Chairmen would appoint committees for the tasks of organising, confirming and installing the members of the Regional Assemblies.²¹

In response, Ortiz Sanz stated that he did not have the authority to object, even less reject, the method proposed. At the same time, neither did he have the authority to express agreement or endorse Jakarta’s decision. Consequently, he would participate in the procedure, but not share in the government’s responsibility for choosing this particular method.²² This position was also made clear in his November 1969 report to the UNGA.²³ Privately, he also asked the Indonesians for the names of all existing “Representative” Council members, along with details of their background and the segment of population that they were supposed to represent. Sudjarwo agreed to this, but the information was never handed over.

On the other issues discussed in the February meetings, Sudjarwo informed Ortiz Sanz that Papuan exiles were to be given until 15 April to apply to return home for the Act. There was no mention of immunity and, in the end, only one Papuan family ever accepted the offer. Nonetheless, Ortiz Sanz later referred to it as one of the “concrete measures” adopted by Jakarta on his advice that would “provide the act of free choice with some essential democratic prerequisite”.²⁴

Although the UNRWI emphasised the importance of releasing all political prisoners before the Act, he again accepted Indonesia’s right to deal with those accused with “anti-state” activities separately. He even offered some advice on the subject: “It was better to move them out of the territory, if their retention was necessary, before the Act of Free Choice.”²⁵ Presumably, removing these political prisoners to some other part of Indonesia would make their incarceration less of a threat to the smooth running of the Act.

Yet again, however, one must question whether it was in any way appropriate for the UNRWI to make such a suggestion. Although neither side defined the precise meaning of “anti-state” activities, open opposition to the Indonesian presence in West Irian was a freedom protected under the Agreement’s Article XXII, which guaranteed the right to free speech. By suggesting the removal of such prisoners from West Irian, he was not only condoning this breach of the Agreement, but also advocating a policy of detaining prisoners thousands of miles away from their family and friends. Ironically it was a method previously used against Indonesian nationalists by the Dutch.

Ortiz Sanz’s final suggestion during the February meetings was for Jakarta to issue a special decree regulating the rights and freedoms of the Papuans. Sudjarwo replied that his government might consider the suggestion, but no such decree was ever issued.²⁶ For his part, Sudjarwo continued to express concerns with what he saw as the unnecessarily large number of staff planned by Ortiz Sanz for his team.²⁷

Soon after the meetings, Sudjarwo wrote to Ortiz Sanz to reaffirm his government’s decision as to the method they would adopt for the Act. He also gave more details regarding the selection process for the additional members of the “consultative assemblies”. Existing, officially approved political, social and cultural organisations would choose one group. A second group would consist of “traditional” tribal chiefs selected by the existing local councils, and a third group was to be elected by the people themselves in each district. Importantly, the percentage of members from each group would be decided by the local existing councils.²⁸

Consequently, the only potential opportunity for genuine popular participation lay in the election of the third group – but only if some form of secret ballot was adopted thereby minimising the opportunity for intimidation. However, in practice there would be no room for dissent. As Ortiz Sanz confirmed in his UNGA report, Sudjarwo’s message in May 1969 was that

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“those few people – possibly existing – not in favour of retaining ties with the Republic of Indonesia, are...not organised in legally existing political groups or parties in West Irian”.²⁹

Papuan petitions

Furthermore, if Ortiz Sanz needed confirmation of the political loyalties of these existing councils and official organisations, Sudjarwo’s letter provided it:

we have to take into account the many resolutions submitted to the Government up till now, both from the local councils as well as from organisations in West Irian which contest the holding of the act of free choice as being unnecessary or uncalled for, simply because West Irian is an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia....The reasoning of these resolutions has the support of a great part of public opinion in this country. I believe you are not unaware of this situation.³⁰

This claim that the majority of Papuan resolutions and petitions favoured the pro-Indonesian position was an important part of Jakarta’s campaign to legitimise the Act. In its November 1969 report to the UNGA it repeated this assertion, stating that while the “simple illiterate” people of the interior had little understanding of the issue, Papuan leaders in more advanced areas had informed Ortiz Sanz that the Act was unnecessary. Furthermore, Jakarta claimed:

Since 1963, the Indonesian Government had received hundreds of statements of this kind from all layers or groups of West Irian people. For the Indonesian Government the implementation of the act of free choice in West Irian was indeed a political proposition without much political support of the people.³¹

In private, however, Sudjarwo complained to the Secretary-General about the anti-Indonesian petitions that Ortiz Sanz was forwarding to him. They were, he protested, beginning to upset the Indonesian Army.³²

At the same meeting, Sudjarwo also seemed to complain, albeit indirectly, about the amount of time he was required to spend dealing with Ortiz Sanz. Rolz-Bennett noted how he informed U Thant, “half jokingly”, about the intense correspondence between himself and the UNRWI, which, he said, was keeping him very busy.³³

Despite passing on anti-Indonesian petitions to Sudjarwo, Ortiz Sanz seemed prepared to support the Indonesian position on the issue when it mattered most. In his report to the UNGA, he referred to the petitions, stating that in total he had received 179 during his time in the territory, and adding that:

Broadly speaking, the petitions may be divided into two groups: (a) those expressing views in favour of the retention of ties with Indonesia (a little more than half of the petitions received were in this group); and (b) those in favour of severing ties with Indonesia.³⁴

With regard to the first group, he recorded that most came from the Representative Councils and the various legal organisations including students. These petitioners he described as “politically minded” and “better educated and aware of the issues”. At no point did he question the validity of their submissions.³⁵

In contrast, his description to the UNGA of the anti-Indonesian petitions was clearly designed to undermine their importance:

As regards the second group of petitions, it should be noted that some of them were unintelligible, some were anonymous or merely initialled, a few contained many alleged signatures all written by the same hand, and almost all had no return address other than the town or place from which they were sent.³⁶

Of far greater importance, however, is Ortiz Sanz’s assertion in his UNGA report that over half the petitions he received were pro-Indonesian. One has to question why he wrote this because it was simply untrue. In the UN archives, descriptions of 156 of the 179 petitions survive, recording all those received up until 30 April 1969. Of these, 95 can be described as anti-Indonesian, 59 are pro-Indonesian and 2 are neutral. Even if the missing 23 petitions were all pro-Indonesian, over half the total would still be in favour of a genuine referendum or simply freedom from Jakarta. Realistically, however, one can conclude that a significant proportion of the missing 23 were anti-Indonesian, since Ortiz Sanz acknowledged in the same report that “nationalist feelings were expressed more forcibly” in the petitions received during the last weeks of his mission.³⁷ If one assumes therefore that even 10 of the 23 opposed Indonesia, then as a conservative estimate, just over 60 per cent of the total 179 petitions received by Ortiz Sanz fell into this anti-Indonesian category.³⁸

It is possible that Ortiz Sanz simply miscalculated, but this is highly unlikely since the UN’s own list summarising the petitions is both clearly typed and numbered. Furthermore, petitions on both sides are unambiguous in their wording, leaving no room for misinterpretation of their particular sympathies. Consequently, either Ortiz Sanz himself chose deliberately to mislead the UNGA or he was directed to do so his superiors in New York. Whoever was responsible, it is a clear illustration of the UN leadership’s collaboration with Indonesia to legitimise the latter’s takeover of West Irian.

TPNG, Australian and Dutch reactions

While Ortiz Sanz continued his meetings with Indonesian officials, on 3 February Suharto told Peter Job, Reuters' departing correspondent, that he would regard any decision by the Papuans to leave the Republic as "treason".³⁹ According to Brian May, this statement caused some embarrassment for Western diplomats, and attempts were made to explain it away as an error in the translation into English. May also claimed that British and US diplomats "advised" and "warned" the new Reuters correspondent to "be more careful" than his predecessor.⁴⁰

Australian concerns at the "disruption" the Act was causing increased throughout 1969. Although numbers of Papuans fleeing into TPNG had grown in 1968, in 1969 official figures recorded a total of 1,695 crossing the border. This compared with a total of 2,230 for the years 1963–1968.⁴¹ In April and May, Indonesian troops in pursuit of fleeing Papuans crossed into Australian territory, killing two of them.⁴² Furthermore, according to official Indonesian military accounts, in April two-thirds of the population of the Erambo/Kalimaro region, north-east of Merauke near the border, were found to have fled across into Australian territory. The account gives no reason for this, but states that army officers involved in "clean up operations" were attacked and killed.⁴³

Meanwhile, the opposition Australian Labor Party passed a resolution in 1969 supporting the Papuans' right to self-determination and condemning Indonesian actions to prevent this.⁴⁴ In TPNG, there was also support for the West Papuans. In April, John Guise, Speaker of the Territory's House of Assembly in Port Moresby, revealed in an interview that:

in his personal campaigns for the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly during the past decade he has advocated the political union of the island of New Guinea, and continues to support the idea.⁴⁵

Two months later, on 28 June, the TPNG Assembly adopted a resolution criticising both Indonesia and the UN for neglecting political and human rights in West Irian. Furthermore, Michael Somare, the future first Prime Minister of an independent PNG, accused Australia of running "concentration camps" for refugees along the border, and in a statement to the Assembly said:

We often hear the UN condemning European colonialism but it never thinks of condemning Asiatic colonialism, and this is what is happening now on our border and it is colonialism on the part of Indonesians.⁴⁶

This resolution embarrassed the Australian Department for External Affairs. Unfortunately for the department, although the Papuan Assembly was not supposed to deal with foreign affairs, a precedent had already been set in 1968 when Canberra passed on a TPNG Assembly resolution to the

Soviets condemning their aggression in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁷ In the end Canberra did pass on the resolution regarding West Irian to U Thant, but added a note making clear that Australia did not agree with it. In addition, the Department of External Affairs instructed the Australian Mission to the UN to “add orally when handing the communication to the United Nations Secretariat that you are not asking for the resolution to be circulated to members of the United Nations”.⁴⁸

The rising anger against Indonesia among the political elite of Australian New Guinea led Peter Hastings to suggest the following year that future contacts between East and West New Guineans “should be, so far as possible, limited”.⁴⁹ Hastings, however, need not have been so concerned. As TPNG moved towards independence in the early 1970s, its political elite would prove themselves to be as eager to maintain good relations with Jakarta as Australia was. In early 1974, soon after self-government was granted, Albert Kiki, PNG’s Minister for Defence, Foreign Relations and Trade, wrote a confidential letter to Les Johnson, the Australian Administrator of the territory. In it, he expressed concern at the OPM’s influence in the border area and declared that he and Chief Minister Somare were determined to strengthen security and weed out officials “including police, who may in any way be sympathetic to the dissident movement”.⁵⁰

Somare himself would go on to become a firm supporter of Indonesian policy in Irian Jaya following PNG’s independence in 1975. As the historian Ian Downs wrote on the TPNG Assembly’s 1969 resolution:

While acknowledging the sincerity of the emotions and fears which this House of Assembly Resolution represented, it is doubtful if the same views would have been so forthrightly expressed if PNG had been independent of Australian protection.⁵¹

Despite these protests, the Liberal government in Canberra remained supportive of Indonesian policy in West Irian. In particular, in February 1969 during his first speech as External Affairs Minister, Gordon Freeth emphasised Australia’s need to maintain close relations with Indonesia and stressed the difficulties Jakarta would face with a “one-man one-vote” plebiscite in West Irian. Furthermore, he indicated that Australia would accept polling of 1,000 representatives as suggested by the Indonesians. In response, the *Sydney Morning Herald* condemned both Freeth and the UN for their treatment of the issue.⁵² Undeterred by such accusations, Freeth declared on another occasion that it was immoral for outsiders to incite the Papuans to resist when there would be no outside help available for them.⁵³

Commenting on the Australian position on West Irian, Neilson of the British High Commission in Canberra informed London in May:

As you know the Australians are very interested in maintaining their good relations with Indonesia and are quite willing to close their eyes to

evidence that might cause them to doubt Indonesia's good faith. You may for example be interested to know that the Prime Minister's Department declined to read Alan Mason's letter of 3 April to Le Breton on the grounds that it "might embarrass them" (this privately of course).⁵⁴

The letter referred to by Neilson was from the British Embassy in Jakarta. It gave a highly critical account of Indonesian rule in West Irian, describing military brutality, Papuan loathing for the Indonesians and their overwhelming desire for freedom.⁵⁵

In an effort to diffuse tensions, particularly over the issue of refugees and Indonesian military border incursions, Indonesian and Australian officials met in Jayapura on 10 and 11 June. They discussed recent incidents and "misunderstandings", and looked at ways of minimising the likelihood of more occurring. As a result, it was agreed that border stations in the respective territories would liaise with each other and meetings were to be arranged between senior representatives of the two administrations when the need arose.⁵⁶ At the same time, contact was maintained between Australian and Indonesian survey authorities engaged in determining the position of the border.⁵⁷

Claims of a higher level of cooperation, never officially acknowledged by Australia, appeared in an Indonesian press report in June. According to this, Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik had declared that Indonesia already had a border agreement with Australia, part of which included an Australian undertaking to return every border-crosser to West Irian.⁵⁸

Although this report was inaccurate, Canberra's cooperation certainly went further than officially admitted at the time. Australia sent scores of refugees to Manus Island, 300 kilometres north east of TPNG, in order to prevent them engaging in any political activity.⁵⁹ In one case, two West Papuans (one of whom, Willem Zonggonao, had been a member of the West Irian Assembly) crossed the border shortly before the Act took place and were arrested by the Australians, apparently at the request of the Indonesian authorities. The two men had intended to travel on to the UN in New York to present a series of petitions calling for West Papuan independence but Australia would not allow this. Instead, Australian officials sent them to Manus Island.⁶⁰

According to the journalist Anthony Balmain, Australia also maintained a secret military and intelligence relationship with Indonesia aimed at destroying the OPM. As part of this telexes were exchanged with the Indonesians before and during the Act.⁶¹

On 18 March, Ortiz Sanz issued a press release in which he referred to Indonesia's decision to rely solely on "consultative assemblies" for the Act. For this to be acceptable, he made clear that three prerequisites should be taken into consideration:

- (1) The “consultative assemblies” should have sufficiently large membership.
- (2) They should represent all sectors of the population.
- (3) The new members should be clearly elected by the people.

The United Nations Representative has, subsequently, received official assurances that these essential prerequisites will be complied with by the government.⁶²

On the same day, he received a cable from Rolz-Bennett concerning a meeting between Dutch Ambassador Middelburg and U Thant. The Ambassador had informed the Secretary-General that there was growing concern in his country about the situation in West Irian, particularly as a result of recent Indonesian government statements which, he claimed, seemed to indicate that Jakarta might “resort to methods and to pressures which would make a mockery of the whole exercise”.⁶³ For this reason, Middelburg relayed a request from Dutch Foreign Minister Luns asking U Thant to consider sending a UN “expeditionary force” to West Irian under the provision of Article XVII of the Agreement to guarantee “that the Indonesian military would not threaten or otherwise coerce the West Irianese to vote in the sense desired by the Indonesian Government”.⁶⁴

In reply, U Thant had made clear that in his opinion Article XVII, which referred only to additional staff for the UNRWI, did not confer on him the right to send such a force to West Irian. If the Dutch government required a fuller response based on the interpretation of this article, the Secretary-General requested that they ask for it in writing. Middelburg said that they would, although there is no evidence in the UN documents that such a written request was ever made.⁶⁵

Ortiz Sanz fully agreed with U Thant’s response and added that such a proposal would be totally unacceptable to the Indonesians anyway. Furthermore, he suspected that the Dutch were as aware of this as he was and concluded that “they are endeavouring to screen themselves from future responsibilities” by being able to claim if necessary that they had urged U Thant to protect the Papuans.⁶⁶

Papuan acceptance and dissent, and UN concerns

On 26 March, four days after Indonesia initiated the first of the Regional Council consultations, Bakri Abdulgani Tianlean, Secretary of the pro-Indonesian “United West Irian Students and Youth Organisation”, gave a press conference in Jakarta. Surprisingly, Bakri announced that the general situation in West Irian was deteriorating with no freedom in the country. He added that a citizen risked arrest as an OPM agent if he talked about the need for economic improvement.⁶⁷

Unsurprisingly, there was no mention of this in official UN and Indonesian accounts of the eight Regional Councils’ meetings that took place between 22 March and 11 April to discuss Jakarta’s proposals for

the Act.⁶⁸ The UNRWI's report to the UNGA noted that during the UN-monitored meetings, which were organised by a team led by Sudjarwo, one-third of the speakers rejected the whole exercise as a legacy of Dutch colonial policy. The majority of other speakers emphasised that the result of the Act should not favour separation from Indonesia. The only evidence of dissent that Ortiz Sanz recorded was in the Jayapura regency where four members supported a "one-man-vote" system and in the Paniai Council where one member "expressed dissent from the Government's proposal".⁶⁹

An eyewitness account, which contrasts sharply with UN and Indonesian reports of the "consultations", was given to the British diplomat A. K. Mason in April 1969 by the British journalist Garth Alexander. Judged by Mason as being "reasonably objective", Alexander described watching the first Regional Council meeting at Merauke on 22 March. He confirmed that there was strong opposition to the government's plans to hold the Act, but for reasons that were the complete opposite of those given in the UN and Indonesian accounts:

Alexander reports that Sudjarwo had a rather tough time with the assembly who are vigorously opposed to the Government's plans and see in them no chance of revealing to the world the true wishes of the Papuans. It is for that reason that they oppose the Act of Free Choice – the Antara version is a rather neat reversal of motives.⁷⁰

It is possible that owing to language difficulties, either Alexander or the UN had badly misunderstood the Council's deliberations. The other possibility is that Ortiz Sanz, members of his team, or the UN Secretariat, deliberately chose to remain silent about this significant example of Papuan protest at Indonesian manipulation of the Act.

