

### Chapter 3: Rising tensions, 1960-1

#### a) The Dutch ten-year plan

In 1960, the Dutch government made a fundamental shift that changed the basis of the debate over West New Guinea. It announced a ten-year plan for local control. Although no actual target date for self-determination was set (beyond promises that it would be within “less than a generation”), the terms of the debate now shifted from Dutch colonialism versus Indonesian anti-colonialism, to what sort of decolonization should take place.<sup>86</sup> Throughout the debate, the Dutch government (backed by public opinion) retained a stubborn refusal to let the territory fall into Indonesian hands.<sup>87</sup>

In New Guinea, this meant that the administration was to be rapidly handed over to Papuans. By 1960, half of government posts were in indigenous hands, a figure that rose to three quarters over the next two years and was slated to reach 95% by 1970.<sup>88</sup> At the same time as self-determination became a mantra for Dutch officials in the international and domestic political arenas, however, officials remained reluctant to give in to the Papuan nationalism that was encouraged by all this talk. The Dutch do not seem to have really believed in their hearts that Papuans were ready for independence or likely to be ready by 1970. Foreign minister J.M.A.H. Luns never budged from his belief that the natives were content with Dutch rule.<sup>89</sup> As Indonesian pressure grew in 1960-62, the Dutch government proved less and less willing to consult Papuan leaders.

To make the ten-year plan work in the face of Indonesian military threats, the Dutch had to make parallel preparations for defence, in the hopes of deterring an attack. A small Papuan volunteer corps was established in 1960, but defence was to rest for the most part on Dutch resources. Thus in 1959 the conscription law was amended to allow conscripts to be sent overseas, while the defence minister announced reinforcements and dispatched the country's only aircraft carrier to West New Guinea the next year, followed by visits by Dutch warships.<sup>90</sup> Yet no comprehensive defence plan was ever drawn up.<sup>91</sup> The Netherlands relied more on warnings to Indonesia by its allies, and the hope that Australia could be drawn in. The ten-year self-determination plan can be seen as an effort to implicate Australia by forcing it to move towards closer co-operation, or else see West New Guinea lurch into independence decades before its own cautious plans for Papua New Guinea reached fruition.<sup>92</sup> The Dutch hoped that

they could gain Australian agreement for a Melanesian Federation uniting both halves of the island and possibly the British Solomon Islands as well, an idea with great popular appeal in Australia that could help shift the Dutch defence burden.<sup>93</sup> Australia, however, refused to be drawn into closer political ties and resisted any military commitments.

#### b) Confrontation escalates: the Indonesian response

The self-determination plan threatened Indonesia's occupation of the moral high ground, encouraging an already-evident Indonesian shift to a trial of strength with the Netherlands. It was important for Indonesia to gain control of West Irian before the Dutch succeeded in establishing what all Indonesians saw as a puppet state similar to the Dutch-established federal states they had swept away in 1950. Self-determination was seen as yet another excuse to divide and rule Indonesia.<sup>94</sup>

A shadow "autonomous province of West Irian" had been established by the Ali government, but this lost Papuan support because it was headed by the house of the Sultan of Tidore, whose "rule" over the coasts of West New Guinea had been mostly in the form of slave-trading. Indonesia had ignored a 1956 declaration of an autonomous province by pro-Indonesia Papuan leader Silas Papare.<sup>95</sup> Anti-Indonesian sentiment among Papuans was put down to Dutch manipulations, with an apparently genuine belief that uprisings were common in the territory. After 1960, Indonesian pamphlets placed increasing stress on Papare's *Gerakan Rakyat Irian Barat*, West Irian People's Movement. The royal house of Tidore was eased out in favour of a new governor, Navy Colonel Pamuji, who officially was deputy to an incognito Papuan living in the territory.<sup>96</sup> Indonesian pronouncements continued to stress that West Irian would have autonomy within Indonesia. Efforts to win the hearts and minds of Papuans who "did not know, either, that they were Indonesians" increased, for instance in the form of the army-backed newspaper *Karya* published from Tidore for the "autonomous province."<sup>97</sup>

In August 1960, Sukarno inaugurated a new phase of confrontation by announcing in his independence day speech that Indonesia was breaking all diplomatic relations with the Netherlands and embarking on an arms buildup.<sup>98</sup> This has been portrayed as an impulsive move by Sukarno, but was not as sudden as it seemed. Indonesia had banned Dutch ships from its waters in April 1960, and this time

took steps to minimize the economic impact: Indonesian gold reserves were shifted from the Netherlands to Britain in advance, so the loss of assets was minimal.<sup>99</sup>

