

Chapter 4: The threat of war and the US-brokered solution, 1961-62

a) Back to the UN: The Luns plan & internationalization

The advent of the New Guinea Council had not proved enough to swing international opinion to the Dutch side. Meanwhile, public opinion at home was swinging towards shedding the country's top international problem. The government's response was to seek to internationalize the problem, a reversal of years of Dutch policy and an indication that the Dutch now saw themselves as the weaker party, in need of international endorsement. In the fall of 1961 they advanced a plan to turn West New Guinea over to the United Nations.

In the context of Dutch domestic politics, this was a brilliantly-crafted compromise that could draw the support of all major political parties.²²⁸ Internationally, it responded to the evolving American suggestion of a trusteeship and embodied the American hope for Dutch withdrawal. In fact, many of the ideas included in the resolution were American in origin, as was the idea of taking the issue back to the UN.²²⁹ It also played to the UN's willingness to become more directly involved in post-colonial problems, as in the Congo.²³⁰ However, as foreign minister Luns conceded,²³¹ it completely ignored the Indonesian contention that West Irian was part of Indonesia and could no more be separated from its territory than Katanga from the Congo. Luns may have seen it as a cover for continued Dutch administration under a UN blanket.²³²

Luns presented a draft resolution to the United Nations at the end of September 1961, which promised to hand over sovereignty to the Papuan people and administration to the UN, following the visit of an investigating commission to West New Guinea. He sweetened the deal by pledging to continue Dutch financing of the entire territorial budget to the tune of \$30 million a year.²³³ Indonesia's claim was not mentioned until the resolution came up for debate in November, at which time Luns said he would raise no objections if the Papuans themselves chose to join Indonesia.²³⁴ The plan was endorsed strongly by Australia, and seems to have been urged privately on the Indonesians by American diplomats as well.²³⁵ But its chances faded when Liberia and Ghana, which had been heavily lobbied by Papuan nationalists, opposed the plan.²³⁶ African governments sympathized with the Papuan cause, but

international politics determined their votes, with divisions over the Congo decisive in determining the alignments.

The Dutch plan was presented in the context of a debate on ending colonialism in which Indonesia served as one of the leading backers of an Asian-African joint resolution. Although Dutch diplomats seemed confident they could pass their plan since it granted self-determination to what they insisted was their last colony, their Indonesian counterparts were equally confident that they could muster 40 votes, more than the one-third needed to block a resolution (this exactly anticipated the eventual results).²³⁷ Amidst the early debates, the visiting chief of the Soviet navy presented a gift of ten gunboats to be used to safeguard Indonesian sovereignty and help unite Indonesia.²³⁸

Thus Subandrio, who addressed the General Assembly four times, felt no pressure to compromise, and merely insisted that the Luns plan be rejected. He continually insisted that self-determination for West Irian had been exercised in 1945 along with the rest of Indonesia, but the Dutch had “embarked upon a regime of terror to de-Indonesianize that part of Indonesia” and re-opened the notorious Boven Digul prison camp. This meant West Irian was “the shrine, the symbol of our freedom.” Like other examples of continuing colonial rule, West Irian represented a growing threat to international peace. If the Dutch resolution passed, he said, Indonesia would consider this as legalization of its “right to eject the Netherlands by force.” Perhaps most importantly, he spoke directly to other Asian and African states when he said that Indonesia had fought for their freedom, and they should return the favour and show solidarity with Indonesia, regardless of the merits of the Dutch plan. The only concession Subandrio was willing to consider was agreement to a resolution drafted by India that called for talks between the two sides.²³⁹

The United States was in a quandary, having failed to achieve a compromise. It welcomed the Luns plan as “imaginative and constructive” but said it failed to “sufficiently recognize the intense Indonesian interest in the Territory.”²⁴⁰ The result was a new resolution, presented by 13 mainly francophone African states known as the Brazzaville group, which mentioned self-determination and tried to wed the two resolutions by calling for bilateral talks but also for a UN commission to visit if no result was achieved by the end of March 1962, preparatory to implementing the Luns plan. This was very much along the lines that the United States had been urging, and therefore received American support.²⁴¹