What is certain is that Ortiz Sanz's report to the UNGA concluded that the councils adopted by *musjawarah* (reaching a consensus) resolutions stating that, although they believed the Act to be unnecessary, they accepted the government's proposal to implement the Act through *musjawarah* with consultative assemblies specifically established for the purpose.⁷¹ These conclusions were then endorsed by the Provincial Council of West Irian (DPRD – the Regional Assembly) on 24 April. Finally, the DPRD called on the authorities to take firm action against any disturbances which might jeopardise the Act or the recently announced five-year development plan.⁷² In a further measure to create the "right conditions" in the territory, the authorities also sent over in early April several hundred Indonesian "teachers of history, technical services and politics" to work among the Papuans. According to a government spokesman their purpose was to "help make a success" of the Act. This campaign was the responsibility of Brigadier-General Ali Murtopo, in his capacity as Commander of the Army's OPSUS (Special Operations Section). Murtopo himself, described as

Suharto's "trouble-shooter" by one British official, had arrived in the territory on 20 February 1969 to "speak to the West Irianese and their leaders about the Act".⁷³

Despite the undeniable efficiency of Indonesian control over the Regional Councils, the Indonesians could not completely prevent unofficial expressions of dissent, even in the provincial capital. At 06:00 on 11 April, the day when the last council consultation took place in Jayapura, a nationalist demonstration occurred in front of the residence of Ortiz Sanz. As might be expected, there are conflicting accounts of the event. In his book, Robin Osborne claims that 2,000 Papuans took part.⁷⁴ Moses Werror, an eyewitness and now a senior PNG-based OPM leader, gives a figure of around 5,000.⁷⁵ Van der Kroef estimated 200,⁷⁶ while Eliezer Bonay, the ex-Governor of West Irian, described it as the largest demonstration which had ever taken place in the capital.⁷⁷ Ortiz Sanz, however, reported to Rolz-Bennett the next day that only around 150 people were involved.⁷⁸

According to D Kafier, one of the organisers, the intention had been to march from Ortiz Sanz's residence to the Regional Assembly building and demand the adoption of "one man one vote" for the Act. In the end, this never took place and the demonstrators were dispersed by troops and armoured vehicles shortly after delivering a petition to the UNRWI.⁷⁹ In Ortiz Sanz's account to Rolz-Bennett he described how he addressed the peaceful demonstration:

I told them briefly that I was aware of their sentiments which I would convey to the Sec-Gen, that to prevent bloodshed or other unpleasant developments for the population they should return to their homes and work places in an orderly and peaceful manner, and that UNATIONS would continue trying to insure the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled.⁸⁰

Twenty minutes after the demonstrators left, Ortiz Sanz was informed that police and troops in a nearby street had surrounded them. He told Rolz-Bennett that he immediately visited Sudjarwo and two senior military officers to ask for the troops to be withdrawn. Following his warnings that military reprisals would seriously damage Indonesia's international prestige, Ortiz Sanz described how Brigadier-General Brotosewojo promised to order the immediate withdrawal of the troops. The UNRWI's confidential conclusions on this incident could be described as, at the very least, over-optimistic:

The outcome of this incident has shown for the first time in West Irian the possibility of peaceful democratic demonstrations by the population and evident good-will on the part of high ranking Indonesian military commanders. Everything is now quiet.⁸¹

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Papuans involved in the event give very different accounts. Moses Werror claimed that the army started shooting and arresting the demonstrators, particularly the leaders, including himself.⁸² Kafir also spoke of the leaders being arrested.⁸³ Another of the organisers described his arrest at the demonstration and subsequent treatment:

I was arrested and held at the prison of the Navy Department in Hamadi. I was beaten and given electric shocks at night while I was being interrogated, and my lips were burnt with a lighted cigarette....I was released after a few months of this.⁸⁴

It is important to remember that the Papuans who gave these accounts were all OPM supporters when interviewed. Nonetheless, their accounts are not atypical of Indonesian military behaviour, either then or in the years since. Furthermore, although Werror later on became a senior figure in the OPM (which Western sources believed was involved in the march), at the time he had just returned to West Irian after spending five years as an Indonesian diplomat at the Canberra Embassy. His motive for joining the peaceful demonstration was, he said, simply to ask for a free vote.⁸⁵ In this context, Ortiz Sanz's conclusions on the incident appear naive, misleading or both.

An insight into Indonesian military attitudes towards the Papuans at the time was given by General Sarwo Edhie in a discussion with a British diplomat in March 1969. The Papuans, the General commented:

badly needed civilizing, half of them were completely naked (which seemed to shock him) and they were very lazy. He had a feeling that the Dutch had spoiled them...[but] properly treated by an honourable administration, they should settle down happily.⁸⁶

It was an assessment that could have just as easily been made by a nineteenth-century Dutch colonial officer about the Javanese, and it goes some way to explaining why the Indonesians were so resented.

Meanwhile, Papuan concerns over the way the Act was to be organised were also shared to an extent by the UN leadership in New York. By mid-April, Rolz-Bennett had been informed by Ortiz Sanz that Jakarta was now planning to have the additional representatives of the assemblies "suggested" by ad hoc committees. It was an embarrassing situation for the UN, since Ortiz Sanz's press release of 18 March had declared that these additional members should be clearly elected by the people if the Act was to be acceptable. It had also stated that Indonesia agreed to comply with this.⁸⁷ In response, Rolz-Bennett cabled Ortiz Sanz:

Our initial reaction is that Indonesia may be going too far particularly by decision to have the additional representatives "suggested" (which means in fact appointed) by an ad hoc committee of each representative

council. Our Indonesian friends should realise, as you have told them so many times, that the method for the act of free choice, while consonant with the realities of the territory, should not depart so radically from generally accepted norms of political representation. It is surely not beyond human ingenuity to devise a method whereby the additional representatives would be elected or selected by their respective communities, thus giving an opportunity to the general population to be involved in the act of free choice.⁸⁸

Ortiz Sanz's response was to send Sudjarwo several notes, "expressing certain concern and observations regarding...the democratic election of members of the Consultative Assemblies". In reply, at the end of April, Sudjarwo merely informed the UNRWI that his government would send him an official report "in the next few days" regarding the results of preliminary consultations with the councils about the method to be adopted.⁸⁹

The UN leadership's reaction to Indonesia's change of position may be seen as further evidence that, while it was content to see Jakarta manipulate the whole exercise, it was increasingly concerned at the absence of some appearance of genuine Papuan participation. While both sides wished to avoid controversy, it was less of a priority for Indonesia than it was for the UN which, as the supposed defender of human and political rights, was potentially more vulnerable to international criticism.

Indonesia's on-going opposition to genuine popular participation in the Act is understandable in the context of the journalist Alexander's eyewitness account of his three-week visit to the territory in March 1969. In his description of the journalist's comments, Mason at the Jakarta British Embassy wrote:

the majority of West Irianese...are very far from wishing to become integrated with the Republic of Indonesia. Of all the people he spoke to, and he met between 300 and 400, none was in favour of such a solution. The impression he has is that the Papuans loathe the Indonesians, perhaps in the same degree and as a direct consequence of the way in which the Indonesians have despised and belittled the Papuans.⁹⁰

Following the 11 April demonstration, Indonesian security forces were keen to prevent any more attempts by Papuans to contact the UNRWI at his residence. Five days later, five armed Indonesian soldiers forced their way into the residence and began shouting in Indonesian at Marshal Williams, the Mission's American Chief Administrative Officer. Eventually, through an interpreter, it was established that the soldiers thought that Williams, who was black, was a Papuan and they intended to remove him from the building. Once the soldiers were persuaded to leave, Williams attempted to inform Sudjarwo but "had no opportunity to do so".⁹¹ The UNRWI had meanwhile already returned to Jakarta.

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A week later Ortiz Sanz wrote to Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik complaining about the incident and reminding him that, under the terms of the Agreement, UN premises were inviolable. It was therefore a violation of the Agreement to enter them without the express permission of himself, or U Thant:

I do not wish, in view of the high regard I have for you and mindful of the delicate stage in our negotiations, to present on this occasion an official protest which might give rise to press comments unfavourable to Indonesia. On the other hand, I cannot ignore the offence committed against the Secretary-General...nor can I expose my Mission to the risk of a repetition of such a disagreeable incident. I have decided therefore, to address myself to you in a personal manner within the spirit of friendliness and co-operation which exists in our relations.⁹²

The matter was kept out of the press and not mentioned again. It is possible, however, that this intimidation was not accidental. According to Brian May, Indonesian Army intelligence had at one point “trumped up” a charge against Williams, and he was only saved from being declared *persona non grata* by “the good sense of the Foreign Ministry”.⁹³

After leaving the territory at the end of the mission, Williams himself seemed reasonably unconcerned about his treatment, although he remarked to relatives that things “dragged along” at times, owing to “small difficulties”. He also commented that the few Papuan leaders there were “yearned and hoped” for independence, and that generally, “self-determination was much desired by the West Irianese”.⁹⁴ These views, though, were not unique to Williams. According to a 1969 document by the US Embassy in Jakarta, “Personal political views of the UN team are...95 per cent of Irianese support the independence movement and that the Act of Free Choice is a mockery.”⁹⁵ Therefore, if the Indonesians had particular objections to Williams, it was unlikely to be because he was any more sympathetic than his colleagues to the plight of the local people. Perhaps it was simply that the military felt uncomfortable having someone black like the Papuans in such a senior UN position.

Rebellion

Shortly before the first ad hoc committees began selecting additional members for the Assembly, Indonesia and the UN faced perhaps their most serious threat to the successful completion of the Act. In mid-April, large-scale armed rebellions erupted in and around Enarotali in the Paniai region of the Western Central Highlands.

According to the Indonesian military, the catalyst for the unrest was local opposition to the appointment by the authorities in February of an

Indonesian as the district head of Paniai.⁹⁶ On 14 April, the missionary airstrip at the village of Moanemani was made unusable by locals erecting barricades. At the same time, non-Papuan government officials were advised by rebels to leave the area. The next day, in Waghete, similar warnings were given to non-Papuans including teachers, and a week later the local airstrip was “demolished”.⁹⁷ By 23 April, the unrest had escalated into an organised rebellion led by around ninety well-armed, Papuan policemen who had mutinied and joined up with the OPM.⁹⁸ As the rebellion quickly spread among the 30,000 local Kapakau (Ekari) people, Franz Kaisiepo, the Governor of West Irian, issued a press statement acknowledging that the revolt was supported by all the Kapakau leadership. He also conceded that tribal groupings that had been enemies for years were united in their hostility to Indonesia.⁹⁹

The rebels’ first move was to round up local Indonesian teachers and government officials and evacuate them unharmed from the area, mostly to the army HQ at Nabire 100 kilometres to the north west. Local Protestant and Catholic missionaries were also removed, as was a small detachment of fourteen Indonesian soldiers from the garrison at Waghete. Those Indonesians who were not forced to leave fled anyway.¹⁰⁰

On 26 April, the OPM took over a Catholic Mission wireless and broadcast a message to Sarwo Edhie and army HQ. The message was a request for all Indonesian troops to leave the area so that the local people could exercise the “right of free choice” without pressure. The OPM also asked for the UN to assist by dispatching aircraft for the evacuation.¹⁰¹ When it became clear that this request would be ignored, the rebels dug up the airstrips at Enarotali, Waghete, Epoty, Nononanie and Paniai making them unusable. On 27 April, an aircraft carrying police and soldiers, including Sarwo Edhie, was shot at by the OPM as it flew over Enarotali, possibly trying to land. Two of the passengers, including a police inspector, were wounded and the aircraft returned to Nabire.¹⁰² Meanwhile, with the Indonesian authorities gone, the Papuan “Morning Star” flag was flown openly in Enarotali and other towns under rebel control.

Sarwo Edhie’s response was to order in aircraft to strafe areas of suspected rebel activity.¹⁰³ Following this, paratroopers were dropped into the area on 30 April, with others following on 4 May. Shortly before being dropped, the troops, who were based in Bandung, West Java, were addressed personally by President Suharto who told them that the “return of West Irian into the fold” was not a “gift from outside” but was supported by “real military achievements” and intensive preparations by all Indonesians.¹⁰⁴

As fighting broke out between Indonesian troops and Papuan rebels, around 14,000 people living in Enarotali and the surrounding area fled into the bush.¹⁰⁵ The Indonesian military soon reoccupied Enarotali, Waghete and other sub-district centres, but found stiff resistance in Muanemani. According to an official Indonesian military history of the rebellion:

More troops were drafted into the area and for a few weeks, it seemed that the army had re-established its authority, but in June, army units were again attacked by “thousands of people.”¹⁰⁶

With most of the population gone, incidents of looting by the military occurred and in one reported case, a Dutch missionary’s house-boy was shot dead by soldiers as he attempted to row his sister to safety across one of the lakes. The missionary himself, Father Tetro, was assaulted by troops after he complained that looting Indonesian troops were as bad as the mutinying police. Sarwo Edhie later apologised to the missionary for the assault, but not, apparently, for the killing of his house-boy.¹⁰⁷

Indonesia and the UN became concerned that unless the people returned the Act could not take place in the area. To persuade them back, Sarwo Edhie had leaflets distributed in early May assuring the rebels that their families and property would be unharmed, if they accepted an amnesty and returned.¹⁰⁸

The following month, another leaflet was distributed citing the New Testament to entice the rebel policemen back:

Through your love of merciful Jesus Christ you should remember what is written in St. Luke’s Gospel about the prodigal son....Have you not pity for your wives and children, who are suffering because you left them?¹⁰⁹

Brian May speculated that the military had had help in preparing the leaflets from American Protestant missionaries. According to him:

They had already co-operated by passing on information given in confidence by Papuans that there would be serious trouble over the Act of Free Choice in the Enarotali area, but the army assured them there was only a trifling, local problem. Dutch Catholics also knew of the Papuans’ plans to demand that all Indonesians leave, but they agreed to keep silent on obtaining a promise from tribal leaders that there would be no physical attack.¹¹⁰

Elsewhere, incidents were reported in Arso, near the northern part of the border, where UN officials estimated that around 500 Papuans demonstrated on 1 May and raised the “Morning Star” flag. In response, at least two of the demonstrators were shot.¹¹¹ On 27 April, Muju tribesmen raided an Indonesian Army camp near Merauke hacking three soldiers to death with axes.¹¹² In May, in the northern region of Dubu/Ubrub, the military discovered that Papuan youths were being given military training by rebels. Troops sent to capture the organiser were trapped and killed. Another army unit was then sent in and found all the villages in the area deserted.¹¹³ Meanwhile, on the Bird’s Head Peninsula, the Arfak rebellion led by Awom

continued, with 2,000 rebels reportedly tying down three to four Indonesian battalions.¹¹⁴

At the time, though, Sarwo Edhie assured journalists that the situation was under control. In a statement in mid-May, he explained that the paratroopers had been dropped into the Enarotali area to “inspire confidence among the people” and that the soldiers were welcomed “by cheering crowds who helped to repair the damaged airstrips”.¹¹⁵

Back in Jakarta, Ortiz Sanz’s initial reaction was to instruct his staff to “refrain from involvement”. He was also concerned at growing international press interest over the unrest, and predicted that “certain sections” would start calling for some form of UN intervention. To counter this, he cabled Rolz-Bennett on 6 May to suggest that the UN HQ be ready to clarify that the UNRWI’s involvement in West Irian was exclusively related to the Act and that the rebellions were a political problem to be dealt with by Indonesia.¹¹⁶

Rolz-Bennett’s reply suggests that he considered Ortiz Sanz was being too cautious in his dealings with the Indonesians:

we believe you are entitled to request full information from the Indonesian Government about these developments, insofar as they may have a relation to or may affect the act of free choice. We therefore suggest that you approach the appropriate Indonesian authorities and request an official account of the incidents in West Irian. It would be useful also to request the Indonesian authorities to keep you informed of any further developments.¹¹⁷

But by the time this cable reached Ortiz Sanz, he had already issued a statement to the press that “it is completely beyond the terms of reference of the United Nations Representative to make any investigation regarding matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the administrative power”.¹¹⁸

In New York, Indonesian Ambassador Abdulgani requested a meeting with U Thant on 9 May to discuss on-going preparations for the Act. At the same time, he also claimed that the unrest was simply the result of inter-tribal rivalry.¹¹⁹ Giving a very different account, Sudjarwo informed Ortiz Sanz two weeks later that members of the “so-called Free Papua” movement had been planning since the previous December to use economic/administrative “difficulties” to organise demonstrations against Indonesia and the Act. Sudjarwo also referred to captured OPM “High Command” documents detailing plans to carry out:

sabotage in every field to harm the Government, which should culminate on 1 May. As you may know, they have chosen their Victory-Day on 1 May.¹²⁰

Sudjarwo also named a number of anti-Indonesian ringleaders including Louis Zonggonao, a local Council member, describing him as “a brother of

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Wim Zonggonao, probably known to you too".¹²¹ Wim Zonggonao was the former West Irian Assembly member arrested by the Australians after crossing into TPNG with a nationalist petition a few weeks before the Act.¹²²

On 12 May, in response to the unrest, Ortiz Sanz flew to West Irian from Jakarta for a seven-day inspection of the territory. On his return to Jakarta on 19 May, he informed the waiting press that Sarwo Edhie had assured him that the army would continue to use restraint. Ortiz Sanz also announced that everything was now quiet but tense, that the previous press reports had been grossly exaggerated, and that there was no cause for alarm about the future.¹²³

The actual death toll among the Papuans during this time will never be known, but large-scale killings and abuse by Indonesian troops certainly took place while Ortiz Sanz's mission was in the territory. Although information on such incidences was difficult to obtain, confidential Australian military information from late August 1969 reported:

Our previous information on rapes committed by Indonesian soldiers has been confirmed in a number of cases...in particular one girl from Bobol, I think, was raped by a number of soldiers when she was 11, several years later again and again when she was 16 and then married.¹²⁴

While some press reports may have been exaggerated, it is doubtful whether Ortiz Sanz was in a position to judge for himself. Although he visited Enarotali, Jayapura, Waghete, Nabire and Biak, Brian May and others claim that in Enarotali, he failed even to leave the airstrip.¹²⁵ Furthermore, he appears to have decided before even leaving Jakarta what his assessment of the situation would be. On 12 May, just prior to departing for West Irian, he sent a cable to Rolz-Bennett that included a draft of a letter he intended to send to Sudjarwo following his return:

I am pleased to inform you that, as far as I have been able to assess the situation, the occurrence of violence has ceased. The administrative and military authorities have been able to restore order acting with restraint....The general situation has improved; life of the population in the affected areas is being normalised and I have the impression that if all those concerned keep acting with restraint there is no cause for alarm.¹²⁶

The fact that this draft was essentially identical to his 19 May press statement is clear evidence that he had no intention of acknowledging publicly anything which might have been damaging to Jakarta or the UN.