The intensification of confrontation with the Dutch, once again, served the need to establish unity among the various political forces in Indonesia. Sukarno broke ties only after a meeting of the National Council attended by army chief Nasution and PKI leader Aidit. The army, already using the Irian issue to build a mass base, saw its interests enhanced by the military buildup: its share of the national budget climbed from 32% in 1960, to almost half in 1961, to as high as 80% in 1962.<sup>100</sup> The PKI, while still reacting rather than leading on the Irian issue,<sup>101</sup> was able to tie itself closer still to the president in an anti-imperialist cause. Sukarno himself was able to unite the main contenders for power behind his leadership and keep them from each other's throats with this campaign. The army was unlikely to move against him while he was leading a campaign very much in army interests; the PKI was more and more domesticated.<sup>102</sup> Any threat that the PKI might have presented was further reduced by competing mobilizers who tied themselves still more closely to Sukarno, such as the 1945 Generation led by Chaerul Saleh and Adam Malik. Even the last rebel bands, which were now "returning to the fold of the republic," were often integrated by sending them to the Irian front.<sup>103</sup>

#### *Guided democracy & Revolutionary diplomacy*

From this point on, diplomacy was downplayed in favour of confrontation in official rhetoric. Indonesia would win its West Irian struggle through the mobilization of its entire population for a trial of strength with the Netherlands. "The Indonesian people," Sukarno shouted in his independence day address of 1961, "consider freeing West Irian a hallowed duty, a sacred moral obligation.... At present our policy vis-à-vis the Dutch is a policy of confrontation in every field, – in the political, the economic, yes, even in the military field! ... We are, therefore, building up power."<sup>104</sup> It was a repeat of the 1954-9 revolution's tactics, combining diplomacy with struggle.

Struggle was pursued through an arms buildup that Sukarno believed would force the Netherlands and the world to take Indonesia seriously. The main source of arms was the Soviet Union, only too happy to support third world nationalists against NATO powers. The Soviet arms connection dated back to Sukarno's visit of 1956, the same year the USSR granted Indonesia a \$100-million line of

credit.<sup>105</sup> The next year, however, the army had offered to cancel Soviet arms purchases if the United States would supply the needed weapons,<sup>106</sup> an offer that was ignored. The new Indonesian air force (jet fighters bought from Czechoslovakia) was inaugurated on armed forces day in 1958, with Sukarno declaring: “Not a single country is respected without a strong armed force.”<sup>107</sup>

In 1959, youth militants Malik and Saleh were named as ambassadors to the Soviet Union and China respectively. Malik recalled that his orders from Sukarno were simple.

Exhaust the Soviet arsenal. That’s what you must do, Adam.... I need a fighting diplomat without being burdened by protocol, but who commands all the tricks of the trade in order to serve the Republic well.... Adam, do everything you can. If necessary, go and fraternize with them. You know what I mean.”<sup>108</sup>

The 1960 visit of the sole Dutch aircraft carrier, the Karel Doorman, stirred enormous Indonesian anger and served as the pretext for a massive acceleration in the arms buildup.<sup>109</sup> The army again tried unsuccessfully to obtain arms from the Eisenhower administration in 1960. General Nasution then departed for Moscow for more major purchases in January 1961, where he signed a deal worth \$400 million and accepted a Soviet offer to train Indonesian army officers.<sup>110</sup> Nasution stopped on his way back in India and Pakistan to ask that they close their airspace to the Dutch in the event of war, and made a similar request to Egypt about the Suez canal.<sup>111</sup> By 1962, Indonesia was largest non-Communist recipient of Soviet bloc military aid, with credits in excess of \$1.5-billion. Nasution continued to insist, however, that Indonesia would take its own military decisions.<sup>112</sup>

The arms were not as effective as was portrayed. Deliveries were often slow and Indonesian expertise on Soviet systems often limited. Indonesian officers later admitted that their jets, for instance, lacked the range for actual operations in West Irian.<sup>113</sup> This was secondary, however, to the impression that was being built of Indonesia as a force to reckon with. In this sense, the arms buildup served as an element of the “revolutionary diplomacy” of confrontation.

The foreign policy of guided democracy was grounded strongly in ideology and moral underpinnings which gave it its strength as a cohesive basis for action. Its central ideologue was Sukarno himself, the master orator and wielder of symbols; its central message was the unity and strength of the Indonesian people, forged in the flames of continuing revolution; its central struggle was to “regain” West Irian as part of the global struggle against imperialism and thereby conjure a united and strong nation.<sup>114</sup> The name Irian itself became a slogan, an acronym for *Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti-Nederland*

(Follow the Republic of Indonesia anti-Netherlands). The revolution even acquired a revolutionary canon in 1961, required reading for all those engaged in the West Irian campaign: five Sukarno speeches and a volume by PNI ideologue and onetime foreign minister Ruslan Abdulgani.<sup>115</sup> But it did not seek to challenge any social forces within Indonesia, but rather to synthesize all streams, a synthesis summed up in the slogan NASAKOM: *nationalisme, agama (religion), kommunisme*.

Sukarno's picture of himself as one who synthesizes is best summed up in his own description of guided democracy:

In Guided Democracy, the key ingredient is leadership. After hearing the general views and contrast views, the Guider summarizes the points into a compromise palatable to each faction. No one side wins totally to the exclusion of others. Only strong leadership is capable of synthesizing the final decision; otherwise the system will not work.