When it came time to vote on November 27, the 53-41 division was solidly along bloc lines formed over cold war issues and the Congo: the Western states, Latin Americans and Brazzaville group voted in favour (with four abstentions), but were joined by only three misfit Asian states: Israel, the Philippines and Taiwan. Indonesia had its 40 supporters in Asia, the Soviet bloc and the seven African radicals (with, again, four abstainers). On the Indian draft, virtually the same 41 countries voted in favour, while enough Brazzaville states abstained to give the resolution a one-vote majority. In the aftermath, both sides claimed a moral victory and vowed to continue with their existing plans.²⁴² Sukarno dismissed the Brazzaville states as artificial countries, born not in revolutionary fire but “under the rays of the full moon ... protected by the perfume of roses and jasmine,” lacking the legitimacy conferred by a struggle for independence.²⁴³

The Dutch were left with no real choice but to negotiate or face a test of strength with an Indonesian state they had failed utterly to isolate. Papuan leaders, faced with an apparently unreliable Dutch policy and unable to convert African sympathy into votes, were thrown increasingly onto their own devices. The United States saw its plans for a UN solution ruined, and its post-West Irian strategy for closer ties to Indonesia in jeopardy. Indonesia, vindicated in its belief that confrontation was the best policy, saw the chances for American support melting away, with only the threat of war remaining as a lever to use on Washington. The imperatives of struggle and diplomacy now both pointed to the need to rattle sabres.

b) War beckons: Trikora, memories of the revolution & a taste of battle

Indonesians spent the first part of December waiting for Sukarno to order the army into action. Fevers rose even more when India invaded Portuguese Goa on December 18, 1961. Sukarno delayed his new policy announcement until December 19, the anniversary of the 1948 Dutch “police action” against the Republic. His speech was made in Yogyakarta, revolutionary capital of Indonesia and the target of that Dutch police action. Similar proclamations were issued all across Indonesia.²⁴⁴

Sukarno’s Trikora (*Tri Komando Rakyat*, threefold command of the people) was actually a very nuanced escalation. In November and early December speeches, Sukarno had promised to order an invasion.²⁴⁵ Instead, Trikora called for preparatory mobilization of the whole country, the defeat of the

formation of the Papuan state, and the raising of the red-and-white flag of Indonesia in West Irian. Sukarno rejected West Papuan self-determination as the greatest provocation yet, a reminder of Dutch attempts to split Indonesia.²⁴⁶ Thousands of people volunteered to go fight in Irian. They included the entire PKI membership, which thereby gained the first success in its campaign for an armed popular force outside the army.²⁴⁷

There was still room left for diplomacy, but military action was also stepped up. Soon after Trikora, a special Mandala military command was set up with authority over all of the eastern Indonesia war zone, headed by General Suharto.²⁴⁸ (The name Mandala recalled traditional concepts of sovereignty radiating out from centre to periphery.) Dutch defences were tested in January 1962, when Indonesian patrol boats entered Dutch waters and were fired upon.²⁴⁹ One ship was sunk and the deputy commander of the Indonesian Navy was killed, a bloody nose for Indonesia but also a chance to create a new martyred National Hero.²⁵⁰ This came just days after a Sukarno survived his fourth assassination attempt, allegedly carried out by Dutch agents.²⁵¹ In the war fever that followed, with every organization in the country vying to mobilize volunteers for Trikora, Sukarno ordered the arrest of his remaining political opponents.²⁵² Even the Indonesian language was “re-tooled” to remove Dutch spellings in accord with the “national identity.”²⁵³

The military seemed prepared to attack on command, although they were unsure of success.²⁵⁴ Naval and air capacity were below what was needed, and the army preferred to spend another year infiltrating soldiers into West Irian before launching a frontal attack.²⁵⁵ By the middle of 1962, according to General Nasution, 2,000 troops were in West Irian and three quarters of the country’s military was poised for an attack.²⁵⁶

c) Washington steps in: The US and UN force talks

After the UN debacle, the United States followed the logic of its post-West Irian strategy to its ultimate end, forcing the Dutch to the bargaining table to negotiate the terms of their surrender. The new U.S. policy was the result of a decision taken in the White House, which came largely in response to Indonesia’s decision to go to war if necessary. To avoid this result, the Kennedy administration was willing to back neutralist Indonesia against its Dutch ally.