Privately, though, Ortiz Sanz informed Rolz-Bennett that he wished to ask Indonesia to delay the Act "by three or four months in order to provide

us with a last opportunity for improving the democratic conditions for the implementation of the act of free choice".¹²⁷ In support of this, Ortiz Sanz suggested that he would contact Sudjarwo to say that the recent arrests and restrictions on free movement and assembly made it:

difficult to envisage a full and free participation of the people in the act of free choice. Therefore, our common efforts to provide the population of the territory with proper democratic guarantees and freedoms for the act of free choice have suffered a set back and I think that, under the present circumstances of restrictions, it should be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out an act of free choice in accordance with the letter and spirit of the New York agreement.¹²⁸

Ortiz Sanz ended by urging Rolz-Bennett to permit him to transmit this request to the Indonesians. It is clear, however, that there was no support from the UN Secretariat for any plans to prolong the organisation's involvement in West Irian. Where Ortiz Sanz had written about postponing the Act for "three to four months", the copy of the cable received in New York had the word "?weeks?" handwritten over it, as if New York did not believe that the suggestion was serious.¹²⁹ In his reply, Rolz-Bennett was diplomatic, but expressed no enthusiasm for Ortiz Sanz's request:

We find it very difficult to comment on your intention to propose to the Indonesian Government the postponement of the act of free choice by three or four months until we have a personal evaluation from you.... We are sure you will also give us your considered views as to whether it would in fact be possible to change significantly the conditions in the territory during the period of a suggested postponement.¹³⁰

Rolz-Bennett knew the answer already. As long as Indonesia remained solely responsible for security and for organising the Act, genuine Papuan self-determination could not take place. In these circumstances, a delay of any length would be largely irrelevant.

In his "personal evaluation" of the situation following his return from West Irian, Ortiz Sanz repeated his assertion to the Under Secretary-General that military operations had been "grossly exaggerated" by the press. Contradicting Brian May's report, he also claimed to have walked round Enarotali "without incident".¹³¹ Nonetheless, he added :

These incidents can be attributed in part to the desire of the population to hold an act of free choice without interference from the military. Another contributing factor is the local discontent with the Javanese authorities. If the situation is not normalised it is difficult to envisage how further steps for the act of free choice can be taken in the deserted villages of the important and densely populated regency of Paniai.¹³²

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He ended by saying that his intention was to release the information contained in the cable to the press, “with the exception of the political comments”.¹³³ There would therefore be no mention of Papuan anti-Indonesian feeling to the press.

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Indonesian/UN discussions on rights, freedoms and preparations for Assembly member elections

While rebellion continued in West Irian, in New York the UN tried to focus its concerns on Indonesian preparations for the Act. On 9 May, U Thant responded to a briefing on the subject from the Indonesian Ambassador by re-emphasising the importance he attached to the process of selecting the additional members for the assemblies:

the Secretary-General emphasised the importance of electing the additional councillors in a way that would ensure that the new councillors would truly represent the people of their constituencies. This would be the touchstone in the judgement about the fairness and validity of the whole exercise which would be made by Member States of the United Nations.¹

At the same time in Jakarta, Ortiz Sanz and Sudjarwo continued to hold meetings and exchange letters throughout May. On 9 May, Sudjarwo repeated his assertion that many Papuans were “vigorously” opposed to the Act taking place. Nonetheless, he added that the government had to “guard” the people from “misinformation from certain quarters”. He also informed Ortiz Sanz that if he considered the rights and freedoms in West Irian to be limited, they were no different to those existing elsewhere in Indonesia.²

In the same letter, Sudjarwo also discussed the issue of Papuan nationalism, explaining that Indonesians considered such political activities as inseparable from their “historical” background. By this he meant that Dutch colonial policies in the territory had “incited” the Papuans against Indonesia, as part of a wider campaign against the Republic. As a consequence, Papuan nationalist aspirations not only could be dismissed as a cynical colonial creation, but were also a threat to genuine Indonesian nationalism. Therefore, they were not to be tolerated:

One should understand the political history regarding West Irian and the inherent Indonesian fight for freedom to understand this Indonesian attitude.³

Sudjarwo's argument is in many ways correct, but it needs some further consideration. It was true that the Dutch did encourage the growth of Papuan nationalism in the last years before their departure and, by definition, this nationalism was opposed to the idea of integration with Indonesia. However, as long as the Dutch believed that they could one day grant independence to their colony, it would have been irresponsible not to have encouraged and assisted a political nationalist elite to form. This was a practice common, with varying degrees of success, in other European colonies being prepared at that time for independence. Where the Netherlands failed the Papuans most was in not encouraging this earlier.

These belated Dutch efforts to prepare WNG for independence may indeed have been largely spurred on by their hostility to Sukarno. But Indonesia's dismissal of Papuan nationalism was arrogant and characteristically self-obsessed. To label one people's nationalism as legitimate and another's not is a common enough tactic whenever a state is threatened by "separatism". West Irian's significance to Jakarta lay always in terms of how the issue affected Indonesia's own national interest. Whether it was Indonesian national pride, political stability or economic requirements, it was never anything to do with the interests of the Papuans themselves. This, then, is perhaps a more accurate "historical background" against which the Papuan nationalist issue should be viewed.

On 10 May, Sudjarwo returned to the issue of the Regional Council consultations, rebuffing Ortiz Sanz's assertion that government decrees for the determination of the method for the Act had been taken without the UN's due participation. In support of this, Sudjarwo argued that a draft of these decrees was passed to senior UNRWI adviser Ali Nekunam well before the consultations commenced.⁴

He then reminded Ortiz Sanz that UN officials had been present throughout all the consultations and had at no point questioned the proceedings. It was unfortunate, he added, that Ortiz Sanz himself had not been present. Turning to the next stage in the preparations, Sudjarwo assured the UNRWI that the organisers of the ad hoc committees had been told that the UN was entitled to "participate" in the arrangements for the election of representatives for the final Consultative Assemblies:

be assured again, Mr. Ambassador, that the Indonesian Government and the local administrators in West Irian – despite the inadequacies – are doing their utmost to implement properly what has been decided by the Government in consultations with the local councils in West Irian pursuant to the provisions of the New York Agreement.⁵

Their disagreements over the ad hoc committees became public after Sudjarwo, then Ortiz Sanz, leaked details to the press. In early May, Dutch newspaper reports on the issue caused some anxiety at The Hague. One official noted that they were “by no means confident that Parliamentary pressures could not develop again” over the issue in the Netherlands.⁶ In Jakarta, Australian diplomats were concerned that Sudjarwo had “been letting his irritation become apparent to journalists”⁷ by revealing that “bad feeling” existed between himself and Ortiz Sanz.⁸ They therefore urged him to avoid giving “the impression publicly that there was any substantial differences between Indonesia and Ortiz Sanz”.⁹ But on 20 May, the UNRWI responded to Sudjarwo’s comments by giving a series of individual “off the record” briefings to foreign journalists in which he revealed his concerns that the government’s selection of additional members for the assemblies would be “less than satisfactory”. He added, incorrectly, that under his mandate he had no authority to participate in the Act.¹⁰

Elections for the Assemblies and UN protests

Meanwhile, the process for electing additional Assembly members had already commenced the previous month, without any UN involvement.¹¹ From Jakarta, Ortiz Sanz informed Rolz-Bennett on 23 May that he had asked Sudjarwo on 1 May to provide a detailed timetable for the elections. This had not yet been provided, “with the result that we find ourselves in a difficult position to perform our duties”.¹² Importantly, Ortiz Sanz also alleged to Rolz-Bennett that he had evidence of a deliberate policy by Indonesia to prevent UN involvement in this crucial stage of the Act:

recently we had the occasion to read certain official instructions which indicated that the participation of the United Nations should be avoided with the explanation that the elections had already taken place.¹³

The Indonesians, however, informed U Thant that difficulties with obtaining timetables for the elections stemmed from their being decided by the various ad hoc committees themselves. The delay had therefore simply been down to poor communications between Jakarta and the various West Irian regencies.¹⁴

At a press conference in Jakarta on 20 May, Ortiz Sanz stated that he had informed the Indonesians again that the Assemblies would only be democratic if they were sufficiently large, represented all sections of the population and were clearly elected by the people. He added that his staff were still waiting to observe and participate in these elections.¹⁵

In a letter to Ortiz Sanz on 23 May, Sudjarwo conceded that some elections were already being carried out without UN participation. He assured the UNRWI, though, that government officials had been instructed that it was their duty to cooperate fully and effectively with the UN in this process.¹⁶

At this stage, Ortiz Sanz appeared to have serious concerns that if

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Indonesia bypassed the UN on this issue, his position and that of his mission would be in danger of becoming untenable. On 23 May he wrote to Rolz-Bennett:

The only means to ensure “the eligibility of all adults, male and female...to participate in the act of self-determination to be carried out in accordance with international practice,” is, as I have repeatedly urged the Indonesian Government, to have the representatives to the consultative assemblies clearly and democratically elected by the people. To this effect the participation of the United Nations is of utmost importance.¹⁷

Ortiz Sanz therefore appealed to U Thant to approach Adam Malik directly on this issue. In his cable to Rolz-Bennett the same day he repeated this plea, urging U Thant to warn Jakarta that the whole process risked being questioned in the future.¹⁸

Continuing the UN pressure on Jakarta, Ortiz Sanz met Sudjarwo in Jakarta on 24 May. In their discussion, he referred to a joint statement issued by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns and his Indonesian counterpart Malik, following a meeting held in Rome on 21 May. Although uncontroversial in its content, Ortiz Sanz seized upon one part which included a public reaffirmation by Malik that Jakarta would fully implement the provisions of the Agreement.¹⁹ Full implementation of the Agreement, he pointed out, meant democratic elections for the Assemblies in the presence of the UN.²⁰ It also meant guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of the population which, he informed Sudjarwo, still needed to be dealt with:

because, I am sorry to say, up to now no concrete measures have been adopted by the Government in this respect. On the contrary, the situation with regard to rights and freedoms has deteriorated. There is a growing number of petitions and complaints of new arrests, and I will have to make an assessment of them. Should it be necessary I will seek an audience with his Excellency the President of the Republic.²¹

To conclude, Ortiz Sanz made a further appeal to the Indonesians at the meeting to reconsider their policy towards implementing the Act:

I stress the importance of a properly implemented Act of Free Choice because I believe Indonesia wishes a final, and not a temporary, solution to the problem of West Irian. The Indonesian Government should take a calculated risk and allow the opposition the opportunity to express its views. This is the moment for the Indonesian authorities to adopt courageous and generous measures.²²

This strong appeal was followed up the next day in New York by a similar confidential message from U Thant to Jakarta.²³

Ortiz Sanz eventually left for West Irian on 2 June. Before leaving Jakarta, he met Malik and emphasised once more the importance of democratic elections and political freedoms. Yet again he was given assurances on these issues.²⁴ In Canberra, Neilson of the British High Commission remarked “there is a feeling abroad that Indonesia is pulling a fast one in the Act of Free Choice and that Australia is leaning over backwards not to notice (and so it is!)”.²⁵

Although the UN mission only received an election timetable on 30 May, on the same day, Wiesber Loeis, of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, told Brian May that the UN had already been informed that elections would begin on 7 May (in fact they began on 20 April) and end on 6 June. Loeis remarked that he did not know why the UN had not turned up to any, but he claimed that officials in Biak were still delaying the election in anticipation of their arrival.²⁶

According to May, the international release of this news story was a blow to the UN in Jakarta. He described the UN as being thrown “into confusion” and claimed that the story precipitated Ortiz Sanz’s departure to West Irian. With Ortiz Sanz’s arrival, May comments that the UN then began a desperate search for air transport. It had none of its own, and despite Sudjarwo’s pledge of “full and effective cooperation”, Indonesia did not appear to be providing any. Brian May adds that the UN could have arranged air transport through the missionary services in advance but did not. Even if it had he concludes that it would have still been unable to attend many of the remotely situated “elections”. Furthermore, without interpreters there was little chance of making contact with ordinary villagers or participating in any meaningful way in the process.²⁷

Rotty, Sudjarwo’s representative in Jayapura, conceded that there had been ‘misunderstandings’, but maintained that the UN knew the elections were being held and added that there was nothing to stop it from going anywhere it wished.²⁸ Sudjarwo described to May how the UN had tried and failed to charter an aircraft to observe elections fifteen minutes’ flight time from Jayapura: “It is very hard for them. To get to some of the elections would take a three-day walk and a boat trip. I don’t think it’s quite their line.” May got the impression that some Indonesians were simply laughing at the “UN pantomime”.²⁹

The UN finally witnessed an election on 4 June, six weeks after the process had commenced. The election took place in Biak. Also in attendance were Stuart Harris of *The Times* and Watson, a diplomat at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. Afterwards, Harris visited the US Embassy in Jakarta (but not the British) and spoke to a diplomat there called La Porta. During the conversation, Harris gave a “glowing picture” of the meeting at Biak in which he described the freedom of the people to decide who to represent them.³⁰ Harris’s positive assessment was welcomed by Western officials who were quick to refer to it as evidence that some form of genuine Papuan participation was being permitted.

Within days of speaking to Harris, La Porta, who had also visited West

Irian, briefed the British Embassy in Jakarta. Despite not having witnessed the Biak vote himself, he described it as “reasonably democratic” and claimed that a secret ballot had been used. He also stated that reports of violence and rebellion were exaggerated. In particular, he said Indonesian troops had acted with restraint during the recent unrest. Nonetheless, he had warned US citizens living in West Irian (almost all missionaries) to “keep very quiet and to avoid any involvement” in the Act. In his report to London of the conversation, the British diplomat Mason noted that La Porta’s information “cleared up some of the points raised in the 1 June 1969 *Observer* article”. This referred to an anti-Indonesian piece by “Michael Donald” under the heading “Tribes Wiped Out in Secret War”.