The Guider, whether he be village chief, Bung Karno, or any minister capable of commanding respect and confidence, incorporates a spoonful of so-and-so's opinions with a dash of such-and-such, always taking care to incorporate a *soupeçon* of the opposition. Then he cooks it and serves it with his final summation, 'OK, now my dear brothers, it's like this and I hope you agree...' It's still democratic because everyone has given his comment. To call this Communistic is ridiculous.<sup>116</sup>

The new Indonesian ideology extended beyond the country's own borders, and indeed could only be framed within a global context. In fact, since Sukarno had absolutely no interest in revolutionary social change within Indonesia's borders, the continuing revolution could only be expressed through foreign policy.<sup>117</sup> Regionally, Indonesia had a duty to lead other countries like Malaya, the Philippines "and other recipients of counterfeit independence" into the revolution of mankind.<sup>118</sup> Globally, it was blazing a new path in international relations, expressed first at Bandung and then through Sukarno's concept of the "new emerging forces," or in their revolutionary acronym NEFO, which would sweep away the "old established forces" (OLDEFO) of imperialism and colonialism. The struggle for Irian was the local expression of the NEFO struggle, and demonstrated Indonesia's leading role in the worldwide struggle. The NEFO concept, for its part, united nationalist, Islamic and socialist countries, "a sort of NASAKOM National Front writ large."<sup>119</sup> Sukarno believed that "the Indonesian revolution is bigger, greater than any revolution in the world."<sup>120</sup> His doctrine of the *Pancasila*<sup>121</sup> had managed to unite the diverse streams of Indonesian nationalism in 1945. He saw no reason he could not play a similar role as synthesizer on the world stage. Few in Indonesia found it odd when he suggested that the UN adopt *Pancasila* as its central tenet.<sup>122</sup>

In concrete terms, Indonesian revolutionary diplomacy used the new appearance of national strength skillfully in pursuit of the claim to West Irian, playing superpowers against each other, always with the “maintenance of a mood of crisis ... boldness of posture, readiness to take risks, swiftness of adaptation to setbacks or challenges and, once again, unpredictability.”<sup>123</sup> Even as he submitted a 1960 resolution calling for the Soviet and American leaders to meet, Sukarno warned the UN General Assembly that the greatest threat to world peace was not superpower confrontation, but lingering colonialism, with West Irian the prime example.<sup>124</sup> Even Indonesian weakness was used as a weapon: the threat that the country would fall to communism without American help on Irian was just as effective for neutralist Indonesia as it sometimes was for American allies in the region.<sup>125</sup>

The leading exponent of revolutionary diplomacy was foreign minister Subandrio, who demanded that diplomats become one with the revolution of the Indonesian nation, not civil servants standing aloof from it. Here he echoed Sukarno, who had condemned any separation between the leadership of the revolution and government.<sup>126</sup> Subandrio ordered Indonesian diplomats to carry out “two aspects of diplomacy: conventional diplomacy and diplomacy as an instrument of revolution, the one complementing the other, each giving content to the other.”<sup>127</sup> Even the “United Nations [was] merely a forum for a form of struggle.”<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, Subandrio was still seen by American policy makers as a moderating influence on Indonesian foreign policy.<sup>129</sup>

Indonesia under guided democracy departed from its traditional interpretation of non-alignment to one of actively courting all major powers in an effort to play one against the other in order to escape client status. Non-alignment on the Indian model had stressed conciliation, but the NEFO concept preached an “era of confrontation” for the entire world.<sup>130</sup> The Nehru and Sukarno visions first clashed at the Non-Aligned conference in Belgrade in September 1961, when Sukarno began to use the NEFO term.<sup>131</sup>

To avoid over-dependence on the USSR, Indonesia departed from its traditional suspicion of China to sign a treaty of friendship in April 1961.<sup>132</sup> A strained Indonesian-Chinese relationship began to mend in 1958 when China linked the cases of West Irian and Taiwan and extended a small economic aid package as the US-backed regional rebellion began.<sup>133</sup> After the Soviet-Indonesian arms deal, China chose to support Sukarno despite his harsh repression of the Chinese-Indonesian community.<sup>134</sup> China

eventually became Indonesia's major ally, but was always kept at arms' length. "I know what China is." Subandrio insisted. "I know she'd eat me up alive if she could."<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Indonesia counter-balanced economic ties with Europe and the United States by embracing Japan, Sukarno's favourite overseas destination and home of his third wife. Japanese funds were crucial to Sukarno's survival during the 1958 rebellion, and Sukarno was happy to return the favour by inviting extensive Japanese investment.<sup>136</sup> Japanese reluctance to offend Sukarno was demonstrated on several occasions, most notably when Japan reversed a decision to allow the Dutch aircraft carrier Karel Doorman to visit in 1960 after its stop in West New Guinea.<sup>137</sup>

Most importantly, Indonesia tried to use its slow drift towards the Soviet Union as a lever to force American involvement. This was done by continual stress on the threat to international peace created by the Dutch presence in West New Guinea, portrayed as a hot spot like Berlin or the Congo. Implicitly, a threat was also posed to the American position in Southeast Asia.