The shift started just days after the UN voting. Robert Komer, an influential national security assistant, joined Robert Johnson in urging a shift: “with the failure of our UN gambit,” he wrote, “the time has come to take the gloves off, and adopt a frankly pro-Indonesian stance while there’s still time to get some political capital out of it.”²⁵⁷ The State Department was soon making similar noises, and the president was brought into the decision-making loop.²⁵⁸ The State Department, with the exception of Harriman’s Far East division, remained resistant to an outright move to side with Sukarno, however.²⁵⁹ Kennedy’s occasional direct interventions were aimed at trying to make his State Department as hard-nosed as his national security staff. The president said he simply “could not understand the Dutch.”²⁶⁰ Conflict over West Irian still bedevilled any improvement of the American position in Indonesia.²⁶¹

Sukarno on December 8 intimated to Jones that Indonesia was considering an early attack. There was little doubt in Washington that he was serious. As Robert Kennedy recalled, “They would have had a war ... It would have been the white men against the Africans, the Asians, and the Communists. It would have been a very bad, a very dangerous situation.”²⁶² The next day, Jones was back bearing a letter from President Kennedy that expressed “deep concern” at the threat and essentially offered the long-requested American mediation if Indonesia would refrain from starting a war.²⁶³ The accompanying guidance to Jones asked him to “seek to persuade Sukarno that if he does not give a signal for force on Monday, we can and will intensify our efforts with Dutch and Australians and will hope to be able to indicate significant progress to him as these efforts proceed.”²⁶⁴

Sukarno’s reply of December 12, however, tossed the problem back into Kennedy’s lap:

I hope that your efforts will make the Netherlands transfer of administration to Indonesia take place in a smooth way, so that a conflict will become unnecessary. On the other hand I hope to have your understanding that as long as the Netherlands continue with their preparations for the proclamation of Independent Papua (the so-called Papua flag and national anthem have already been introduced into West Irian) there is no alternative left to us but the use of force in order to face this illegal, forceful occupation of West Irian by the Netherlands.²⁶⁵

Indonesia was willing to fight or, if transfer was agreed, to talk; the choice was up to the United States. Its choice was made easier by events in Australia, which from December 1961 was shifting to a less pro-Dutch stance.²⁶⁶ “No responsible Australian would wish to see any action affecting the safety of Australia on the issues of war and peace in this area except in concert with our great and powerful friends,” Menzies told parliament.²⁶⁷ Two key policy shifts were made: Australia for the first time urged the Dutch

to agree to bilateral talks, and the Australian chiefs of staff downgraded the strategic significance of West New Guinea to “less than vital.”²⁶⁸

After the naval clash, Kennedy addressed the issue in a news conference, saying the U.S. was now working actively in support of a peaceful settlement.²⁶⁹ Sukarno continued to use the Communist threat as a lever. He sent Subandrio and the secretary-general of the foreign ministry to Washington to raise the question of succession. “Go and meet Kennedy” he told them. “Don’t argue with him. Just give him the benefit of answering my single question. Which one does Kennedy prefer: Nasution or [PKI leader] Aidit?”²⁷⁰ In March 1962, the threat was given weight when Sukarno named the first two Communists to his cabinet. Washington was clearly listening. The naval clash had prompted arms embargoes from Denmark, Britain and West Germany, but the U.S. continued to supply arms to Indonesia in the face of criticism from its NATO allies.²⁷¹