Finally, La Porta also revealed that the Dutch and Australians had been privately urging the Americans, as mediators in the 1962 talks on the territory, to “concern themselves rather more closely” in the on-going situation in West Irian. The Americans, though, declined the offer.³¹ The US policy of non-involvement in the Act was also noted by the British Embassy in Washington. On 3 June it informed London that, despite some criticism in the Senate, the Americans saw little merit in getting involved in “the niceties of ascertainment” because they “might lose goodwill [in Jakarta] to no advantage”. As a US Embassy telegram also commented “USG should not become directly involved in this issue either through attempting to pressure Indonesia or holding hands of Dutch.”³²

Two days later on 12 June, Goronwy Roberts, British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, mentioned the description of the Biak vote in a meeting with sceptical members of the British United Nations Association. The UNA had asked for the meeting to discuss serious concerns that it was having about events in the territory. He informed the UNA that, in at least some elections, “conventional democratic methods were used with a large proportion of the population taking part”, and made a specific reference to the use of a secret ballot in Biak.³³ Four days after that, the MP Tam Dalyell asked Roberts in the House of Commons:

May we have an assurance that the Foreign Office will resist following the lead of the press in jumping to the conclusion that the West Irian rebels are in the right and that the Indonesian Government in Djakarta are necessarily wrong?³⁴

A week later, on 24 June, the British Embassy in Jakarta was finally able to hear a first-hand account of the Biak vote when officials spoke to the Australian diplomat Watson. He gave a very different version of events, informing them that he was convinced that the vote:

was “rigged”, and that this was the only selection that the U.N. team witnessed, and they were taken especially to see it!...Difficulties were put in their way in every case except Biak.³⁵

As with many allegations concerning West Irian under Indonesian rule, it is difficult to determine their accuracy. Nonetheless, in contrast to Harris's version of events, Watson's account of Biak was, unsurprisingly, not publicised by Britain or Australia.

A few days after the Biak vote, Ortiz Sanz had to inform Rolz-Bennett that his team had witnessed barely 30 per cent of the elections.³⁶ This must have been an embarrassment to the UNRWI, particularly after both he and U Thant had repeatedly made clear to the Indonesians the vital importance of UN involvement in this stage of the process. Furthermore, it was hard not to conclude that Jakarta had made Ortiz Sanz appear foolish and outwitted, both to the international press and to U Thant.

Watson, who told the British that Ortiz Sanz had been "out-manoeuvred" by the Indonesians, particularly Sudjarwo, also reached this conclusion. Significantly, there was also evidence of the UNRWI's general growing isolation. In its description of the Australian's assessment, the Embassy relayed to London:

[Ortiz Sanz's] weak position has come about mainly as a result of lack of support from U.N. H.Q. Sudjarwo went to The Hague in January. Convinced by what he heard there that the Dutch Government would not cause difficulties in West Irian, he went on to New York, where he found in the U.N. Secretariat a similar attitude. Armed with this knowledge he has managed to render Ortiz Sanz virtually impotent. This is borne out by what a British UNESCO/FUNDWI expert resident in Jayapura reported to us last week when he was in Jakarta namely that the rest of the political mission now have little faith in Ortiz Sanz.³⁷

Reports of other elections also suggest that the procedures had been far from democratic. One foreign diplomat informed an Indonesian official, in front of Brian May, that many Papuans had been terrorised by the authorities "to fall in line":

He cited an incident at Mulia, in the Central Highlands: a council member asked what would happen to him if he opted for independence; the reply was that he would be shot.³⁸

The authorities appeared little concerned about reports of such intimidation. On 24 May, the officially controlled Jayapura newspaper *Tjenderawasih* reported that a Major Soewondo had addressed 200 village chiefs in the Lake Sentani area on the subject of the representatives' elections. Before ordering them to bring back villagers who had fled during the on-going uprising he warned:

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I am drawing the line frankly and clearly. I say I will protect and guarantee the safety of everyone who is for Indonesia. I will shoot dead anyone who is against us – and all his followers.³⁹

May himself witnessed the election of Assembly members in Jayapura town on 9 June. He described how only nine candidates were nominated for the nine seats. The nominations were chosen by approximately 100 elders who had been brought in by the authorities to approve them. There was no way of knowing, however, whether these men were genuine representatives of the 15,000 local inhabitants:

The UN men did not speak Indonesian and had no means of asking the delegates questions or of understanding anything they might have wanted to say. I asked one of them, Marshall Williams, if he had been able to find out previously if those voting in fact represented the townspeople. He replied: “We came in at this point.”⁴⁰

Agreement to hold fresh elections

In the meantime, Ortiz Sanz wrote to Sudjarwo requesting a meeting with President Suharto to discuss his concerns.⁴¹ In New York, as soon as the UN leadership learned of the situation from Ortiz Sanz, it immediately sent a cable back making clear that, on this issue at least, Jakarta’s behaviour was unacceptable:

Failure of the Indonesian Government to inform you about the timetables for elections to consultative assembly is most regrettable. The fact that about 70 per cent of the elections took place without the presence of Unations observers will cast a serious doubt about the validity of such elections and will damage the Indonesian Government and the United Nations as well...these elections were the corner-stone of the whole exercise and the account of what happened in your report to the Secretary-General will jeopardize the outcome of the Act of Free Choice when the matter is taken up by the General Assembly. In the circumstances, we strongly suggest that you approach the appropriate Indonesian authorities and urge them to conduct fresh elections in all the places where no Unations observers were present, for the purpose of these fresh elections being observed by members of your staff.⁴²

Like U Thant, Ortiz Sanz had consistently emphasised to the Indonesians the importance of these elections. But now he appeared reluctant to pursue the issue, despite U Thant’s clear directive. It was as if after ten months in the job, Ortiz Sanz had little confidence in his ability to deflect Jakarta from its chosen path. In his reply to Under Secretary-General Narasimhan, he cabled that he would ask Indonesia to conduct fresh elections “in at least some of the

places where more numerous representatives were elected without our participation".⁴³ This, though, contrasted with Rolz-Bennett's "strong suggestion" for fresh elections in all the relevant places. Ortiz Sanz then added:

There is no doubt that the answer of the Government will be in the negative because lack of time and the complexity of the operation a view that I cannot reasonably object to because of the enormous practical difficulties involved.⁴⁴

At the side of this cable from Ortiz Sanz, Narasimhan, or an aide, had written by hand "Why not request in *all* of the places?"

Eventually, Ortiz Sanz wrote to Sudjarwo on 13 June to suggest that "despite the difficulties involved", his government give "serious consideration to the possibility" of holding fresh elections "at least in some of the localities where the largest number of representatives were elected before 30 May". By doing this, he added, Jakarta would demonstrate its "fairness in regard to this matter" to the international community.⁴⁵

At this point, Jakarta finally seemed to realise that holding elections without any UN presence was viewed as unacceptable departure from the terms of the Agreement by both Ortiz Sanz and, more importantly, U Thant. In retrospect, it is clear that this was the one occasion during the entire UNRWI mission in which the UN took a firm stand. Since Indonesia's veto of Ortiz Sanz's suggestion for any direct voting in the Act, the UN had repeatedly emphasised that the elections of Assembly representatives would need to include some evidence of participation by ordinary Papuans, witnessed by UNRWI staff. By ignoring these appeals, Jakarta was making it virtually impossible for U Thant to bestow UN legitimacy on the final result, something that both sides wanted.

On 14 June, Sudjarwo replied to Ortiz Sanz that he would have no objection to fresh elections being held "in a few places – if that would still be feasible – only to meet your wishes".⁴⁶ Since Ortiz Sanz had expected a wholly negative response, this must have been somewhat of a surprise. Nonetheless, Sudjarwo qualified his position by maintaining "this of course is a matter for the local ad-hoc committees with whom one should discuss these possibilities. It can not be decided in Djakarta."⁴⁷

Furthermore, Sudjarwo alleged that Ali Nekunam, a senior adviser on Ortiz Sanz's team, had already informed him that it would be sufficient for the UN to attend only a sample of the elections for each part of the territory. Sudjarwo therefore questioned the need for fresh elections in regencies such as Jayapura, where UN officials had already witnessed a number of elections. Whether Nekunam actually said this cannot be confirmed, but handwritten annotations in the margin of Rolz-Bennett's copy indicate that he found such a concession surprising at the very least.⁴⁸ In his reply to Ortiz Sanz, Rolz-Bennett expressed some satisfaction with the Indonesian response, while at the same time noting:

[Sudjarwo] speaks of fresh elections “in a few places” and also leaves the matter to discussions with local ad-hoc committees. Notwithstanding such limitations, we are sure you will make every effort to have the largest possible number of elections repeated in presence of Unations observers.⁴⁹

Despite this appeal from Rolz-Bennett, Ortiz Sanz appeared to feel that Sudjarwo had already moved further than expected and he made no further appeals to the Indonesians on the issue.

On 23 June, the Indonesians sent the UNRWI a timetable for fresh elections. The choice had been made following “consultations with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the local authorities in the territory”. In all, Jakarta listed nine such elections spread throughout the territory, beginning on 26 June in Merauke and ending in Biak on 5 July. In the end, however, despite another Indonesian pledge to ensure that the UN could attend, UNRWI staff only managed to witness six fresh elections.⁵⁰ At the same time, they also attended a further four elections in Balim, Paniai and Manokwari, areas which had not previously voted. In all, Ortiz Sanz reported that the UN witnessed the election of only 195 out of the 1,026 Assembly Representatives who were eventually selected to take part in the Act.

In his final report to the UNGA Ortiz Sanz gives no description of the actual conduct of the elections for the Assembly Representatives. However, foreign journalists witnessed several and their reports give some idea of the procedures employed. In Biak, Hugh Lunn described how, despite being followed everywhere by Indonesian security officials, locals still managed to pass him notes alleging that the Indonesians were killing Papuans suspected of favouring independence. On 5 July, Lunn and Otto Kuyk, a Dutch colleague, visited the Biak village of Bosnik where they watched fresh elections of six Assembly Representatives in the presence of four UN observers and around 500 villagers. According to him, Indonesian soldiers in civilian clothes simply selected six men from the crowd without any consultation with the people. Following this, a huge cheer erupted as two men and a boy emerged from the bush with placards denouncing the process as unrepresentative and warning of a new wave of arrests. Lunn got their names before the soldiers led them away at gunpoint. Kuyk appealed to Ortiz Sanz who witnessed the incident to intervene but he replied that the UN was only there to observe. His account also gives credence to suggestions of disquiet amongst the UNRWI's team:

In the next three days, all three UN observers under Ortiz Sanz came to me individually, distraught. They said there would be no free choice. They'd received a constant stream of pleading letters. I asked each for an on-the-record interview. If a UN official spoke out, the World would listen. Jim [Lewis], an elderly American, said he would lose his pension. Michel [Pelletier], a young Frenchman, said he earned three times as

much with the UN as back home and Peter [Jennings] a young Indonesian speaking American said his future was tied to Indonesia.⁵¹

This “election” was also witnessed by Link van Bruggen who confirmed Lunn’s description, although he estimated a much larger crowd of 2,000–3,000.⁵²

Bob Hawkins, Editor of *Pacific Islands Monthly*, witnessed another election. It took place on 24 June in the highland town of Wamena in the Baliem Valley. Hawkins commented that his most vivid recollection of the process was that of an Indonesian officer using a thick cane to prod the local Ndani people into position, so that they could vote unanimously for the Indonesian choice.⁵³

Furthermore, there is evidence that in May 1969, the military commander for Merauke sent instructions regarding the selection process to a senior governmental official in the area. Assembly members, he stated, had to be chosen on the basis of their loyalty to Indonesia. If a “delegate” was not loyal then “one has to have the courage to use improper methods to remove the delegates concerned”.⁵⁴

It is hard therefore not to conclude that the UN failed completely in its attempts to influence the organisation of these elections. This must have been a bitter blow for Ortiz Sanz and the Secretariat, particularly when one considers the importance attached by them to the process as the “touchstone” on which the democratic credentials of the whole Act were to be judged. In the few elections witnessed by UNRWI observers, it was obvious that genuine democracy had no perceivable part to play in the exercise. As one British official commented privately, they were “rather laughable” repeat performances with predictable results.⁵⁵

Faced with such an obvious failure, it was understandable that in his final report, Ortiz Sanz chose to emphasise his role in instigating repeat elections, while omitting to give any description of the elections themselves. In the end, this isolated example of UN assertiveness in West Irian resulted in no more than a token, and ultimately meaningless, gesture by Jakarta. It did nothing to conceal the reality of the situation from those who chose to notice. With the failure of his final attempt to create an appearance of democracy, Ortiz Sanz was to spend the remainder of his time in the territory collaborating with U Thant and Jakarta in their efforts to resolve the issue of West Irian with the minimum of controversy.

UN and Dutch cooperation with Indonesia

The importance attached to this task, and the extent to which it, rather than the rights of the Papuans, guided UN policy, particularly in the last weeks of the UNRWI mission, is clearly illustrated in a 14 June letter from Ortiz Sanz to Rolz-Bennett concerning issues to be raised in a meeting planned for late June between the UN Secretariat and Sudjarwo. Ortiz Sanz began by asking

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that it be made “crystal clear” again to Sudjarwo that he had never given his blessing to the chosen Indonesian method of holding the Act, “as it has been at times asserted by the Indonesian and Dutch sides and elsewhere”.

He also reiterated that political rights and freedoms in West Irian had continued to deteriorate, and that the government had yet to adopt any concrete measures to address the problem. In particular, he expressed regret that Jakarta had ignored his request for it to issue a special statute granting the people basic rights and freedoms in line with the 1962 Agreement:

The argument that the situation in West Irian is the same as in the rest of Indonesia is untenable. In the Territory there are still many political prisoners, the number of which has never been made known to the United Nations.⁵⁶

As evidence of these detainees, he referred to the peaceful Papuan demonstration which had occurred in front of his Jayapura residence on 11 April.⁵⁷ At the time, he had described how this incident had shown “for the first time” that peaceful demonstrations were permissible in West Irian. He had also commented upon “the evident goodwill” of high-ranking Indonesian military officers with regard to this.⁵⁸ Now he informed Rolz-Bennett that on the day following the demonstration, forty-three people had been arrested, and of these, thirty-seven were finally released on 11 June, while the remaining six remained in detention.⁵⁹

This report by Ortiz Sanz demonstrates clearly that senior Indonesian military personnel lied to him on issues specifically covered by the Agreement such as political freedoms. It also illustrates Ortiz Sanz’s surprising willingness to believe them, despite receiving regular petitions and communications from Papuans alleging abuse. In a recent interview, he still holds to the position that while there were political prisoners, “They [the Papuans] were treated civilly, not barbarically.”⁶⁰

In the rest of his letter, Ortiz Sanz discussed Indonesian concerns on two points. The first was the attitude of the Netherlands government towards Indonesia’s chosen method and preparations for the Act. The second was the UNRWA’s final report to the Secretary-General. With regard to the former, Ortiz Sanz declared:

I advised [Sudjarwo] privately though emphatically that his Government should try to obtain assurances that the Netherlands’ Government would not cast any doubt on, or challenge, the Act of Free Choice. This would prevent a heated debate in the General Assembly.⁶¹

On the subject of his final report, Ortiz Sanz revealed “as an expression of my continued cooperation” with the Indonesians “I offered to show him, on a personal basis, those parts of the report that might be controversial or create discrepancies with the Government’s report”.⁶²

This is a significant letter for two reasons. First of all, it reveals a level of Indonesian sensitivity to world opinion that seems surprising in view of its open determination to strip the Act of any meaningful democratic content. It would have been a simple matter for Jakarta to permit some token expression of Papuan dissent, thereby demonstrating its “democratic credentials”. But such a convenient solution would perhaps have posed too great a threat to the Indonesian myth of Papuan loyalty to be permissible.

More important, this letter provides further unambiguous evidence of Ortiz Sanz behaving, with U Thant’s consent, in a manner totally incompatible with his official role. The situation in West Irian, as relayed by him to the UN leadership, was clearly one in which there could be no act of self-determination as laid down in the Agreement. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to argue that his responsibility should have been to highlight this fact, particularly in his final report. Instead, the letter shows his preoccupation was to ensure that Jakarta took measures to minimise the impact of any international protest over the fundamental breaches of the Agreement. While this level of duplicity and cynicism might be expected of a state in pursuit of its perceived “national interest”, for a Representative of the UN Secretary-General, it is indefensible.

On 21 June, immediately following the New York meetings between an Indonesian team led by Sudjarwo and the UN leadership, Rolz-Bennett wrote to Ortiz Sanz outlining their content. The discussions concentrated on Indonesian concerns over the procedure to be followed in the General Assembly regarding the Act. Under the terms of the Agreement, Indonesia and the UNRWI were required to submit final reports to the Secretary-General, who would then report to the UNGA on the conduct and results of the Act.⁶³ Still concerned about what the UNRWI’s final report would say, Sudjarwo apparently “expressed the hope” that the reports would not contain conflicting views. He also hoped that Ortiz Sanz’s report would not contain controversial statements “which may make the handling of the issue in the General Assembly more difficult”. U Thant tried to reassure Sudjarwo, commenting that, as both reports would be mainly factual and descriptive, the possibility of conflicting views was limited.⁶⁴

It was also clear from the meetings that Indonesia wanted U Thant to deal with the matter in such a way that member states would have little, or no, opportunity to comment. First, Sudjarwo and Sani informed the Secretary-General that they did not feel it necessary to inscribe a special item in the agenda of the next session of the UNGA. Second, they stated that there would be no need to circulate either Ortiz Sanz’s or their own reports on the issue to the General Assembly. Finally, they impressed upon the Secretary-General their belief that the UNGA was not entitled to pass any substantial resolution on the conduct and results of the Act.⁶⁵

In response, U Thant pointed out that the terms of the Agreement obliged him to request inclusion of an item on the Act in the agenda of the Assembly. He also felt “duty bound” to circulate the UNRWI and

Indonesian reports to member states who, he felt, could not be prevented from passing comment. Overt breaches of the Agreement in New York could not, it seems, be accepted by the Secretariat with the same degree of complacency as those committed in West Irian.