#### *Modernizing tradition & Remapping Irian into Indonesia*

While Sukarno's Indonesia was building a nationalism oriented to a glorious future global role, the glue for this new nationalism was being supplied increasingly by recalling a glorious past, which was then equated on maps with the extent of Indonesia's territory. Edward Said calls this "reinscription," the emotional need to find pre-colonial traditions, "the rediscovery and repatriation of what has been suppressed in the natives' past by the process of imperialism."<sup>138</sup>

As Sukarno piled revolutionary concept upon revolutionary concept, the Indonesian nation was also projected backwards in time. The Indonesian flag, once made haphazardly by ripping the blue stripe off the Dutch flag, was now ascribed sacredness as *sang merah putih*, the honoured red-and-white, and defined as the symbol of resistance which "never ceased to be used" during the Dutch period by a string of heroes retroactively claimed for the national pantheon.<sup>139</sup> References to the old empire of Majapahit seem to have increased in parallel with rising Javanese dominance, culminating in the Javanese-inspired vision of guided democracy.<sup>140</sup> The *Negarakertagama*, the epic poem of Majapahit, was carefully interpreted by historians like Mohammed Yamin to build a picture of "the last sovereign Indonesia-wide state" sharing much the same boundaries as present-day Indonesia, including West Irian.<sup>141</sup> Research on

the actual extent of Majapahit shows that it was far less than the *Negarkertagama's* rhyming off of islands, and that the areas equated with West Irian were just a tiny corner of the island,<sup>142</sup> but the perceived sprawl of Majapahit proved far more important than the reality in the nationalist imagination. The mental map of Majapahit was layered on top of the physical map of Indonesia and made to conform (see appendix B). Sukarno even claimed that he had “unearthed” Pancasila from the *Negarakeragama*.<sup>143</sup> Although the Dutch had only colonized West Irian at the end of the 19th century, it was now said that West Irian had suffered 400 years of colonialism, a date derived from the beginning of the Dutch presence in Java.

With Majapahit now defined as coterminous with Indonesia, the continued presence of the Dutch on the sacred territory of Indonesia was all the more intolerable. National unity already rested on the borders of the Dutch East Indies, and the exclusion of one part therefore represented a standing threat to the unity of the whole — as Arend Lijphart noted, “if West Irian were to be regarded as not essential to the national whole, the definition of national unity would cease to operate.”<sup>144</sup> With the weight of Majapahit added to the inheritance of the Indies, the separation of any part of Indonesia could be viewed as the mutilation of what Thongchai Winichakul has called the “geo-body” of the nation.<sup>145</sup> Thus Subandrio at the UN rejected “the Netherlands’ concept of self-determination” as an “amputation which the Dutch are performing on our national body.”<sup>146</sup> The map of Indonesia had already been made into a logo by the Dutch and their Indonesian successors (one which always included West Irian, but never the eastern half of the island).<sup>147</sup> In some cases the logo-map included only two place names: Sabang and Merauke. The map of West Irian itself was also made into a logo for the liberation campaign which would physically complete Indonesian independence (see appendix B). If traditional Javanese power was indivisible, with no allowance for alternative power centres within the realm, as Anderson argues<sup>148</sup>, this became true of modern Indonesia too. Any other administration inside the map of Indonesia, whether Dutch or Papuan, was an added threat to national unity.

Anderson has pointed out that the Papuans themselves were soon imagined as “Irianese,” a new word named after the map, therefore “imagined in quasi-logo form: ‘negroid’ features, penis-sheaths, an so on.”<sup>149</sup> The initial impetus for this image was Dutch, but independent Indonesia embraced the same image. Subandrio spoke of grandiose development schemes and the need to get Papuans “down out of

the trees even if we have to pull them down.”<sup>150</sup> A people who were peripheral geographically came to be seen as embodiments of an earlier, primitive state – Indonesians now, and therefore Indonesians throughout all history, albeit backwards ones: *Papua bodoh*, stupid Papuans, as the popular expression has it.<sup>151</sup>

### c) Becoming Papuan: the emergence of a nationalist movement

Between 1960 and 1962, the tiny Papuan elite coalesced into an embryonic nationalist movement which both responded to the Dutch ten-year plan and demanded that Dutch rhetoric on self-determination be transformed into reality. This nationalist movement was once again caught between Dutch and Indonesian power, unsure of which side would provide a better patron.