Jones believed Sukarno’s Trikora speech had stopped short of a declaration of war because of Kennedy’s intervention.²⁷² There was plenty in the speech to be alarmed about, however. The next call for restraint came from UN secretary general U Thant, who saw the issue as diversion from priority issues like the Congo but agreed to work in tandem with Kennedy. He sent identical cables to Sukarno and Dutch prime minister J.E. de Quay. “It is my most sincere hope that the parties concerned may come together to seek a peaceful solution of the problem,” Thant wrote, an implicit call for bilateral talks, which was Indonesia’s long-standing demand.²⁷³ Sukarno had not won West Irian, but his confrontation diplomacy embodied in Trikora had won, in the space of a few weeks in December, exactly what Indonesia had sought throughout the 1950s.

The United States also took direct action to limit Dutch military forces in the region, while being careful not to foreclose all avenues for reinforcements. The Commander-in-Chief Pacific had strongly objected to American arms being used to defend West New Guinea as far back as 1959.²⁷⁴ This stance was now extended to Dutch troop transfers. Dutch troops were being reinforced by civilian flights via Alaska and Japan. In February 1962, under Indonesian pressure including student demonstrations in Tokyo and at the Japanese embassy in Jakarta, Japan asked the Netherlands to stop sending troops this way. The Dutch were outraged and tried to circumvent the ban by dressing their soldiers in plainclothes for the flight, but after several weeks of acrimony agreed to stop using Tokyo as a jump-off point.²⁷⁵

In February, the US withdrew landing rights “in the interests of a peaceful solution” and closed the Panama Canal to Dutch ships, although the ships eventually got through after announcing they were bound for Vancouver.²⁷⁶ Even Australia refused to allow Dutch ships to refuel in Australia, “a refusal as symbolic as the request.”²⁷⁷ The only countries willing to allow open Dutch refuelling of planes carrying soldiers were Peru and France, which may have obtained clearance from the United States for its decision to let the Dutch refuel at its Pacific colonies.²⁷⁸

Further presidential action came in February in the form of a mission to Jakarta and the Hague by Attorney General Robert Kennedy, whose job was to press both sides to the bargaining table. The president took a personal hand in drafting State Department telegrams at this time.²⁷⁹ The Dutch had insisted at first that they were willing to talk on the condition that self-determination was recognized, but dropped their precondition in December 1961.²⁸⁰ Indonesia’s precondition, in Jones’ words, was that “purpose of talks should be to effect transfer of administration of West New Guinea to Indonesia and to discuss matter in which this should be accomplished.”²⁸¹ The Attorney General’s job in Jakarta was to get Sukarno to drop his precondition, which the Americans believed was achieved by the visit.²⁸² However, it does not seem that Sukarno in fact did this. His next major speech insisted upon “negotiations which really discuss the procedures as to how the Dutch shall transfer the administration, the authority, over West Irian.... We clearly reject negotiations without condition.”²⁸³

The visit was probably more significant as another charm offensive in which Robert Kennedy declared that the US “welcomes the new forces which have come on the world scene because they correspond so closely to the forces which sparked our own revolution for independence.”²⁸⁴ He apparently succeeded in convincing Indonesians that the United States was trying to help and would pressure the Dutch. Meanwhile, Indonesians seem to have also converted the president’s brother to almost all-out support for their claim. His comments on Papuan unfitness for self-government outraged the New Guinea Council, which cabled a protest to the president.²⁸⁵

In the Hague, Kennedy’s job was to lay down the law, letting the Dutch know in no uncertain terms that the United States would not support them.²⁸⁶ Luns came to Washington soon afterwards, sounding a more conciliatory tone. President Kennedy asked Luns not to send ships to West New Guinea immediately, and appealed to the greater interests of the West. If Indonesia went to war, he said, it might

well go communist, a “disaster for the free world position in Asia [which] would force us out of Viet Nam.” West New Guinea, he said, had no strategic significance, and “by concentrating too much on the welfare of the Papuan population we may be forgetting our other obligations in Asia and free Europe.”²⁸⁷