Echoing the advice of Ortiz Sanz, U Thant then made clear that the main responsibility for dissuading member states from speaking out on West Irian lay with Jakarta:

The Indonesian Government would have to consult very diligently with the Members of the General Assembly for the purpose of preventing the submission of a draft resolution touching on the substance of the West Irian matter.⁶⁶

Despite Jakarta's anxieties over possible Dutch reaction to the Act, the Indonesians must have been encouraged by the support they were now receiving from their old adversary on West Irian, Dutch Foreign Minister Luns. Following his May meeting with Malik, Luns publicly expressed support for Indonesian policies on several occasions. In early June, as uprisings continued and controversy over the council elections grew, Luns informed the Dutch Parliament that press reports giving an unfavourable picture of Indonesian policy in the territory were greatly exaggerated.⁶⁷ A month later he addressed Parliament again, this time expressing his support for Jakarta's chosen method for the Act.⁶⁸

Luns' statements seem to have been a direct reaction to articles on West Irian appearing in Dutch newspapers. On 11 July, Quarles of the Dutch Mission to the UN commented to Rolz-Bennett that there had been a renewal of press interest in the Netherlands as the climax of the Act approached. This, he said, was partly due to the presence in the territory of the Dutch journalist Otto Kuyk who, along with Hugh Lunn, had witnessed the Papuan protest in Bosnik.⁶⁹ (Kuyk's report on the Bosnik protesters had begun with the statement "I call them heroes".)⁷⁰

Unsurprisingly, this criticism in the Dutch press did not go unnoticed by Jakarta. Generally uncomfortable with the small foreign media presence, Indonesia had banned them following the April rebellions, although some like Brian May had ignored the order and stayed.⁷¹ With the approach of the final stage of the Act, Jakarta began allowing some back in, but not apparently those considered to be particularly hostile. In one example the Dutch Press Association alleged that the journalist Henk Kolb was refused entry because he had previously written articles critical of Indonesia.⁷²

Ortiz Sanz passed on the complaint to Sudjarwo, recommending that "further consideration be given to the request...so that world opinion might be informed of the fairness with which the Act of Free Choice was carried out".⁷³ However, Kolb remained excluded.

In the end, faced with official restrictions, only a small number of non-Indonesian journalists were present during the last weeks of the exercise.

Those that came required special entry permits to cover the Act and, according to official figures, a total of twenty were issued to the foreign press.⁷⁴ But another factor may have been the attention generated by the presence in Jakarta of President Nixon who was on a tour of South East Asian capitals in late July and early August.⁷⁵ Describing the absence of foreign coverage during the final “Consultative Assembly” meetings Lunn wrote:

There were no press photographers, so I took pictures. There was no television either: although once I bumped into a Japanese TV crew, it turned out to be making a documentary on Japanese war dead.⁷⁶

Ortiz Sanz probably shared Indonesia’s satisfaction at the small number of foreign journalists present. Overwhelmingly, they were highly critical of the Act, and their reports reflected this. Responding to a journalist who asked to interview him in Jayapura on 3 June, Ortiz Sanz replied: “I do not propose to meet the press. They have been very unkind lately.”⁷⁷

Meanwhile, in the Indonesian press, government officials stressed Indonesia’s peaceful intentions but warned that “if they [the Papuans] rebel against us with arms we have to meet them with arms”.⁷⁸

“OPM plot” against Ortiz Sanz and final Indonesian/UN discussions on the “Act”

In mid-June, Indonesian officials claimed to have seized “certain documents” proving the existence of an OPM plot to assassinate Ortiz Sanz and Sarwo Edhie. Furthermore, they alleged that Reiff, a Dutch UNESCO official working on a FUNDWI educational project, was involved. Ortiz Sanz wrote to Foreign Minister Malik requesting details so that they could be passed on to U Thant, but it is not clear whether he obliged.⁷⁹ No more appears to have been said about the allegation, although the foreign press were aware that Reiff was implicated by Jakarta in some way with the OPM. As a consequence, he was expelled from the territory.

The accuracy of Indonesia’s allegation is hard to assess, but May comments that it was an absurd accusation prompted by Indonesia’s dislike of Reiff’s overt sympathy for the Papuans.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the American diplomat La Porta concluded that Reiff “had certainly had knowledge of a rebel training camp in the Sentani area”, although he discounted other reports that the UNESCO official had misappropriated FUNDWI funds.⁸¹ More recently, a key OPM figure at the time has said that he was astonished by the allegation of a plot to kill Ortiz Sanz, and strongly denied it.⁸² True or not, it would have distracted Ortiz Sanz during this final part of his mission, and at the same time it gave Jakarta the excuse to remove an official they viewed as hostile.

At the end of June, Ortiz Sanz wrote to Sudjarwo to ask for information

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about which segment of the population each Assembly member was supposed to represent.⁸³ It was important information, but Ortiz Sanz has since confirmed that he never received any details on this.⁸⁴

The UNRWI also repeated his request of 10 June that Sudjarwo arrange for him to meet Suharto.⁸⁵ As he had informed Rolz-Bennett on 1 June, he wished to meet the President “in a last attempt at improving the democratic conditions in the territory before the act”.⁸⁶ But in his UNGA report he was forced to concede that “owing to his heavy schedule of work” Suharto could not offer him an appointment to meet until ten days after the completion of the Act.⁸⁷

Unable to meet the President, Ortiz Sanz spent the last days before the Assemblies commenced in further largely ineffectual correspondence with Sudjarwo.

On 28 June, he received from Sudjarwo a draft “Decision regarding the Standing Orders of the Session of the Consultative Assembly for the Act of Free Choice”. In his response to it on 2 July, he sought a few clarifications and made a number of suggestions. Sudjarwo was asked to confirm that the questions to be put to the Assemblies would conform with the stipulations of the Agreement.⁸⁸ The Ambassador duly assured Ortiz Sanz that they would.⁸⁹ Ortiz Sanz also questioned Jakarta’s description of the Act as essentially a consultation between the government of Indonesia and the “people of West Irian”. As he correctly noted, the Act was in fact an opportunity for the Papuans to decide freely whether or not they wished to remain with Indonesia.⁹⁰

He then reminded Sudjarwo that the Agreement specified the right of every member of the Assembly to express their views actively and freely.⁹¹ Finally, he requested that he be provided with a clarification of these points,⁹² but again there does not appear to be any mention in the UN records of the UNRWI receiving any such clarification.

More rebellion, political prisoners and Australian cooperation with Indonesia

While Ortiz Sanz sought clarification, rebellion again erupted in a number of areas, but particularly in the Western Central Highlands around the village of Moanamani, close to where the Enarotali rebellion had occurred three months previously. On 1 July, local Ekari tribesmen armed with bows and arrows joined forces with mutinous Papuan policemen and attacked Indonesian troops, killing up to twenty.⁹³ Forty kilometres to the north east, other groups of Ekari reportedly wiped out a fifteen-strong Indonesian Army patrol and killed eleven other soldiers during an attack near Lake Paniai.⁹⁴ The seriousness of the rebellion is hard to estimate accurately owing to the absence of UN or any other outside observers. However, reports reaching the foreign press seem to be corroborated by later official Indonesian military accounts. These describe how troops faced bitter oppo-

sition from thousands of armed locals as they tried to re-enter the area on 9 July, supported by additional forces airlifted from Biak. Five days later, the same military history describes how 800 Papuans attacked the neighbouring Indonesian-held town of Waghete.⁹⁵

In response, the authorities denied that a new rebellion had broken out, claiming instead that reports of the fighting referred to the previous unrest in April. Meanwhile, foreign correspondents were barred from visiting the area to investigate.⁹⁶

On the issue of political prisoners, Jakarta informed Ortiz Sanz on 10 July that the remaining seventy-six had been released “and put to work in agricultural estates in West Java”. This, they claimed, meant that there would be no political detainees in West Irian during the Act.⁹⁷ Jakarta, it seems, had taken Ortiz Sanz’s earlier advice to transfer “anti-state” Papuans to Java before the Act.

Papuan sources, though, claim that there were in fact many more political prisoners than the official figure, and in Jayapura alone up to 250 were still being held during the Act. Many of these prisoners were apparently students who had been arrested shortly before as a precaution in case they attempted to cause disruption.⁹⁸ Similar arrests also seemingly took place in Biak, but according to Robin Osborne, many detainees were then freed during a raid on Biak Gaol by the OPM, just before the Act.⁹⁹ One of those who escaped during the raid, Mathew Meyer, would later allege that many prisoners had died during their incarceration owing to cramped conditions and ill-treatment.¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere in Biak, the Dutch journalist Link van Bruggen reported that 200 political prisoners at a navy camp rioted on 30 July following the arrival of ten Ekari rebel prisoners, captured during the recent fighting in the Highlands.¹⁰¹

As rebellion and arrests continued within West Irian, Indonesia took steps to ensure that West Papuans outside the territory would not create problems for Jakarta in New York. In particular they appealed to Australia not to permit two West Papuans recently arrived in PNG, Zonggonao and Runawery, to travel on to New York with a petition calling for independence. Gordon Jockel, Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, reported to Canberra on 24 June

immediate concern of Indonesia is that early arrival of these 2 West Irianese at UN could stimulate defiance and seriously upset the management of conduct of Act of Free Choice within West Irian...Malik said he hoped that we'd keep the 2 refugees on Manus island over next few weeks as a satisfactory way of dealing with the problem.¹⁰²

Canberra obliged and orders were sent to the authorities on Manus to arrest the two men if they attempted to leave. As a consequence the Papuans and their petition never got to New York.¹⁰³

10 The Act of Free Choice and its aftermath

Final Indonesian preparations for the “Act”

Indonesia’s final preparations for the Assembly meetings have been described by various people, including Assembly members. They allege that members were isolated for several weeks beforehand in camps. Forbidden to contact friends and relatives and often under armed guard, they were then subjected to a series of threats and bribes by the authorities to do as they were told.¹ A few weeks after the Act, Reverend Hokujoku, one of the members for Jayapura, described to a Dutch journalist how Brigadier-General Ali Murtopo, the commander of OPSUS, visited him and his colleagues during their period of isolation:

The man who totally destroyed my self-respect was Brigadier-General Ali Murtopo, publicly acknowledged as being the chief brain washer. For two hours, this special envoy of President Suharto spoke to us. He destroyed any will we may have had to vote against integrating with Indonesia....Jakarta was not interested in us as Papuans but in West Irian as a territory. If we want to be independent, he said, laughing scornfully, we had better ask God if He could find us an island in the Pacific where we could emigrate.²

Hokujoku also described how Murtopo warned that after fighting for West Irian for so long, Indonesia would not tolerate any Papuan vote against it. Those that did would have their “accursed tongues” torn out. The historian Benedict Anderson goes as far as to describe the Act as entirely an “Ali show”.³ In a more recent interview, Hokujoku also claimed that those members selected to speak at the Assembly were given written instructions on what to say. They were then made to rehearse their speech in front of officials. One who refused was allegedly taken away and killed.⁴

With such overt manipulation of every detail of the process, an American journalist wrote on 7 July:

Jakarta's diplomatic community insists and members of the Indonesian government frankly admit in private that the entire process is a meaningless formality.⁵

Stuart Harris, *The Times* journalist who had witnessed the Biak vote, reported that the army did not want foreign press in the territory, unlike Sudjarwo who believed that some must be there to witness the Act.⁶ Commenting on his brief visit, Harris added:

Sudjarwo is contemptuous of the Ortiz Sanz mission. Privately he has instructed his staff to cooperate with it as little as possible. The United Nations team is doing its best but their brief is a sham and they know it. Unhappily most of the people of West Irian do not understand this...They are encouraged by the useless presence of the United Nations observers and foreign journalists...to believe that their people have a choice.⁷

Harris believed that, as the Papuans had no alternative to Jakarta's rule, the sooner they settled down under it the better. In the end, he predicted, all would be well for the Indonesian province of West Irian. In contrast the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial of 14 July was not so content with developments:

Under the patronage of the United Nations, approved by the United States...warmly endorsed by the Australian Minister for External Affairs, acquiesced in without a murmur of protest by the Communist and Afro-Asian champions of colonial emancipation, the last stage in the betrayal of the people of West New Guinea is scheduled to begin today.⁸

In New York, as the first Assemblies gathered in West Irian, Tony Parsons of the British UN Mission gave an assessment to London on the attitudes of member states. He warned of the possibility of some African states causing difficulties at the absence of "one man one vote" "because of possible precedent regarding Rhodesia",⁹ especially if Ortiz Sanz's report was critical. But his prediction was that Africa was anxious to enlist Asian support over South Africa and would therefore not want to antagonise Indonesia or its Arab and Moslem state supporters. Overall, he commented: "Our strong impression is that the great majority of United Nations members want to see this question cleared out of the way with the minimum of fuss as soon as possible."¹⁰

Parsons also informed London that the Dutch believed even the "moralistic Scandinavians" recognised that there was no practical alternative to Indonesian rule. "Finally the Secretariat, whose influence could be important, appear only too anxious to get shot of the problem as quickly and

smoothly as possible.” As for the British position, the letter ended with the comment: “our own attitude will be on the lines of ‘least said, soonest mended’”.¹¹

The Act of Free Choice, 14 July to 2 August 1969

The Act finally began on 14 July, starting with a meeting of the 175 “Consultative Assembly” members for Merauke. In addition to Ortiz Sanz and his team, a large group of senior Indonesian politicians and soldiers were present. Also there were the Ambassadors of Australia, the Netherlands and Thailand, accompanied by members of the Indonesian press and a small number of foreign journalists.¹²

In Merauke and elsewhere, the Assembly members were expected to arrive at some form of collective decision using the vaguely defined Indonesian method for reaching consensus, known as *musjawarah*. In practice this meant that a number of senior Indonesian officials addressed the members, telling them that, for a variety of reasons, they should remain with Indonesia. Ortiz Sanz then made a brief statement about the importance of their task, reminding them that they were speaking not only for themselves, but for all Papuans. “Your answer,” he said, “must express the true desire of the population. Do not hesitate to speak the truth.”

Following these speeches, twenty of the Assembly members stood up one after the other and made a series of almost identical statements, all strongly in favour of Indonesia.¹³ Describing the event, the official Indonesian report to the UNGA declared:

Cheers went up when the speakers declared their adherence to the Republic of Indonesia....The first speaker, Mr John Somar, representing the Aghats [*sic*] area, in a moving statement asked why the question should have been put at all. He continued....Our beloved country is Indonesia, our sacred flag is the Red and White; we will defend and safeguard them till the end of time.¹⁴

After these statements the Chairman, an Indonesian government official, told the other 155 assembly members to stand up if they agreed with their colleagues’ position. All of them then stood up. To sum up, the Chairman announced: “on behalf of the people of Merauke, we declare unanimously that West Irian is an integral part of Indonesia and do not want to be separated from the Republic of Indonesia stretching from Sabang to Merauke”. The Indonesian Minister of Home Affairs then promised that West Irian would be given autonomy in organising, coordinating and carrying out this task.¹⁵ A Dutch journalist afterwards described the proceedings as simply an elaborately stage-managed affair.¹⁶

According to the Indonesian report, the outcome of this first Assembly provoked an impressive outburst of Papuan celebration:

Members of the consultative assembly, joined by the people and school children outside, sang joyous songs. Enthusiastic shouts like “Long live the Republic! Long live Indonesia!” were heard....The town of Merauke, festively decorated, celebrated the happy occasion with parades, music and dance, and a people’s evening fair....A happy feast in a happy Merauke!¹⁷

Unfortunately for some of the Merauke members, there were reports that the celebrations were not as universal as Jakarta claimed. According to Brian May, the journalist Link van Bruggen later wrote that news reached Jayapura, “presumably through missionaries, that six of the unfortunate twenty had been killed by angry followers”.¹⁸

The following day, Ortiz Sanz gave a press conference in which he defended the Indonesian *musjawarah* system as “practical”. Shortly afterwards he also argued that the option of national independence for West Irian would not be feasible.¹⁹

Two days later, the next Assembly went ahead in Wamena and followed a similar pattern to Merauke. Ortiz Sanz’s report gives little description of the Wamena meeting, but the Indonesian version goes into some detail:

The spirit and mood of the consultative assembly session in Wamena, after the known success of Merauke, appeared to be hopeful and imbued with confidence of similar success. One speaker after the other, using his own language or dialect, declared in various fashion the desire of the people he represented, to remain within the Republic of Indonesia. As in Merauke, on the wall of the Assembly Hall, a big map of Indonesia was hanging, behind the seat of the chair, face to face with all members of the consultative assembly, showing clearly the vast territory of the Republic of Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke, and to Wamena. Many members spoke very eloquently and with a candid spirit (many West Irianese turned out to be eloquent orators in their own right and fashion of expression!).²⁰

If the Assembly members needed reminding of the size and power of Indonesia, then the conspicuously large map of the Republic would have no doubt provided it. The report’s account of the Wamena assembly ends by stating that various festivities followed the unanimous decision to remain with Indonesia. It has been alleged, however, that, in Wamena at least, some of the Assembly speakers were critical of Indonesian rule. But with four different dialects being used, the official interpreters made sure that none of these criticisms were expressed in their translations into the Indonesian language.²¹ After the Merauke and Wamena results were announced, the *Melbourne Herald* commented: “even Hitler was satisfied with less than one hundred per cent in plebiscites”.²²

The third Assembly meeting took place on 19 July in Nabire in the

Western Central Highlands region. This vote could have been problematic for Indonesia because throughout July another major rebellion had erupted in the region with up to fifty Indonesian soldiers killed. Despite the fact that Jakarta banned foreign press from the area, reports were getting out that 60,000 people had abandoned their villages and moved into the mountains from where they launched attacks on government troops.²³ According to an official army report, thousands of tribesmen were involved in these attacks, which only subsided towards the end of the month following an Indonesian counter-attack.²⁴

Brian May has written that so few local people were left in the area that the Indonesians had to ship in Papuans from other regions to play the part of Assembly members.²⁵ Even so, another journalist, Hugh Lunn, reported that one member managed to contact him to ask whether he could guarantee that there would be no reprisals if 100 members spoke out against Indonesia at the meeting. Lunn replied that he could not give such a pledge. Another member then slipped him a note to say that the Assembly had all been bribed. At the same time, a third member attempted to pass a note to the UN personnel, but according to Lunn, they refused to accept it.²⁶ Despite all this, Ortiz Sanz's official report made no mention of the rebellions or allegations of bribery. Instead, he gave a short description that was almost identical to those of the previous two meetings.