Throughout the 1950s, Papuan leaders had expressed pro-Dutch views, largely out of necessity.<sup>152</sup> There were also demands for more local control which mounted in parallel with increasing Dutch use of the self-determination argument in international forums.<sup>153</sup> Indigenous nationalism was also in part a reaction to the Eurasian influx after the Indonesian revolution. Eurasians (who had status as Dutch citizens) and a handful of pro-Dutch Indonesians formed a middle layer resented by many Papuans for blocking their prospects in business and administration.<sup>154</sup>

The new Dutch policy was to accelerate elite political development of a “dynamic few”<sup>155</sup> who were supposed to lead West New Guinea under Dutch guidance and meld one of the most diverse regions of the world into a single nation. “The authorities are deliberately striving towards integration of the many small groups of the native population and endeavouring to get them to realize that in actual fact they are *one* people,” in the words of one government pamphlet.<sup>156</sup> At the same time, however, many highland peoples were still being contacted by Europeans for the first time.<sup>157</sup>

Parna, the National Party, was the most important of a dozen-odd parties formed in 1960 in the lead-up to the New Guinea Council elections. Its name worked in both Dutch and Indonesian as well as avoiding the issue of which nation it sought to represent, and its leadership straddled the pro-Dutch and pro-Indonesian camps, prompting some opponents to call it a fifth column for Indonesia. It seemed driven by typical anti-colonial sentiments, noting that “even today there are Netherlanders, and among those religious leaders in Papua country, who still regard the people of New Guinea as a herd of animals,

who cannot think, who can only eat.”<sup>158</sup> The Parna platform called for an independent West New Guinea by 1970 and, as tensions rose, for tripartite talks between Indonesia, the Netherlands and Papuan leaders.<sup>159</sup> Its leaders stopped short of calling for immediate independence based largely on outside considerations: the botched decolonization of the Congo.<sup>160</sup>

Outside Parna, the main Papuan political force lay in non-party figures like Nicolaas Jouwe and Markus Kaisiepo, who worked in support of the Dutch ten-year plan while consciously trying to build a Papuan national identity. This identity placed strong emphasis on race (not coincidentally a mainstay of the Dutch case for why West New Guinea should not come under Indonesian rule). The Papuan people were black-skinned Melanesians having no kinship with Indonesians, and thus should seek close ties with the Pacific and Africa while staying aloof from Asia. That meant the Melanesian Federation idea looked attractive. “I don’t believe that in the future we will be friendly with Asiatic people,” Jouwe said. “They will become more and more Communistic. We are Pacific people.”<sup>161</sup> At an Australian-Dutch administrative cooperation conference in 1961, Jouwe appealed to natives of Australian Papua New Guinea over the heads of his Dutch masters. “We look not only to the Dutch but also to Australia. We also look forward to the distant day when all Papuans from Sorong in West New Guinea to Samarai in East New Guinea will share common political feelings.”<sup>162</sup>

February 1961 elections for the inaugural New Guinea Council were the “final attempt to defeat Sukarno” by creating an alternative focus for decolonization.<sup>163</sup> They were hailed as a great success, with Papuans accounting for 22 of the 28 Council members along with five Dutchmen and an Indonesian.<sup>164</sup> “This is the first step on the road that leads to self-determination for your people,” said Queen Juliana in a taped message.<sup>165</sup> Despite very limited powers, council member was the most respected occupation among Papuan students in 1962, a demonstration of the new body’s strong potential.<sup>166</sup> The New Guinea Council (with Jouwe and Markus Kaisiepo now named vice-presidents) attempted to assert its authority through a resolution that the Netherlands was “no longer free” to dispose of West New Guinea without its agreement.<sup>167</sup> The new elite attitude was summed up by one student, who pointed out that “we are not the same people we were 15 years ago. We know what future we want now. We want independence.”<sup>168</sup>

After the election of the New Guinea Council, Parna members like Eliezer Bonay had begun to complain that the Dutch still wanted to use the Council as a rubber stamp. Dutch authorities soon were

trying to isolate Bonay, considering him pro-Indonesian.<sup>169</sup> When the Dutch began in 1961 to consider placing the whole issue before the UN, a Papuan National Council was held on the initiative of Parna and the Jouwe-Kaisiepo group, which took the next step in the process of building a Papuan nation. In a move much like the 1920s Indonesian Youth Oath, seventy elite Papuans agreed on a set of national symbols. These included a new name, Papua Barat (West Papua) that was to replace the Dutch name (West New Guinea) and the Indonesian name (West Irian). The conference also decided to adopt the Morning Star (*Koreri*) flag used during the Second World War and a new anthem, "My Land of Papua." Within a year, 95% of Papuan students were able to identify the flag and anthem.<sup>170</sup>

All these national symbols recalled the past in support of the future nation-building project. The name West Papua and the flag recalled the Mansren movement's declaration of independence in 1942, which pre-dated Indonesia's. The anthem was penned in 1925, ironically by a Dutch missionary. And the identification of nation with the territory bounded by the colonial borders was complete as West Papua replaced the Melanesian Federation idea, nixed by Australia in August 1961.<sup>171</sup> The Dutch accepted the new flag, but insisted it fly only alongside their own, and slightly lower.<sup>172</sup> The raising of the new flag on December 1, 1961, has become an event to be commemorated with flag-raising by today's West Papuan nationalists. It did not mark independence, but it did mark the arrival of a new "nation-of-intent."