d) West Irian talks, West Irian struggle

Unofficial talks finally opened on March 20, 1962, at an estate near Washington. Indonesian ambassador Adam Malik sought a direct transfer of administration. His Dutch counterpart J.H. van Roijen, who had been a lead negotiator of the agreement for Indonesian independence, wanted to see a transfer to the UN, followed some years later by an act of self-determination.²⁸⁸ The job of reconciling these positions fell to Ellsworth Bunker, an American diplomat who officially was an agent for U Thant, although he in fact reported to Washington and only sporadically to the UN.²⁸⁹ Bunker’s eventual formula for a settlement took the Dutch idea of transfer to the UN, grafted it to Sukarno’s notion that one or two years of interim UN administration would be acceptable, accepted the Indonesian contention that transfer to Indonesia was a given, and retained the Dutch desire for an eventual act of self-determination. However, by putting transfer to Indonesia first and self-determination later, the Bunker plan essentially favoured the Indonesian position and granted the Netherlands only face-saving devices. Van Roijen called this “abject surrender” and professed shock that Western strategic interests were placed ahead of the rights of the Papuans. Bunker “agreed bluntly his thinking was in fact in those terms.”²⁹⁰ In presenting this formula, Bunker made himself “a central player in the mediation process,” backed by the prestige of the UN and US.²⁹¹

That weight was quickly expressed in a letter from the American president to de Quay which again asked for priority to be given to overall Western interests:

This would be a war in which neither The Netherlands nor the West could win in any real sense. Whatever the outcome of particular military encounters, the entire free world position in Asia would be seriously damaged. Only the communists would benefit from such a conflict. If the Indonesian Army were committed to an all out war against The Netherlands, the moderate elements within the army and the country would be quickly eliminated leaving a clear field for communist intervention. If Indonesia were to succumb to communism in these circumstances the whole non-communist position in Viet-Nam, Thailand and Malaya would be in grave peril and as you know these are areas in which we in the United States have heavy commitments.²⁹²

Kennedy was now willing to let the Dutch blame the U.S. if it would achieve a settlement: "We're prepared to have everybody mad," he told reporters, "if it makes some progress."²⁹³

Sukarno quickly accepted the formula after reading a letter from Kennedy that the United States would be "seriously disturbed" if talks did not resume, but Luns presented a note to the American ambassador which stated his government was "shocked and dismayed" by the Bunker plan and "deeply hurt" that the US government was backing it and thereby pursuing "appeasement."²⁹⁴

In the Bunker plan, the broad outlines of the eventual peace deal were clear. However, five months of intermittent battles, megaphone diplomacy, threats and counter-threats were to ensue before the deal was signed. The United States and Australia now began to exert maximum pressure on both sides to close the deal along the lines laid out by Bunker.

The Indonesian diplomatic style in this period was to alternately advance demands, then retract them as apparent concessions, all the time keeping the Dutch and Americans off balance by their unpredictability. Backed by continued low-intensity warfare, Subandrio and Malik posed as restraining influences while in many ways fuelling the campaign. In fact, the low-intensity war in West New Guinea was designed not for military purposes, but to back up the diplomatic campaign and create the impression of action for the home audience – although the credible threat to launch a full assault was always there, visible to American U-2 surveillance flights.²⁹⁵ While the army declared publicly it could throw 1,750,000 men into the fight, its chief of staff told one group of paratroopers their job was "principally to give support to our diplomatic efforts to negotiate with the Dutch. We have to be in a position to prove that we own the territory seized." This particular offensive, for symbolic reasons and because of the area's remoteness from the main Dutch forces, was aimed at Merauke.²⁹⁶ These feints continued without interruption even as talks resumed in July, with new paratroop drops and attempted landings from submarines reported even after the signing of a final agreement.²⁹⁷ Sukarno saw this policy as fair since the Dutch had proved they could not be trusted.²⁹⁸ Outside warnings against the use of force were essentially irrelevant. Struggle continued, was even intensified, as an inseparable track alongside diplomacy. As far as Indonesia was concerned, it was already at war. Even as Subandrio reported acceptance of the Bunker principles, Nasution announced on April 3 that volunteers had landed. Indonesian forces were soon reported laying siege to some towns, taking control of others. Sukarno

announced Indonesia had taken possession of Mig-19 supersonic jets, and Subandrio returned to Moscow for a fresh infusion of arms.²⁹⁹