The Indonesian report on Nabire stated that the "troubles" in the area a few months previously had had no effect on the spirit of the session. Nonetheless, in a rare hint of controversy, it noted that several members reminded the government to make greater endeavours to improve the economic and social welfare of the area. At the same time, however, Papuan speakers were described dismissing the "troubles" as being "not a peoples rebellion".²⁷ Again, the unanimous result was to remain with the Republic.²⁸ The same day, Jakarta declared that the results so far meant that West Irian had already chosen to stay with Indonesia. The remaining meetings would therefore be nothing more than a confirmation of this.²⁹

Following this, Ambassador Scheltema of the Netherlands returned to Jakarta and did not witness any of the remaining five Assembly votes. While he conceded that there was "plenty of moral pressure", he informed the Dutch Foreign Ministry that during his visit, he had seen no signs of violent pressure on the Papuans by the Indonesians.³⁰ This was apparently a view also shared by Australian Ambassador Jockell when he and Scheltema, met with the journalists Hugh Lunn and Otto Kuyk during their visit to West Irian. According to Lunn, in an informal discussion, Jockell questioned their allegations of Indonesian brutality remarking "You blokes are causing problems for us. Where are the petitions? Where are the bloodsoaked letters?"³¹

In Fak Fak, the proceedings at the Assembly on 23 July mirrored those elsewhere. Seventeen members spoke, reaffirming their loyalty to Jakarta and questioning the necessity of the Act.³² The result was a unanimous declaration that West Irian was an integral part of the Republic.³³

Three days later, the Assembly at Sorong declared its unanimous support for Indonesia. The Indonesians quoted one speaker, a clergyman, apparently saying “We are convinced that our Indonesian State and Indonesian Government are a State and Government which have been blessed by the Lord and given to us.”³⁴

On 29 July, it was Manokwari’s turn. Indonesia reported the speeches of a number of Assembly members, including Miss Jockbeth Momogin, described as being a representative of women’s organisations. Interestingly, Lodewijk Mandatjan, the rebel leader who had surrendered in January, also appeared as an Assembly member. His months spent as a guest of the Indonesian authorities seemed to have convinced him that a radical rethink of his position was necessary. According to the Indonesian report he declared:

the people in the interior do not want to be dissociated from the Indonesian Government. Do not try to separate us from Indonesia. In fact, this act of free choice is not necessary. Long live Indonesia.³⁵

One can assume that Indonesia was pleased with this public spectacle of Mandatjan’s prodigal return. But whether the international observers found it any more unconvincing than the rest of the exercise is debatable. In his official report, Ortiz Sanz merely said “it may be noted that Mr. L Mandatjan, one of the former leaders of the opposition to Indonesian rule in Manokwari...spoke in favour of maintaining ties with Indonesia”.³⁶

Also present at the Manokwari Assembly was Hugh Lunn. He described witnessing Papuan demonstrations and subsequent arrests outside the Assembly hall which were not mentioned in either the UNRWI’s or the Indonesian official accounts:

Outside the voting hall young Papuans yelled “sendiri, sendiri” (alone, alone) and Indonesians threw them into the back of trucks and took them away. As I snapped a photo, a plain-clothes man ripped open his jacket to show me his revolver. I ran into the hall and told Ortiz Sanz. But he said: “Our job is to see what happens inside.” Later Ortiz Sanz told me he would love to see a US base in Manokwari harbour. Like the Americans, he feared a communist takeover. “West Irian is like a cancerous growth on the side of the UN and my job is to surgically remove it,” he said.³⁷

If Lunn’s allegations are correct, then the UNRWI’s refusal to intervene in this violent public Indonesian attack on the protesters was a disgrace, even by the standards of behaviour already set by his mission.

On 31 July, the penultimate Assembly took place on the island of Biak. It differed little from previous meetings, except perhaps in some of the “theatricals” allegedly adopted by the speakers. The Indonesian account

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describes how Stephanus Rumbewas, one of the twenty-four chosen to speak, pulled out:

a small red and white flag from his pocket, requested a fellow member, the old veteran from Biak, Mr Lukas Rumkorem, to join him in sanctifying the flag, and while sprinkling the flag with perfumed water, he prayed, “may this flag fly in Indonesia – from Sabang to Merauke – till the end of time! Halliluyah, Halliluyah in Heaven!”³⁸

The result was a unanimous decision to remain with Indonesia, indicated by all 130 members standing up on command. At Biak, as in all other Assembly venues, the result was followed, according to Jakarta, by “festivities of the people”.

Finally, on Saturday 2 August 1969, the last Assembly met in Jayapura, the province’s capital. In attendance, along with various senior Indonesian officials and UNRWI staff, were the Ambassadors of Australia, Burma and the Federal Republic of Germany. Of the 109 Assembly members, twenty-six had been selected to speak. Again, all allegedly spoke passionately in favour of remaining with Indonesia. One, Jacob Daimoi, responded to allegations of bribery by Jakarta by declaring that only agricultural tools had been given and “a father has to love his children”.³⁹ Brian May, however, alleges that other types of gifts were given to the members, including clothes, radios and promises of money.⁴⁰

Jacob Prai makes similar allegations, stating that in addition to gifts, some Assembly members were promoted to Kepala Desa (Head of Village) with a monthly salary of 150,000 rupiahs.⁴¹

Although Ortiz Sanz never received official information about the backgrounds of the Assembly members, information on the appointed speakers in Jayapura was sent to him shortly after the final vote. This information was contained in a report on the Act supplied to the UN by the West Papuan nationalist Thomas Wainggai. He alleged that Indonesian officials carried out interviews with all the 1,026 Assembly members during their “internment” in the weeks before the Act. Having completed this task, Wainggai claims that the authorities then decided that only 175 were deemed reliable enough to express pro-Indonesian views at the Assemblies. As an example, he provided the UN with details of each of the twenty-six speakers at the Jayapura Assembly. Of these, twelve were members of the Indonesian “Red–white” flag movement. A further two were non-Papuan Indonesians, and the rest, like Hokujoku, were simply appointed members.⁴²

Once the Jayapura Assembly had made its unanimous decision, the customary evening festivities were witnessed by, among others, Brian May:

The Indonesians, who are masters of anything theatrical, thoroughly rehearsed the Papuans in singing, dancing, cheering and voting. It was reported on the eve of the Act that the Papuans had practised carrying

Indonesian leaders shoulder-high; and certainly, on the day, there were no slips when Sarwo Edhie, the weighty Major-General...Amir Machmud, Minister for the Interior, and Sudjarwo were jubilantly hoisted.⁴³

With the final result, Mahmud issued a statement that the wishes of the entire people of West Irian were to “remain united within the Republic of Indonesia and reject separation”. He also thanked Ortiz Sanz and his mission for their “well done task” and declared the result official and legal.⁴⁴

Aftermath

On the day of the final result, General Edhie Sarwo publicly warned that there were still problems in West Irian that would have to be settled by military force.⁴⁵ Three days later at a specially convened meeting of the Provincial House of Representatives in Jayapura, an appeal was made to “those few West Irianese” living abroad to “honour the people’s decision”.⁴⁶

In the conclusion to its UNGA report, Indonesia remarked that West Irian was one of the most primitive and undeveloped communities in the world. “To measure the method and conduct of the act of free choice in such a community against purely western democratic methods and procedures, would indeed be erroneous and unrealistic.” As to the “impressive” result, Jakarta explained that those who knew about the political background of the West Irian dispute would understand why it would have been difficult “politically and psychologically” for anyone to contradict the Assemblies’ overwhelming decision.⁴⁷

Commenting upon the unanimous result, Ortiz Sanz stated in his official report:

As far as we were able to observe, the meetings of the consultative assemblies were conducted in an orderly manner. Members of the assemblies were able to express their views and often signified vehemently their wish to remain with Indonesia. The meetings were open and in some places the general public gathered inside and outside the buildings where the meetings were being held and enthusiastically supported the decision reached.⁴⁸

He made no mention of any demonstrations against the Assembly decisions. In his closing remarks, however, Ortiz Sanz did concede that anti-Indonesian petitions, “cases of unrest,” the flight of some Papuans to Australian territory and the existence of political detainees, did show that without doubt:

certain elements of the population of West Irian held firm convictions in favour of independence. Nevertheless, the answer given by the consultative assemblies to the questions put to them was a unanimous consensus in favour of remaining with Indonesia.⁴⁹

An obvious conclusion to draw from this statement is that the unanimous consensus of the Assemblies could not be seen to be representative, since it did not reflect the “certain elements of the population” who favoured independence. Nonetheless, Ortiz Sanz has recently reaffirmed his satisfaction with the legitimacy of the result, saying “Indonesian officials exerted pressure on one or two of these occasions, but apologies were offered for that. For the rest the procedure was absolutely clean.”⁵⁰

Jakarta could of course have permitted a token expression of dissent at the Assemblies. It would not have threatened their possession of West Irian; indeed, it would have given the Act a modicum of authenticity. At one point, Rolz-Bennett apparently confidentially urged Jakarta to record some negative votes, “to give the outcome the appearance of legitimacy”.⁵¹ But the myth created by Jakarta, of total Papuan loyalty to the Republic, was simply not sophisticated enough to accommodate expressions of Papuan dissent. Consequently no such opposition was permitted.

Despite the indefensible unanimity of the Act’s result, Ortiz Sanz’s report avoided, where possible, passing comment upon anything that might have conflicted with the Indonesian report. One notable exception was his admission that Article XXII of the Agreement, relating to the rights and freedoms of the population, was not fully implemented, despite his “constant efforts”. Furthermore, “the Administration exercised at all times a tight political control over the population”.⁵² It was a significant, if isolated, criticism.

Nonetheless, Ortiz Sanz chose to end his report by saying:

Finally, on the basis of the facts presented in this report and the documents referred to, it can be stated that, with the limitations imposed by the geographical characteristics of the territory and the general political situation in the area, an act of free choice has taken place in West Irian in accordance with Indonesian practice, in which the representatives of the population have expressed their wish to remain with Indonesia.⁵³

It was a carefully worded conclusion, which deliberately avoided addressing a fundamental issue. Article XVIII(d) of the Agreement stipulates that the Act had to be carried out in “accordance with international practice”. The UN’s failure to persuade Jakarta to introduce any recognisable democratic content into the exercise meant that Ortiz Sanz could not claim that this had been fulfilled. Instead, he chose to omit any mention of the requirement, referring only to an even vaguer term, “Indonesian practice”.

Soon after the end of the Act, Ortiz Sanz returned to Jakarta and, on 12 August, he was finally granted an audience with President Suharto. By this time, though, he saw little point in raising the issues of political and human rights. As the Indonesian report of the meeting perceptively stated, it was simply an opportunity for Suharto to thank Ortiz Sanz “for the valuable assistance he and his Mission had rendered to the Indonesian Government”.⁵⁴

On 16 August, Suharto spoke of the result of the Act in a speech to Parliament:

This success of the act of free choice has really strengthened the unity of our country and our people....It was most important that the principle of territorial and sovereign integrity of a free independent nation had been duly recognised and appreciated.⁵⁵

The next day, Ortiz Sanz attended celebrations in Jakarta to mark the twenty-fourth anniversary of the 1945 proclamation of Indonesian independence. Then, with his mission over, he finally left Indonesia on 18 August.

The Western press generally agreed that the Papuans had not been allowed to exercise anything approaching genuine self-determination. The only matter for debate was the motivation that had led various governments and the UN to collaborate with Indonesia on the matter. In London, the *Daily Telegraph* asked on 5 August:

Where does United Nations idealism begin and end? What part should be given to the principles of the Charter and how much should hard political facts be taken into consideration...should a distinction be made between white and yellow colonialism?⁵⁶

Peter Agnew, writing a letter to *The Times* on 1 August, asked: "Who will face the greater condemnation at the bar of history: the perpetrators of this outrage, or those other Governments who will have done nothing to stop it?"⁵⁷

The US magazine *Time* commented on 22 August:

Indonesia, once a bastion of noisy self-righteous anti-colonialism, last week formally took over a remote, primitive piece of real estate that can hardly be considered anything but a colony.⁵⁸

Berlin's *Die Welt* on 5 August noted that: "A chapter of Western colonial policy is coming to an end – a chapter of Asiatic colonial policy begins...the Papuans have the same relationship with the Indonesians as the Eskimos with the Basques."⁵⁹ In the Swiss paper *Der Bund*, the 12 August edition remarked: "An odd decision of the people without the people deciding."⁶⁰ Amsterdam's *Het Parool* echoed the Dutch press generally by describing the Act as a "humiliating show" with nothing to do with free choice.⁶¹ Even Peter Hastings, writing in *The Australian*, did not claim that there was widespread Papuan enthusiasm for the result. But, almost uniquely among the foreign press, he still managed to point to alleged evidence in some areas of strong Papuan support for Jakarta, while at the same time expressing surprise at anti-Indonesian sentiment elsewhere.⁶²

It was not just the press that condemned the Act. In Britain, the UNA

still had serious concerns, despite the assurances given to it in June by the Foreign Secretary. The July 1969 issue of the UNA newssheet included a piece by P. Szudek of the pro-Papuan “Anglo-Melanesian Aid Committee”. It was entitled “Crisis in West Papua” and described the Papuans’ desire for freedom “in the face of Indonesian intimidation and terror”, concluding that:

Ortiz Sanz’s reported acceptance of the Indonesian formula [for the Act] means a total abandonment and setting aside of the New York Agreement....It may be better for the U.N. mission to withdraw rather than to sanction the illegal procedure....Otherwise an extremely dangerous precedent may be created by the U.N.⁶³

Meanwhile, Humphrey Berkeley, the UNA’s Chairman, wrote several letters to the Foreign Office during the summer expressing these reservations and urging the government to “investigate” whether or not genuine self-determination was taking place. Although the UNA was not directly linked with the UN, it had consultative status through its membership of the World Federation of UNAs, and was generally considered to be a well-respected non-governmental organisation with all three main British political party leaders as Honorary Presidents.

This criticism of the Act was not welcomed by the Foreign Office, and Aiers, of the South-West Pacific Department, expressed irritation at Berkeley’s persistence: “it is perhaps time to point out to Mr. Berkeley the harm he may do by launching a campaign which must reflect badly on the Secretary-General and his representative”.⁶⁴

On 29 July, Lord Shepherd replied to Berkeley on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, suggesting “I am sure you do not intend any implication against the impartiality and integrity of the U.N. Secretariat”. He also tried to persuade Berkeley that the government was not unconcerned about the handling of the Act. It was simply, he explained, that the Foreign Office believed the best time to raise any concerns would be after U Thant had submitted his UNGA report. Shepherd concluded reassuringly, “it seems to me that the difference between us is largely one of timing”.⁶⁵ In reality, numerous internal communications make plain that the Foreign Office had no intention whatsoever of raising any concerns about the Act, either before or after the Secretary-General’s report.