#### d) Mediation attempted: West New Guinea & the business lobby

Despite the severance of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, contacts continued through a back channel apparently known to both governments. This was the Rijkens group, an informal gathering of Dutch businessmen headed by Paul Rijkens, former managing director of Unilever, and including top executives from a number of other large Dutch corporations. Most Dutch multinational corporations had supported the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia since 1950,<sup>173</sup> so Sukarno was happy to discuss the question with them. Secret talks began a month after diplomatic relations were broken. Sukarno met members of the group on at least three occasions between April and June 1961. General Nasution also opened his own channels to Dutch figures. The Rijkens group talks ended abruptly when they were publicized in the Dutch press and foreign minister Luns denied any knowledge of the back channel.<sup>174</sup>

Business interest in West New Guinea was not confined to the Rijkens group. There were also companies interested in the territory for its own sake. Dutch business first interested itself in 1938, when fifteen corporations formed a New Guinea Consortium following discussion of a bill in the Japanese imperial diet to lease West New Guinea as colonization territory.<sup>175</sup> Oil and mining had proved disappointing in terms of output, and postwar West New Guinea was a burden on the Dutch treasury. By the mid-1950s, the government subsidy was \$10-15-million a year.<sup>176</sup> Exports, which in neighbouring Papua New Guinea were roughly equal to the territorial budget, covered just 20% of the Dutch colony's budget.<sup>177</sup> Most contemporary works portray West New Guinea as essentially a worthless swampland.

For political leaders, that may have been so. Neither the Dutch nor Indonesian governments seemed interested in West New Guinea as a money-making venture, although Indonesians sometimes cited the territory's resources as a reason for Dutch stubbornness.<sup>178</sup> Literature on the struggle for West New Guinea inevitably contains a bleak description of the "remote, inhospitable territory."<sup>179</sup> However, the lack of investment in the territory stemmed less from its intrinsic lack of value than from the political uncertainty that enveloped it. At least two Papuan nationalist leaders established close ties with Japanese corporations in 1960-1 which stalled as the threat of war grew.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, a number of foreign corporations were aware of mineral deposits which were potentially enormous money-spinners. Nickel and cobalt were known to exist in large quantities in the Cyclops Mountains near Hollandia and on Gag and Waigeo islands off the west coast. One of the last acts of the Dutch New Guinea regime in March 1962 was a contract for mining rights to islands of Gag & Waigeo with Pacific Nickel Co., a subsidiary of US Steel; this was renewed by the Indonesian government in 1972.<sup>181</sup> The vast copper deposit of Mount Ertsberg in the southern highlands was discovered in 1936 and reported to the American company Freeport. In 1960, a Freeport manager climbed the mountain and concluded that "the Ertsberg was indeed a unique deposit and probably the largest above-ground outcrop of base metal in the world."<sup>182</sup> Freeport was the first company to sign a contract of work for mining with the Suharto government in 1967 and remains Indonesia's largest taxpayer today. The inauguration of the Freeport mine, in fact, served as the occasion for West Irian to be renamed Irian Jaya, Victorious Irian. The province is one of three that today provides the bulk of Indonesia's export earnings, generating revenues of about \$125 million annually.<sup>183</sup>

It might be expected that potential investors in West New Guinea would have preferred Dutch rule to that of the erratic Sukarno. On the other hand, Indonesia had offered far more generous guarantees to investors than those likely from Dutch administrators who stressed the preservation of Papuan cultures.<sup>184</sup> On balance, it seems likely that such business interest as existed was exerted in favour of a settlement that would allow investment to take place, without preference as to who emerged as the eventual administering power. As long as the territory remained in dispute, favourable investment conditions would not exist. The dispute also made the investment climate in Indonesia itself unstable, although Indonesia was careful never to follow through on threat to act against non-Dutch capital, even Dutch-British companies like Shell.

e) A new direction: the Kennedy administration and Indonesia, 1961

Tensions around New Guinea alarmed the Kennedy administration, which came to power at the beginning of 1961 determined to set a new course, more friendly to neutral states like Indonesia. While the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev was proclaiming co-existence in the developed world, it saw Africa, Asia and Latin America as the battleground for superpower competition. The new administration, wrote one of its key policy makers, was “activist in foreign policy, oriented to the emerging peoples and the new nationalisms, and determined to attempt to shape events.”<sup>185</sup> American policy was to become one of stressing economic growth in regions like Southeast Asia, in order to build stable, non-Communist regimes that would then be able to aid their neighbours – what one writer called “islands of development.”<sup>186</sup> Neutral governments like Sukarno’s were no longer to be regarded as the enemy, but as potentially powerful partners, if not allies, in containment. In Kennedy’s own words, “more energy is released by the awakening of these new nations than by the fission of the atom itself.”<sup>187</sup> But the bases of American policy in the region remained containment of Communism, with great symbolic store still set on keeping Southeast Asian states out of the “Communist orbit.”<sup>188</sup>

Indonesia, in this strategy, was a key player. Economically, it was especially important to Japan and Britain. Indonesia was the major oil supplier to Japan, with most of that oil pumped by American firms. On the mental maps of American policy makers, Indonesia’s position was not quite that of mainland Southeast Asia. Rather it formed part of the offshore island chain beloved of strategists after the

