

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **WEST IRIAN 1968 Part 1**

#### **The Economic, Political and Security Situation**

In the last years of Dutch rule, \$A30 million was spent annually on subsidising jobs and economic development in the West New Guinea. By the late 1960s, the Australians were spending over \$A120 annually on subsidising the economy of Eastern New Guinea. In West Irian, up until 1968, the annual Indonesian allocation of funds was \$US4 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 \$US30 million. In 1968, UN funding resumed and \$US30 million was 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.<sup>1</sup>

The economic problems in West Irian were also highlighted by 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 and actively disliked them as a result. He also remarked that the OPM (Free Papuan Movement guerrilla organisation) was well financed and stronger than he had expected with possible connections in Australian New Guinea.<sup>3</sup>

Hastings' assessment of the OPM's strength was also shared by Reynders, the 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",<sup>4</sup> 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 reported that there were in total around one hundred 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. Brutalities are undoubtedly perpetrated from time to time in a fruitless attempt at repression...With the text book ratio of 10:1 for overcoming guerrillas, with the present commitment in West Kalimantan and with the terrain of West Irian being what it is, it would be beyond the capacity of the Indonesian army, let alone its financial resources, to eradicate them.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, to an extent these assessments of rebel strength were also shared by the Indonesians themselves, 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.<sup>7</sup>

This armed resistance to Indonesia was to continue throughout the whole period leading up to the Act, despite intensive Indonesian military activity including airstrikes against positions that had come under OPM control.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the OPM's armed resistance, there was widespread hostility towards the Indonesians from the small group of educated Papuan elite. Following a conversation about FUNDWI in January 1968 with Dr Ali Gritly, the UN Representative in Jakarta, a British Embassy official reported:

...some provision was also made for sending students on courses overseas, but Dr Gritly said that he was beginning to despair of this part of the UN's programme as almost all those sent on previous courses had failed to return. The only result had been the establishment in Holland of a number of restaurants serving Papuan dishes.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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 MA 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.<sup>11</sup> 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."<sup>12</sup>

An Indonesian ministerial delegation's visit to the territory in May 1968 reinforced Jakarta's concerns about the general situation in West Irian. This delegation was led by the Sultan of Yogyakarta and included the Ministers of Home Affairs, Finance, Mines and Trade as well as the Attorney-General. 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.<sup>13</sup>

### **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.<sup>14</sup> This point was acknowledged by Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik at a Jakarta press conference in early June 1968 when he commented that "one advantage for Indonesia" was the absence of any

mention in the agreement of a one man one vote system.<sup>15</sup> 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".<sup>16</sup>

The significance of the deliberately vague terminology meant that there was no encouragement by Indonesia or the UN to define what self-determination would actually entail. Perhaps unaware of this, Abdoh must have caused some embarrassment to Indonesia and the Secretariat when he commented on the issue during a UN press conference in Jakarta in November 1962. Shortly before departing for West New Guinea to become UNTEA's Administrator, Abdoh had explained in reply to a journalist's question:

...that the clause in the Indonesian-Netherlands Agreement on the question of self-determination did not specify the word 'plebiscite.' However, he said that he knew of no other machinery for self-determination, other than the plebiscite, which is a normal means of ascertaining the wishes of the people. He reminded the press that on two occasions he had been responsible for supervising plebiscites in the Cameroons in recent years.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, 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."<sup>18</sup> 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 no significant international governmental opposition to Indonesia's objective of retaining control of West Irian. This point was accurately and prophetically made in April 1968 by the Jakarta-based British diplomat IJM. Sutherland:

The strength of the Indonesian position lies in the fact that...they must know 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.<sup>19</sup>

Despite reading the reports of Hastings and Reynders, Sutherland 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. As far as the British position was concerned:

In view of HMG's own interests. but more importantly because we are in no position to assist or offer any alternative solution to the inhabitants, I would not see any advantage in our taking the initiative in a quixotic defence.<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>21</sup>

The letter to which Murray referred 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."<sup>22</sup>

Of particular concern for Australia at this time was the issue of refugees from West Irian crossing the border into the half of the island which they administered. In 1967, 866 were reported to have arrived and by April 1968, a further 200 to 300 had followed.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup>

Canberra also agreed with the British assessment that no Western government would risk damaging its improved relations with Indonesia on the

issue of Papuan self-determination. This was also felt to be the case with Japan, despite evidence that Japanese business had been providing some financial assistance to exiled Papuan leaders.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup> 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", He also added that even if the Indonesians adopted "unreasonable" methods in carrying out the Act the Netherlands was in no position to protest: "international interest in West Irian," he concluded "is insignificant".<sup>28</sup>

### **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 4000 and 5000 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 pre-occupation 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.<sup>29</sup>

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 assessment, his optimistic assessment of

Jakarta's plans for the territory were 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup>

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 under-development.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> UN officials in PNG during the mid 1980s also emphasised this argument, following the arrival of around 9000 West Papuan refugees in 1984. Writing on the subject in 1989, Beverley Blaskett states:

Despite the acknowledged existence of an undetermined number of 'political refugees' who had crossed to PNG in 1984 and 1985, [UNDP PNG Representative] Subbaraman's letter [to the UNHCR in Geneva] implied the paramountcy of economic motives behind any border crossings into PNG...With his letter, Subbaraman enclosed press clippings referring to proposals made by [Indonesian] General Kahpi to implement faster and more extensive development in Irian Jaya to resolve the issue of OPM dissidence.<sup>35</sup>

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.