Although he also met with officials at the Indonesian Embassy in London, Berkeley remained unconvinced. In his reply to Lord Shepherd on 4 August, he denied questioning the behaviour of the UN Secretariat, but stated:

quite frankly we are not satisfied about the Act of Free Choice since there are so many representatives who are tribal chiefs who would certainly not be impartial in such an Act of self-determination in

Rhodesia or any other former British territory that I know of... We have come to the view rather reluctantly that it would be better for the U.N. to withdraw [from West Irian] rather than to be associated with an Act of Free Choice which we believe will be rigged.⁶⁶

Despite these criticisms, with the Act over, all that remained was for the Secretary-General to “report to the General Assembly on the conduct of the act of self-determination and the results thereof”.⁶⁷ In preparation, C. Stavropoulos, the UN legal counsel, sent a memorandum to Rolz-Bennett on 17 July containing suggestions on how U Thant might present his report. Aware of the potential for controversy, he recommended that the Secretary-General present the two reports by Ortiz Sanz and Indonesia *in toto*, along with a brief note by himself. This was to avoid accusations that anything was being suppressed.⁶⁸

With regard to U Thant’s requirement to report on the conduct of the exercise, Stavropoulos asked: “Does this, however, mean that the Secretary-General must submit his own comments on the conduct of the act? I believe that this question need not be answered in the affirmative”.⁶⁹ To bypass this politically awkward requirement, Stavropoulos suggested that merely presenting the two reports by Indonesia and the UNRWI would suffice:

member States may then reach their own conclusions on how the act of self-determination was conducted, without the Secretary-General having to make comments of his own.⁷⁰

Stavropoulos did not, though, favour the inclusion of an item on the Act in the agenda of the UNGA:

The Agreement is one between Indonesia and the Netherlands, and the United Nations is in no way party to it....Such an item might well result in sterile and acrimonious debate, leading to no useful conclusion.⁷¹

Interestingly, seven years previously Stavropoulos had advised U Thant that the Papuans had a strong case for genuine self-determination. In a report dated July 1962 he had written:

Our study has revealed that the subject of self-determination is a complex one, presenting many facets. However, at least since President Wilson enunciated the principle of self-determination in 1918, there appears to emerge a strong presumption in favour of self-determination in situations such as that of Western New Guinea on the basis of the wishes of the peoples of the territory concerned, irrespective of the legal stands or interests of other parties to the question. While other factors may also be taken into account, there seems to be a growing practice of recognising that the wishes of the local population should be

paramount, and should thus be ascertained before a final disposition is made of any particular territory.⁷²

In the weeks before U Thant's report to the UNGA, senior UN officials and other interested parties expressed cautious optimism that their efforts to curtail the opportunity for debate on the issue would succeed. On 4 September, Australia's Ambassador to the UN, Sir Patrick Shaw, cabled Canberra to report:

Netherlands Ambassador Middleburg hopes that the handling of the item in the Assembly will go quietly....He expressed some apprehensions however about the effects of lobbying by West Irianese in New York....Rolz-Bennett continues to be cautiously optimistic that the item will not give rise to much discussion.⁷³

Meanwhile, Indonesia, backed by Australia and the Netherlands, continued to lobby countries "not to question the legitimacy of the self-determination process".⁷⁴ As part of this, Malik went on a tour of African countries to put Jakarta's case and refute the arguments of Free Papua spokesman Nicolaas Jouwe who had travelled widely in Africa campaigning for black solidarity with the Papuans. Indonesia also sent an official "goodwill delegation" to several Latin American countries to encourage support for its position.⁷⁵

In late October, Jouwe spoke to the Australians at the UN in New York. He told them that a number of African representatives had commented to him that the Act was fraudulent and might constitute a harmful precedent. The Australians promptly informed the Indonesians, who reassured them that they believed no African state held particularly strong views on the matter. Nonetheless, the Indonesian diplomat Maramis added that the Indonesians "were carrying out as complete a canvass of delegations as they could in the period before the item came up for discussion".⁷⁶

Although communist countries had been firm supporters of Sukarno in his dispute with the Dutch over West Irian, the new pro-Western Suharto regime was certainly not a natural ally. It did, though, remain formally non-aligned and Malik maintained notably close links with Moscow. Addressing the Eastern Bloc reaction, Australia's UN Ambassador Sir Patrick Shaw wrote in September 1969 that their position was unclear. On the one hand Suharto's right-wing regime had killed hundreds of thousands of communists, but on the other they would wish to develop friendly relations with Suharto:

The USSR moreover could not go too far in criticising the results of the 1962 Agreement when they themselves were at least partly responsible for that agreement because of the arms and support which they gave to Indonesia at that time.⁷⁷

Although Australia seemed confident that there would be little international reaction to the Act, domestic hostility to Canberra's position continued. With this in mind, Ambassador Gordon Jockell in Jakarta advised Canberra against requiring him to write a public report on the Act: "It seems to me for Australia a matter of going through the present period without much to say."⁷⁸

Furthermore, Australia had its own problems in the region during this period, specifically in Bougainville where there was growing resistance against plans for a big copper mine at Rorovana.⁷⁹ Although not relevant to West Irian at the time, it would eventually develop into an armed separatist movement against the independent PNG state and undoubtedly influence PNG political opinion on "separatism" generally.

Meanwhile, on 1 September, in an indication of continuing unrest in West Irian, army chief General Maraden Panggabean warned that troops stationed there would "still have to stay for a long time to come".⁸⁰ Further evidence of unrest came from Papuans fleeing to PNG in early September. According to Van der Kroef, these refugees "indicated that systematic and coordinated attacks on Indonesian civil and military posts were occurring on the island of Biak, as well as in the vicinity of Djayapura".⁸¹ Although the Australian administration had little sympathy for these people, it would continue to rely on them to a certain extent for information on the situation in West Irian. Tom Unwin, head of the UN Development Programme in PNG from 1973 to 1981, states that in the early 1970s, Australian intelligence obtained information from OPM leader Seth Rumkorem during meetings that took place just over the border in PNG.⁸²

On 10 September, the British delegation to the UNGA received a briefing from the FCO in preparation for the General Assembly's consideration of the Secretary-General's report. The briefing reminded the delegation that the official British attitude was, first of all, to "steer clear of the problem, in which we have no involvement". It also made clear that the British should stick firmly to the legal position that the Agreement was between the Dutch and the Indonesians and did not confer any responsibility on any other government. And finally, it was for the Secretary-General in the first instance to decide whether the Act had been properly fulfilled, and no action by member states was required, or would be appropriate, prior to the submission of his report to the UNGA. The briefing then added:

Privately, however, we recognise that the people of West Irian have no desire to be ruled by the Indonesians who are of an alien (Javanese) race, and that the process of consultation did not allow a genuinely free choice to be made. On the other hand, no country seems prepared to antagonise Indonesia by criticising the conduct of the Act, and it is impossible to see any practicable alternatives at the present time to West Irian remaining under Indonesian control.⁸³

To conclude, the delegation was instructed to avoid taking part in any debate on the item. "We expect the Secretary-General's report to put the best face on the completion of the Act, and to avoid criticism of Indonesia."⁸⁴ In Jakarta, Mason at the British Embassy added: "I suspect that an indication by us that we would not be raising any awkward questions [over West Irian] would help to gain us Indonesian support over Ireland."⁸⁵

The report of the Secretary-General and the UNGA debate, November 1969

Finally, on 6 November, the Secretary-General presented his report to the UNGA. As suggested by Stavropoulos, it consisted of a short summary by himself along with the two reports by Indonesia and the UNRWI. In his summary, U Thant noted Ortiz Sanz's "reservations" with regard to the rights and freedoms of the Papuans. He also reminded the UNGA that Article XVI of the Agreement concerning the presence of UN "experts" in the territory after 1963 had not been implemented.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, U Thant did not question his representative's conclusions that, "in accordance with Indonesian practice", the representatives of the population "have expressed their wish to remain with Indonesia".⁸⁷ Following this, in a series of plenary meetings held between 13 and 19 November, the UNGA discussed the Secretary-General's report.

In the days before the final vote, Indonesian anxiety about possible criticism from African states grew. On 7 November, Malik asked the British whether they:

could promote a better understanding of the result of the Act of Free Choice in Africa, particularly Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Malik said these were small countries which found it difficult to evaluate the position of West Irian.⁸⁸

In spite of its own instruction to "steer clear of the problem", the FCO responded to Malik's request by informing the British Mission at the UN that the FCO had agreed with him:

it might be possible for you to give delegations of countries mentioned some background information and advice about the Act and its outcome....If asked our advice would be that in our view Act could be taken as final, and that it was impossible to see any other viable future for West Irian except as part of Indonesia.⁸⁹

Jakarta's anxiety over the "African vote" was well founded. On the eve of the final UNGA vote, the British UN Mission telegraphed London to say that the situation was still confused and that the African group had refused

a request by the Indonesian representative to address them. In a stormy meeting of the group there was:

much talk of the African origins of the West Irianese, of Moslem imperialism and Asian racialism and of the need to ensure full self-determination of the people...the Africans felt that they were being rail-roaded by the Indonesians and the Netherlands.⁹⁰

Elsewhere the member states' discussions centred around the draft resolution sponsored by Belgium, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Thailand. This resolution took note of the report before the UNGA and noted "with appreciation the fulfilment by the Secretary-General and his Representative of the tasks entrusted to them under the 1962 Agreement".⁹¹ The draft resolution then expressed appreciation of any financial assistance given to Indonesia "in its efforts to promote the economic and social development of West Irian".⁹² The draft was introduced to the UNGA on 19 November by Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik.⁹³

Luns, the Netherlands Foreign Minister, then added that "the interests of the people of West Irian had been the paramount concern of the Netherlands", and his country would continue to translate that concern into concrete action "that would reflect the modified circumstances". Although expressing reservations, Luns concluded that his government was prepared to "recognise and abide by the outcome of the act of self-determination".⁹⁴ It was an impressive shift of position from the politician who had once been the main obstacle to an Indonesian takeover.

In contrast, several African states ignored last-minute appeals from Indonesia and spoke out against the Act. Part of their motivation was no doubt a fear that if the UN allowed Indonesia to manipulate the exercise of Papuan self-determination so completely, then perhaps remaining European colonialists might attempt similar "Acts" in Africa, thereby delaying, or preventing, de-colonisation.

As previously discussed, other states such as India combated this argument by ignoring the terms of the Agreement and declaring the West Irian issue to be an affirmation of Indonesian national unity, rather than one of self-determination.⁹⁵ The African states were not convinced by this tenuous argument and the Zambian Ambassador declared:

My delegation has so far been unable to find out why it was considered acceptable to the Secretary-General's Representative in West Irian to agree to a formula of free choice on the basis of musyawarah...something that was not stipulated in the original agreement.⁹⁶

Rebuffing Jakarta's arguments regarding Papuan "primitiveness", the Ambassador for Togo quoted from the UNGA's resolution 1514 (XV) of

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1960. This, he reminded the Assembly, stated that the inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence in any country.⁹⁷ In support, Nicol of Sierra Leone added that no society in the modern world could be said to be so primitive and no terrain so geographically difficult that it would justify indefinitely denying its peoples the vital exercise of democratic government. He also deplored the fact that the UNRWA only advised and assisted, but did not participate in the Act. "The methods used laid open the way for South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia to adopt similar tactics."⁹⁸

The Ghanaian Ambassador then spoke:

We are not convinced by the argument that the principle of *musyawarah* was the only political method which could be understood by the people...in Australian Papua New Guinea, which is characterised by the same so-called undeveloped peoples, the principle of "one man one vote" is being successfully used, and a somewhat enlightened policy is being applied in leading the peoples towards eventual self-rule.⁹⁹

This comparison with the eastern half of the island is particularly poignant. Australian New Guinea was recognised in the UN as a non-self-governing territory and Canberra kept the UN briefed about its development. In marked contrast to its attitude towards West Irian, UNGA resolutions concerning self-determination for TPNG were impressive. In 1966 and 1967, the UNGA adopted resolutions accusing Australia of condoning discriminatory practices in TPNG and called for the holding of elections fixing an early date for independence.¹⁰⁰ In December 1968 the UNGA passed another resolution which included calls for Australia to:

- (a) fix an early date for self-determination and independence in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people of the territories;
- (b) hold free elections under United Nations supervision on the basis of universal suffrage in order to transfer effective power to the representatives of the people of the territories.¹⁰¹

Jakarta, though, did not consider West Irian to be a non-self-governing territory. But more importantly, it was not challenged on this in the UN, although West Irian was not a recognised part of Indonesia before the Act. As one official in the British FCO UN (Political) Department noted in August 1969:

West Irian has been a plenary item since its inscription by Indonesia in 1954 although listed as a non-self governing territory until UNTEA took over in 1962. It is not clear why, when Indonesia took over the administration of West Irian in 1963 she was not required to submit transmissions under article 73e of the Charter or, for that matter, why

West Irian did not, once again, appear on the list of non-self governing territories.¹⁰²

Eventually, on 19 November, the UNGA rejected a move by Dahomey for an adjournment for further consultations (by fifty-eight to thirty-one with twenty-four abstentions). It then voted on a Ghanaian amendment which stated:

Further bearing in mind article VXIII of the Agreement which, *inter alia*, calls for an act of free choice in accordance with international practice...decides that the people of West Irian should be given a further opportunity, by the end of 1975, to carry out the act of free choice envisaged in the Agreement.¹⁰³

The amendment was rejected by sixty to fifteen with thirty-nine abstentions. Interestingly, while Australia, Asia, the United States and the communist countries voted against this amendment, the Dutch abstained. This was despite informing the British beforehand that they were determined to keep in step with the Indonesians.¹⁰⁴ Possibly it was a token gesture aimed at domestic public opinion. The British, who also abstained on the amendment (and the Dahomeian proposal), privately explained their motives as being determined:

partly by a desire to stick with the Dutch, partly because the amendments were based on the right of peaceful self-determination of all peoples and it was necessary to be consistent with our position on Gibraltar, Apartheid etc.¹⁰⁵

In the end the Dutch, British and eighty-two other states voted to adopt the original resolution taking note of the Act's result and acknowledging the fulfilment by the UN of its responsibilities under the Agreement. There were thirty abstentions, but no votes against. This resolution was then recorded as Document A/L.576 in the official records of the UNGA.¹⁰⁶ The UNGA moved on to Agenda item 99 concerning the Korean question, and with that the UN ended its interest in the right of the people of West Irian to self-determination.

In a report by the British Embassy in Jakarta to Le Breton at the FCO shortly afterwards, the mood of the Indonesian government was described as one of great relief: "The number of abstentions disconcerted somewhat; but at least there were no votes against."¹⁰⁷ Thirty years later, Le Breton acknowledges that it was "shameful" that the West "didn't do more", but confirms that nothing was said because Suharto was seen as a "brave new upstanding general" who had defeated the PKI. Washington and London were therefore anxious to support and encourage stability for the new regime after so much chaos under Sukarno.¹⁰⁸

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The reaction of the Indonesian press was interesting in that it focused upon what it believed were criticisms of Indonesia in Ortiz Sanz's UNGA report. Summarising the comments, the Embassy report stated:

Many of the old complaints about his manner of conducting his mission – his poor links with New York, his obvious sympathy with the dissident groups, his prolonged absences from West Irian – all these, justified or not, have been resurrected. Djakarta Times leader on 13 November talked of “his peculiar attitude towards Indonesia, her government, her press and her people”, condemned his lack of realism, and concluded with regrets for his having succumbed to the blandishments of the OPM in New York.¹⁰⁹

Accused of being an anti-Indonesian OPM sympathiser on the one hand, he was also criticised by Mason at the British Jakarta Embassy of being too cautious in carrying out his responsibilities. On the “questionable” methods used by Jakarta for the Act, Mason commented that one might have expected the UNRWI to speak out against them more strongly:

The feeling remains...that it might have been possible for him to play a more active role in the proceedings, despite the fact that Sudjarwo...seems to have out-manoeuvred him on several occasions. And one does not know what degree of support he believed he could count on from the Secretary-General in the event of a major disagreement with the Indonesians.¹¹⁰

Referring to the “touching faith” which the Papuans had had in the UN, Mason added that impartial observers “feel that the United Nations’ part has done nothing to enhance its standing”.¹¹¹

In his defence, it seems rather ungrateful of Jakarta and the West to express such criticisms. The desired solution was achieved, and this was made possible because the UN was prepared to expose itself to serious accusations regarding its integrity and reputation as a defender of human and political rights. As the UNRWI, Ortiz Sanz's role in this was central and for that reason at least, his Indonesian and FCO critics might have offered him some thanks.

Now in his late eighties, Ortiz Sanz is long retired and living in Sucre, Bolivia. Recently interviewed on the Act, he defended the result but suggested that it need not be an irrevocable decision. “The Papuans [in 1969] did not have the level of civilization needed to determine their own fate.” Nonetheless he asserted:

The final result was wise and sensible. I was able to acquire the greatest possible autonomy for them. But this does not make me rule out that, in the future, the population of West Irian should again have the opportu-

nity to decide their own fate. I told them: be patient. The moment will come, do not fear. Go to school, learn everything there is to know about the principles of democracy and the road will be open to you. That was a healthy attitude, I think.¹¹²

Meanwhile, his old colleague Narasimhan has been more blunt in his recollections, describing the Act of Free Choice as a “sham” and a “white-wash”, according to the journalist who interviewed him in 2001.¹¹³ Despite this he has asserted subsequently that the UN fulfilled its obligations adding, “If you want your heart to bleed for the Papuans then let it bleed. Me, my heart isn’t bleeding.”¹¹⁴

11 Conclusions

Some arguments for and against Papuan self-determination

The purpose of this book has been to provide a detailed examination of how the 1962 New York Agreement was put into practice, with a particular emphasis on the role of the UN.