“loss of China,” a Pacific Rim string of bases and friendly states that would contain Communist Chinese pressures from the Asian mainland.<sup>189</sup> States like Indonesia and the Philippines were not on the front lines as Laos and Vietnam were, but formed a second line of defence. Indonesia was part of a “Malay barrier” of Southeast Asian islands familiar to American policy makers from the Second World War, “rich in resources but weak in self-defence capabilities” and thus uniquely vulnerable to internal communist subversion.<sup>190</sup> The “loss” of a state in this tier would spell disaster for the “free world” position on the mainland. Robert Kennedy noted that the “capture of Indonesia by the Communists would enable them to flank the whole of Southeast Asia, an area barely holding on to freedom by its fingertips.”<sup>191</sup> Secretary of State Dean Rusk worried that U.S. “commitments on the Indo-China peninsula could be lost if the bottom of Southeast Asia fell out to Communism.”<sup>192</sup> Ideally, the administration wanted Indonesia as part of a “New Pacific Community,” in which neutralist Indonesia would be safely anchored in an association with Australia, the Philippines, Japan and American Pacific island territories.<sup>193</sup>

The new administration gave the final nod to the policy advocated since 1958 by Howard Jones, the American ambassador in Jakarta. Jones advocated a friendly stance towards Sukarno coupled with ever-closer ties to the Indonesian armed forces, the strongest anti-Communist force in the country.<sup>194</sup> On the one hand, personal friendship with Sukarno was pursued: Kennedy invited him to send his son to an American university, Jones commissioned his autobiography, American funds paid for a hospital named for his wife, and so on.<sup>195</sup> Economic growth was also fostered by the sending of an American survey team. On the other hand, the United States started to rebuild its “assets” in the army in the hopes that they would replace Sukarno in time. Army chief/defence minister Nasution’s hopes for effective grassroots competition with the PKI dovetailed perfectly with the Kennedy administration’s civic action strategy.<sup>196</sup> As many as one in five Indonesian officers in this period were American-trained.<sup>197</sup> Direct military aid of about \$20-million a year fell far short of the Soviet contribution, but held enormous symbolic importance. Technically this aid was in the form of a sales program, but Indonesia was allowed to pay a token amount (one-thirtieth of the book value in 1959) and may not even have deposited the requisite rupiahs.<sup>198</sup>

Frederick Bunnell has described this as a two-track “post-West Irian strategy.”<sup>199</sup> The strategy could not work, however, while the West Irian issue continued to dominate the Indonesian political

scene. It was necessary, then, to resolve the issue in some way that would allow the economic-military strategy to go ahead. Jones had been calling for U.S. action to resolve the West Irian dispute since 1959.<sup>200</sup> Even the non-partisan economic survey mission dispatched in 1961 recommended a “favorable position” on Irian.<sup>201</sup> Irian was responsible for all the obstacles, according to Jones:

It was Sukarno’s determination to obtain West Irian that was responsible for his dissatisfaction with us, for his turning to the Soviet Union for military assistance, for his welcoming the political support of Peking, even, to some extent, for his growing fondness for the PKI, which had proved the most able and enthusiastic adherent of the cause.<sup>202</sup>

In essence, key American decision makers had come to accept the argument that Indonesia could disintegrate and leave the PKI in control unless given American aid over Irian.<sup>203</sup>

United States policy on West Irian began to be reviewed early in the administration. When it was revealed that Sukarno would be the first foreign head of state to visit President Kennedy, a full-scale review was launched. Kennedy told his cabinet that Indonesia was “the most significant nation in Southeast Asia” and a solution to the West Irian dispute “the key” to winning Indonesia.<sup>204</sup> However, the administration as a whole continued to seek a middle position between Indonesian and Dutch positions. The shift at this time was simply one from passive neutrality to active neutrality.

The Department of State’s new preferred solution, developed by the policy planning staff, was a trusteeship to remove the issue from the international arena. Pro-Western Malaya was the recommended trustee, and Malayan prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was encouraged to play a stronger mediating role.<sup>205</sup> The White House national security staff also turned to outside sources for new policy inputs, however, and these appear to have been more important than the State department in determining the eventual administration policy. Enormous time was spent eliciting the views of RAND Corp. analyst Guy Pauker, who saw Sukarno as the problem and bewailed Nasution’s unwillingness to challenge the president, but believed a deal on West Irian might be the only way to save the situation.<sup>206</sup> A more pro-Indonesian line was stressed by George Kahin of Cornell University<sup>207</sup> and Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans. Oltmans wanted an immediate shift. His recommendations seem to have been given little credit in the White House, but his input seems to have influenced the White House staff’s views on Dutch opinion as soft on the issue.