Hastings' belief that development would help win Papuan opinion over to the Indonesian side was indicative of a general underestimation at the time of the potential strength of Papuan nationalism. 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 nationalism to recognise that they had little in common, culturally or otherwise, with the 12,000 to 13,000, Indonesian officials, mainly military, who administered the territory 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 that faced the fifty-three year old Bolivian diplomat Ortiz Sanz when he was appointed United Nations Representative for West Irian (UNRWI) by UN Secretary-General U Thant on 1 April 1968. Fluent in four languages including English (but not Indonesian), 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.<sup>36</sup> He was not, therefore, an individual who was likely to be fooled or misled by the Indonesians or the Papuans as to the reality of the situation in West Irian in 1968 and 1969. Despite this, an Australian diplomat who met him in New York shortly after his appointment, sent a cablegram to Canberra that portrayed him as a rather naive character:

Roeslan Abdulgani, who was with us, give him promise of Indonesian Governments support, which encouraged Ortiz Sanz perhaps more than it should. Dutch Ambassador Middelburg

impressed on Ortiz Sanz the need for communication with the people of West Irian through capable independent interpreters. 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.<sup>37</sup>

Under the terms of the Agreement, Ortiz Sanz's responsibility was to "advise, assist and participate in arrangements" for the Act.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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 who like himself had no experience of the conditions in Indonesian West Irian. This point was bluntly made by Ortiz Sanz himself 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.<sup>40</sup>

Despite reporting to U Thant 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 eventually got to West Irian on 23 August.<sup>41</sup> Ortiz Sanz's report to the UNGA did not explain why Jakarta had delayed his arrival. The official Indonesian explanation

was that it was due to the need for further “technical and administrative preparations.”<sup>42</sup>

The real reason, according to a Western journalist in West Irian, was that the Indonesians were still attempting to deal with the ongoing revolts in Arfak and other areas, and wanted to end them before allowing the UN in.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> In response to the security situation, West Irian’s Military Commander requested additional troops to counter the insurgency<sup>45</sup> and a special combat task force was transferred from Manado, North Celebes, to the territory in late May 1968.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Indonesian Army Headquarters sent six major-generals to West Irian in early June to report on the military situation there.<sup>47</sup>

One result of this visit was the despatch 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...The time factor is critical. We must complete security operations by the end of this year.”<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup> The Brigadier General was a paratroop commander with a reputation for

ruthlessness in the suppression of those considered opponents of Suharto's New Order. He had first come to prominence while still a colonel, following the alleged attempted left-wing 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.<sup>50</sup> On 11 March 1966, it was Sarwo Edhie 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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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."<sup>53</sup>

The transfer to West Irian of an officer with such a reputation was a demonstration by Jakarta of its determination to prevent any form of Papuan nationalism being expressed 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."<sup>54</sup> This position was well understood by

the Western diplomatic community in Jakarta. At the British Embassy, Sutherland commented:

In West Irian [Sarwo Edhie's] undoubted ability and his flair for publicity will be harnessed to the monumental task of maintaining law and order, of improving communications and ensuring that no untoward incidents mar the proceeding in 1969. The Government can be confident that he will have no sympathy towards any local aspirations towards independence.<sup>55</sup>

Sarwo Edhie acted quickly with his customary speed and ruthlessness and in June 1968 launched a new pacification campaign against Papuan rebels, particularly the Arfak tribesmen. This particular Arfak uprising had started in May 1967 and was led by two brothers, Lodewijk and Barends Mandatjan, who deployed their forces in the area of the Bird's Head Peninsula, in the far west of the territory. As Sarwo Edhie began his attacks, 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.<sup>56</sup> 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 in the country 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.<sup>57</sup> 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." They 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."<sup>58</sup>

Suharto's reaction to critics of his decision to allow an 'act of free choice,' was to produce a variety of West Irian 'leaders' who publicly declared their loyalty to Indonesia, a familiar tactic, much used by Sukarno during the UNTEA period.<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> Those leaders who questioned the role set out for them 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> 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 they were required to undertake in accordance with the Agreement.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup>

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 West Irian and the primitive conditions of the people.<sup>65</sup> 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. It is difficult to draw any conclusions at this stage, until we see how the situation develops, but this a point we shall need to watch.<sup>66</sup>

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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

The reason for this was clear. India was well aware that the method 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 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."

## CHAPTER SIX

### Notes

1. PRO: FCO 15/162 (DH1/7). Report of a conversation between Reynders (US Embassy Jakarta) and Ian Morgan (British Embassy, Jakarta), 9 April 1968.
2. Peter Hastings, "West Irian. A Ticking Time Bomb", Australian, 5 August 1968.
3. PRO: FCO 15/162 (DH1/7). I.J.M. Sutherland (British Embassy, Jakarta) to R.B. Dorman (SEAD, Foreign Office), 13 August 1968.
4. PRO: FCO 15/162 (DH1/7). Report of a conversation between Reynders and Ian Morgan, 9 April 1968.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.* This possibility was alluded to by Morgan who revealed in the report a claim by Reynders, that Stein Rooerd, a Norwegian employed by FUNDWI, was "not only working for the UN". Morgan commented that Reynders made this claim during "an intoxicated lapse of discretion".
7. Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, West Papua: The Obliteration of a People, p.19 quoting Praja Gupta Vira: Irian Barat dari Masa ke Masa.
8. *ibid.*
9. PRO: FCO 15/162 (DH1/7). Sutherland to Dorman, 16 January 1968.
10. Bob Kubia interviewed by ABC journalist Geoff Heriot in Port Moresby 1978, quoting Robin Osborne, Indonesia's Secret War. The Guerilla Struggle in Irian Jaya, p. 53.
11. M.A. Jaspán, Research Fellow, Dept. of Anthropology and Sociology, Australian National University "The Tjenderwasih State University of West Irian", Vestes (1964), p.266.
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