Some academics, while acknowledging that the human and political rights of the Papuans were denied, emphasise the Agreement's achievement in preventing a war that would not have been in the West's interests.¹ It has also been argued that genuine Papuan self-determination might have "set in train the dissolution of innumerable ethnically complex states whose main claim to unity derives from the colonial mandate. The consequences of this for the stability of the international system could be incalculable."² On this issue, May and de Silva add:

Separatism could be and is a powerful destabilizing force. It has generally been held at bay by that even more powerful force – Asian nationalism embodied in the post-colonial state system of Asia. Separatist movements in the Third World, in general, find that the great obstruction they face is a widespread hostility to disturbing the status quo. Because practically everyone is vulnerable to the pull of indigenous – and often, external – separatist forces, it is seen to be in everyone's interest to help existing post-colonial nation-states resist threats to their integrity from indigenous as well as external separatist force.³

Furthermore, one can question how genuine a force was "Papuan nationalism" among the traditional tribal societies that predominated in WNG during the 1960s. Benedict Anderson argues that the 1969 Papuan rebellions were "ethnic" and "local", rather than clear manifestations of Papuan nationalism. "Being anti-Indonesian doesn't automatically mean being 'nationalist'."⁴

For other commentators, the relevant issue was that the Agreement, and its relatively peaceful implementation, was an example of a successful UN intervention which could serve as a model for future operations, particularly

those involving the temporary administration of a territory.⁵ The dispute and its settlement have also been studied as an example of effective conflict resolution.⁶

On the other hand, in an argument that I believe is relevant to the case of the West Papuans under Indonesian rule, Mullerson asserts that, while there is no right to secession in international law:

when a minority is denied its rights and is oppressed and discriminated against, it is thereby rejected by the majority. The majority rejects and alienates the minority leaving it outside the society. Thereby the minority becomes not simply ethnically or religiously distinct...but also socially, economically and politically different from the majority. We can say that the minority, due to the policy of the majority which does not permit the minority to fully develop its identity, acquires characteristics similar to those of colonial peoples. It can survive as a distinct group only independently of the majority. Therefore, the principle of the self-determination of peoples becomes directly relevant to such minorities.⁷

One can also argue that, as a result of Jakarta's deliberate policy (initiated in the 1960s) of settling hundreds of thousands of non-Papuans in the territory, the indigenous population's situation is now comparable with that of the aborigines of Australia and the native Americans. On the issue of such peoples, a delegate at the first session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 declared :

Those peoples we call indigenous peoples are nothing more than colonial peoples who were missed by the great wave of global de-colonisation following the Second World War, particularly where independence was granted, not to the oppressed inhabitants of a territory but to an intrusive and alien group newly arrived.⁸

As previously noted, on the specific issue of West Papuan self-determination, Stavropoulos, the UN legal counsel, advised U Thant in June 1962 that there was a "strong presumption" in favour of self-determination for the West Papuans, "irrespective of the legal stands or interests of other parties to the question".⁹

Supporters of this position often refer to the 1960 UNGA resolution on the granting of independence to colonial peoples. In particular they cite Article 5 which calls for immediate steps to be taken:

in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire...in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.¹⁰

However, one can counter this by pointing out that the resolution was only intended to address the issue of European colonialism. This is made clear in Article 6 which is a deliberate rejection of separatism:

Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.¹¹

I would contend, though, that since WNG was recognised by the UN in 1960 as a non-self-governing territory, Article 5 is directly applicable to its case, while Article 6 is irrelevant. As a consequence, this resolution remains a key factor in the case for West Papuan self-determination.

Implementation of the New York Agreement

Important as all these arguments are, the purpose of this book has not been to assess the legitimacy of the West Papuans' right to self-determination, because this right had already been explicitly acknowledged and guaranteed by the Netherlands and Indonesia when they signed the New York Agreement. Furthermore, by agreeing to play a central role in the implementation of this Agreement, the UN Secretariat undertook a responsibility to ensure that it was properly fulfilled.

Specifically, under the Agreement, the Netherlands, Indonesia and the UN had an obligation to protect the political rights and freedoms of the Papuans, and to ensure that self-determination took place freely in accordance with international practice. On both these points, the three parties failed, and they did so deliberately because genuine Papuan self-determination was never considered as a serious option by any of them once the Agreement had been signed.

Looking at the UN's role in the Agreement's implementation, it is clear that the Secretariat's priority throughout was to ensure that the territory became a recognised part of Indonesia with the minimum of controversy and disruption. This was a role that had been assigned to the UN by Washington in 1962 and U Thant saw no reason to deviate from it. This was "big power" Cold War politics in which the rights of the Papuans counted for nothing. Indeed it would have been surprising for it to be otherwise.

Discussing the attitude of the Secretariat following the signing, Markin notes that as Jakarta began planning for its manipulation of the Act, it was clear that the pressure it had encountered during the talks for a meaningful exercise "had abated significantly":

The Americans, who had repeatedly assured the Netherlands during that time that they would "stand accountable by our principles" by insisting on a self-determination process that was a "reality and not a mockery," began shortly after the signing ceremony to argue that the

responsibility for ensuring a fair exercise really lay with the UN and the Netherlands. Around the same time, the Dutch were losing much of their will to press this issue as the topic of West New Guinea faded from the Netherlands political scene with the renewal of economic and political relations with Indonesia. And with neither the US nor the Netherlands pressing the issue, the UN had little incentive to do so.¹²

To fulfil its role adequately, the UN tolerated Indonesian interference and intimidation of the Papuans and itself throughout the UNTEA period. A specific example of this was the banning in December 1962 of the planned Papuan nationalist march. Although UNTEA claimed the organisers had called it off, it was in fact banned by UNTEA following warnings by the Indonesian government to U Thant that its armed forces could react violently if the march went ahead.¹³

The UN Secretariat also made misleading statements as part of a policy of collaboration with Jakarta during UNTEA. Specifically, Narasimhan declared in February 1963 that the UN's decision to withdraw from WNG on 1 May was in response to the wishes of the Papuan population. In fact, confidential reports from senior UNTEA officials, and the UN Secretariat, clearly demonstrate that they knew the majority of Papuans did not want to be ruled by Indonesia. These senior officials also concluded that expressions of pro-Indonesian Papuan sentiment were the result of deliberate manipulation by Jakarta. But the same reports made clear that the UN wished to depart no later than 1 May (and debated pulling out as early as February), because it assessed, accurately, that growing Indonesian dominance of the territory's security and administration meant that even the appearance of UN authority could not be sustained beyond this point. Furthermore, the 1 May handover date seems to have already been agreed by the Dutch and Indonesians before the signing of the Agreement.¹⁴

Following UNTEA's withdrawal, the Agreement states that a number UN "experts" were to remain to assist and participate in preparations for the Act. But when Indonesia ignored U Thant's initial approach on the issue, the Secretary-General made no effort to press it further, and the matter was effectively dropped until its mention in the UNGA report of November 1969.

Significantly, there is evidence that the UN Secretariat and the Dutch had already privately agreed with Jakarta in 1963 that they would not object to the eventual Act being carried out solely via a number of "Representative" Councils, without any direct voting on the issue by the population. This agreement to deny a direct vote even in the urban areas was a fundamental abrogation of responsibility by both the Netherlands and the UN, and cannot be justified on the grounds of West Papuan "primitiveness". To demonstrate this, one need only look at the organisation's treatment of political developments over the border.

In 1962, following a visit to Australian New Guinea, the UN's Trusteeship Council (which included members from India, China and the

USSR) produced a report noting that a Legislative Council, with the first elected representatives, had already been established. It then concluded that it was now possible:

to plan for a Parliament of Papua and New Guinea of about a hundred members elected on the basis of direct election and by adult suffrage under a system of single member constituencies. It proposed that all preparations for elections on this basis should be put in hand immediately and completed not later than the end of 1963.¹⁵

Two years later a House of Assembly was formed in the territory with forty-four of the sixty-four members directly elected by the population. The stark contrast in the UN's treatment of self-determination between East and West New Guinea demonstrates a cynical degree of hypocrisy by both the Secretariat and involved member states.

The UN and the "Act"

When a UN team returned in 1968, it was only sixteen in number and its head, Ortiz Sanz, spent at least half his time in Jakarta. Furthermore, it is clear that the task given it by U Thant was not, as laid down in the Agreement, to "advise, assist and participate" in arrangements for an act of Papuan self-determination. Instead its role, in conjunction with the Secretariat, was to see that the final part of the Agreement could be completed with the minimum of controversy in such a way that Indonesian sovereignty over West Irian would be confirmed and the UN's responsibilities for the territory discharged. To facilitate this, the UN endeavoured to persuade Indonesia that a sufficient level of genuine Papuan participation should be included in the Act to minimise the opportunity for potential critics to question its validity.

An example of this was the UN's genuine attempt to ensure some Papuan participation in the process devised by Jakarta for selecting members of the special Assemblies. Both U Thant and Ortiz Sanz emphasised privately and publicly the importance that they attached to there being some democratic dimension to these selections. In the Secretary-General's final report, much was made of Jakarta's agreement to hold fresh elections in some areas. In reality, though, this was a token gesture, and one can conclude that there was no genuine free participation by the people in the selection process.

Another possible example of UN efforts to involve the Papuans in the Act was Ortiz Sanz's suggestion of a "mixed method". Although open to manipulation, one can argue that it took into account different levels of political development around the territory, and might have produced at least an indication of public feeling.

But any method that permitted some genuine Papuan opinion to emerge was intolerable to Jakarta, and the reason is clear when one considers the

evidence from non-Indonesian eyewitnesses of Papuan opinion throughout the 1960s. Effectively all of them, including foreign and UN officials as well as journalists, publicly or privately acknowledged the overwhelming unpopularity of Indonesian rule in the eyes of those Papuans who experienced it.

Whether the Secretariat ever genuinely supported the “mixed method” is unlikely, particularly in view of the reports that it had already privately agreed to the omission of any direct Papuan participation in the final Act. While Rolz-Bennett may have urged Indonesia to “record some negative votes” to provide the appearance of legitimacy, a free and direct vote in the towns would have given too accurate a picture of Jakarta’s deep unpopularity. While the final result could still have been manipulated to show a majority in favour of Indonesia, the UN’s objective of confirming Indonesian sovereignty with a minimum of controversy would not have been achieved.

Ortiz Sanz may, as Sudjarwo suspected, have proposed this method without proper consultation with New York. In the first months following his appointment, there is certainly evidence, albeit indirect from Australian diplomats, that he favoured a greater degree of free Papuan participation than the Secretariat. His communications to Sudjarwo and New York on the mixed method seem genuine enough.

Nonetheless, with no realistic possibility that Jakarta would have accepted any direct voting, it is probable that this option was raised simply as a public demonstration of UN concern for the political rights of the Papuans.

Although the UN’s efforts to provide “the appearance of legitimacy” failed, one can argue that the lack of significant international interest in the Act made this largely irrelevant at the time.

Having failed on this issue, U Thant and Ortiz Sanz focused their attention instead on collaborating with Jakarta in its mission to prevent any international criticism of the Act emerging. In this effort they were assisted by other states including the Netherlands, Australia and Britain who all privately lobbied those countries, particularly in Africa, which it was feared might condemn the result.

As part of this campaign, Ortiz Sanz deliberately misrepresented the extent of Papuan hostility to Indonesian rule. This was clearly illustrated in the false assertion contained in his report to the UNGA that the majority of petitions he received during his time in West Irian were pro-Indonesian.

For such an apparently experienced politician and diplomat, Ortiz Sanz was remarkably naive in his dealings with Sudjarwo, and was often outmanoeuvred by him and other Indonesian officials and military officers. Nonetheless, like UNTEA, he could not have been confident of support from the Secretariat in any significant disagreements with Jakarta. This might explain his reluctance, particularly in the final months, to confront the Indonesians over their systematic denial of political and human rights in the territory. In the end, though, he was a man with traditional views towards

the treatment of “primitive peoples”, and seems to have found little difficulty in justifying his part in the UN’s involvement.

Whatever its failings, the New York Agreement did guarantee the Papuans political and human rights, specifically the right to full self-determination. In the event, these rights were effectively discarded by Indonesia and legitimised by the UN’s involvement and support. This was the case with UNTEA, but it was particularly evident in the year leading up to the ironically titled “Act of Free Choice”. If the UN’s motive in 1962 was to prevent a damaging Dutch/Indonesian war, there was no such justification in 1969. However, with no significant international pressure to protect the Papuans, U Thant evidently saw no reason to undermine the West’s policy of encouraging and supporting the anti-communist President Suharto.

Over thirty years later, West Papua remains a part of Indonesia. There can be no accurate figures for the number of Papuans who have died as a result of Jakarta’s mis-rule, but estimates range from the thousands to the hundreds of thousands. At the same time, Indonesia, and its multinational business partners, have effectively plundered the vast mineral and other natural resources of the territory.

For a brief period following President Suharto’s fall in 1998, it seemed that the Papuans would at last be permitted some freedom of political expression. This culminated in a gathering of thousands of people in the capital Jayapura in June 2000. A Papuan “Congress” and leadership was set up and the meeting concluded with the passing of a resolution rejecting the 1969 Act of Free Choice and calling for genuine Papuan self-determination under the auspices of the UN. However, with nearly half the population now non-Papuan as a result of Indonesia’s deliberate transmigration policy, the outcome of any referendum would be hard to predict.¹⁶

Since then, many key Papuan leaders have been arrested as part of a renewed security clampdown that has seen further torture, killings and a new refugee crisis. Then in November 2001 Papuan Congress leader, Theys Elvay, was murdered, seemingly by Indonesian Kopassus troops. Furthermore, the appointment of Sukarno’s daughter Megawati as Indonesian President in July 2001 makes the possibility of a return to meaningful dialogue unlikely. While apologising to the Papuans for past Indonesian abuses, she has warned them that they will never be allowed to break free.

In April 2002, an international campaign was launched to urge UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to review the UN’s role in the Act of Free Choice. Meanwhile the Dutch government is in the process of undertaking a historical “re-examination” of the Act of Free Choice, prompting one Dutch MP to remark: “At last we can look the Papuans straight in the eyes.”¹⁷ It remains to be seen whether the UN Secretariat wishes to join them in returning to this issue it so deliberated washed its hands of in 1969.

Notes

Introduction

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9 May to July 1969

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- 82 Email from Jacob Prai to author, 17 August 1999.
- 83 UN: Series 100, Box 1, File 5. Ortiz Sanz to Sudjarwo, 30 June 1969.
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- 85 UN: Series 100, Box 1, File 5. Ortiz Sanz to Sudjarwo, 30 June 1969.
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- 97 UNGA Official Records, Agenda item 98, Doc. A/7723 (6 November), Annex ii, paras 67, 68, 69.
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- 102 Quoted in television documentary by Mark Worth, "Act of No Choice", SBS Television, *Dateline* programme, broadcast in Australia, 25 August 1999.
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10 The Act of Free Choice and its aftermath

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- 36 UNGA Official Records, Agenda item 98, Doc. A/7723 (6 November), Annex i, para. 227.
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- 79 "Tear Gas in Solomon Islands", *Times*, 6 August 1969.
- 80 Van der Kroef, "West New Guinea. New Dimensions of Conflict", p.367.
- 81 Ibid., p.388.
- 82 Interview by phone with Tom Unwin, 4 February 2000; Robin Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War. The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya*, pp.161, 165. Unwin's efforts to highlight the issue of West Papuan refugees made him unpopular with the Australian, and then PNG, authorities.
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11 Conclusions

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- 5 Rikhye, *The Thin Blue Line*, p.159; Arthur Rovine, *The First 50 Years: The Secretary-General in World Politics 1920–1970* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970), pp.362–368.
- 6 Markin, "The West New Guinea Dispute"; Henderson, *West New Guinea, the Dispute and its Settlement*.
- 7 Rein Mullerson, *International Law, Rights and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.71, 77.
- 8 Quoted in R. L. Barsh, "Indigenous People: An Emerging Object of International Law", *American Journal of International Law*, 1986, p.376, quoted in Richard Mulgan, "Should Indigenous Peoples have Special Rights?", *Orbis* (Journal of World Affairs, Philadelphia), Vol. 33, No. 3, Summer 1989, pp. 375–388.
- 9 UN: Series 100, Box 2, File 7. C. Stavropoulos to U Thant, 29 June 1962.
- 10 UNGA Resolution 1514, Article 5, 14 December 1960.
- 11 Ibid., Article 6.
- 12 Markin, "The West New Guinea Dispute", pp.479–480.
- 13 See Chapter 3, note 55.
- 14 See Chapter 3, note 29.
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Russian immigrants. These ethnic Russians were effectively disenfranchised by restrictive citizenship legislation (see Mullerson, "International Law, Rights and Politics", pp.111–113). Another option would be one based upon that adopted by the UN Security Council for the planned act of self-determination in Western Sahara. Participants would be limited to those listed in the 1974 Spanish census of the territory, thereby excluding recent migrants deliberately moved in by Morocco which claims sovereignty. With no equivalent census available for West Papua, eligibility would be a far less clear-cut matter.

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