A formula for a face-saving withdrawal is eagerly searched for in the Netherlands by all.... Dutch public opinion — and the writer believes he is in a position to categorically state — needs another hard knock on the head in regards to West Irian. It is in their own

and very interest (sic) [t]hat it may not be a bombardment from Indonesian Ilyushin jet bombers, but rather to come from Washington in the form of quiet, friendly but firm diplomatic pressure.<sup>208</sup>

By the end of the review, the White House staff (which constituted “really a small state department,” according to Robert Kennedy<sup>209</sup>) seemed determined to act along the lines of the Jones approach to Indonesia. Robert Johnson, point man on the West New Guinea issue, listed American objectives as:

(a) the elimination of an issue from Indonesian politics and foreign policy which is tending to drive Indonesia into the arms of the Communist Party (PKI) internally and into the arms of the Bloc externally; and (b) achievement of a major gain in U.S. relations with Indonesia. This is not to say that we are totally unconcerned with Dutch and Australian reactions, but we are prepared to accept at least some difficulty with the two of them... We have committed ourselves to a search for a solution, thus reversing our past policy of total non-involvement.<sup>210</sup>

The Pentagon, looking at a mental map of its own, also broadly supported the Jones line.<sup>211</sup> “Indonesia’s large population (sixth ranking in the world), wealth of natural resources, and strategic location constitute a major prize in the East-West struggle,” argued the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “All the major trade routes between the Far East and points west pass through or near this massive island complex. The loss of Indonesia to the communists would gravely undermine the Free World military position in the Western Pacific.”<sup>212</sup>

There were barriers in the administration that slowed American initiatives, centred in the state department and the CIA. Australia, which Washington was committed to consulting on its West New Guinea policy, also restrained an outright move to the Indonesian side, particularly in 1961 when Prime Minister Robert Menzies was acting as his own foreign minister.<sup>213</sup> State reluctance to depart from support for a NATO ally that had just agreed to house American nuclear weapons<sup>214</sup> was not resolved until November 1961 when Kennedy axed many of the department’s top men. Most importantly for Indonesia policy, Averell Harriman was brought in as assistant secretary for the Far East and Walt Rostow as assistant secretary for policy planning.<sup>215</sup> Rusk stayed on as secretary, however, and continued to be seen by the White House as an obstacle. Rusk spoke of self-determination as a principle in the same moral terms as used by Dutch politicians. “If Sukarno starts aggressing against his neighbors, he’ll find us on the other side,” Rusk said. “We learned our lesson with Hitler. The time to stop him was at the beginning.”<sup>216</sup>

The Central Intelligence Agency view was even more strongly anti-Sukarno, a predictable stance from an agency that had tried to overthrow Sukarno in 1957-8. Like Rusk, the CIA apparently saw Sukarno as Hitler, and opposed any concessions to him.<sup>217</sup> “We believe that accession to Indonesia’s claim as long as Sukarno is in power would not serve the best interests of United States security in that part of the world,” said one CIA paper.<sup>218</sup> After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the destruction of the CIA’s assets in the Indonesian rebel movement and the ascendancy of Ambassador Jones, however, CIA views on Indonesia seem to have been downplayed.

With the national security staff committed to American activism and the State Department still clinging to its idea of a Malayan trusteeship, the end result was caution. Kennedy indicated to Sukarno that the United States wished to be helpful but made no commitments, saying publicly that it would be “rather difficult” to offer American mediation.<sup>219</sup> Essentially, he wanted West New Guinea removed from the arena of great power competition.<sup>220</sup> The Indonesians for their part had great hopes for the visit, as seen by the delegation’s composition: in addition to Sukarno it included his first deputy prime minister, Leimena; foreign minister Subandrio and seven other cabinet ministers; and representatives of the army, navy and air force.<sup>221</sup> In their April 24 meeting, Sukarno pleaded with Kennedy for help on West Irian. “Give me something to enable me to say that America is our friend,” he said, recalling American support in 1948-9 for Indonesian independence and asking for support to complete the territorial extent of that independence. Subandrio, for the first time, offered to consider a trusteeship of one or two years as a transition step to Indonesian rule, and Sukarno added that Indonesia “would be willing to borrow the hand of the United Nations to transfer the territory to Indonesia.”<sup>222</sup> This foreshadowed the eventual compromise settlement.

Kennedy’s charm apparently made a good impression on Sukarno, and the joint communiqué condemned imperialism “in all its manifestations,” wording seen as a criticism of Soviet expansionism.<sup>223</sup> Although Kennedy made no commitments on West Irian, Sukarno could not have been unaware that American policy was beginning to change. Two moves prior to Sukarno’s visit served up ample evidence of this. Privately, Rusk in April 1961 told the Dutch that the United States would no longer abide by Dulles’ promise to come to their aid if Indonesia attacked. He also decided to stop repeating counter-productive warnings to Indonesia over the use of force.<sup>224</sup> Britain and Australia publicly denied any

commitments to help the Dutch around the same time.<sup>225</sup> The first public shift came when the United States declined to send an observer to the installation of the New Guinea Council, the only South Pacific Commission member state to boycott the ceremonies.<sup>226</sup> Since the Council was the centerpiece of the Dutch self-determination plan, the symbolism was very clear. Although the decision elicited little discussion in Washington, Robert Johnson noted that American absence “had a very favorable impact upon the Indonesians.”<sup>227</sup>