Dutch diplomacy, on the other hand, tended to a series of grudging concessions which often came too late to meet escalating Indonesian demands. As Subandrio said, "the Dutch have always been one step behind Indonesia's minimum demands."³⁰⁰ After sustained American pressure, the Netherlands announced it accepted the Bunker plan "in principle." Since Sukarno insisted this was nothing more than Dutch trickery, the United States continued to press for more. At the NATO Council meeting in Athens in May, Luns accepted Bunker's plan conditional on being allowed to raise other issues, an offer which was rejected by Indonesia.³⁰¹ On May 22, the United States formally requested the Netherlands accept the Bunker plan in toto. The next day, Thant let the Dutch know he would publish the Bunker proposals if the Dutch did not make a clearer acceptance soon; a day later Kennedy publicly endorsed Bunker's plan.³⁰² De Quay then accepted "on the basis" of the Bunker formula.³⁰³

Sukarno continued to say publicly that he could not tell whether the Dutch had accepted Bunker or not.³⁰⁴ Throughout June, an exchange of cables between Sukarno and Thant debated whether or not the Netherlands had actually accepted Bunker's timeline, until a formal statement meeting Sukarno's requirements was delivered.³⁰⁵ Western pressure now shifted to Indonesia to resume talks, with Menzies, for instance, calling on Indonesia to "stop making war."³⁰⁶

When Indonesian negotiators did return, it was with the knowledge that they had foreclosed any chance of Dutch departure from the Bunker plan and that they were negotiating from a position of unassailable strength.³⁰⁷ As the second round of talks opened, the National Defence Council decided Trikora would continue to be implemented "in whatever circumstances and whatever situation."³⁰⁸ Malik again advocated direct transfer, but then retracted the demand. Subandrio then called for partial direct transfer of the areas controlled by Indonesian guerrillas (Jones backed this, suggesting that Merauke be transferred for symbolic reasons³⁰⁹), but this proposal was also blocked. The central issue became the timing of the transfer from the UN to Indonesia, an issue over which the Dutch were willing to break off talks.³¹⁰

In this round of talks, the principle of self-determination was abandoned. This is perhaps not surprising, given American attitudes towards the Papuans. Rostow worried that the Dutch "may

continue to insist upon self-determination, however little sense that makes for the stone-age Papuan population of New Guinea." Komer dismissed self-determination for "a few thousand square miles of cannibal land." Kennedy himself rejected comparisons to West Berlin, saying "that's an entirely different matter.... those Papuans of yours are some 700,000 and living in the Stone Age."³¹¹

The Dutch proved willing to abandon the substance of self-determination in exchange for the appearance. Dutch promises to consult Papuan leaders were never followed up.³¹² Instead, their top priority was to resist the humiliation of direct transfer to Indonesia, their second to preserve the appearance of the promises they had made. The idea of transfer to Indonesia followed by an act of choice had been floated by Subandrio in the November 1961 UN debates, where it was rejected by the Dutch ambassador as "a mockery of the principle of free choice."³¹³ Now, the Dutch agreed to the idea in exchange for keeping the period of interim UN administration. Dutch negotiators did not hold out for a plebiscite run by the UN³¹⁴ but agreed to write into the agreement the idea of a popular consultation (*musyawarah*) conducted by Indonesia in accordance with Javanese tradition — in other words, the style of consultation under guided democracy. They raised no complaint when Indonesian negotiator Zairin Zain denounced the long-held notion of an autonomous province.³¹⁵ Even the word "Papuans" was dropped from the final agreement in favour of "inhabitants."

Pushing for further Dutch concessions, Subandrio on July 25 said he would break off talks. This proved too much for the Americans, who called in Kennedy to speak with Subandrio. No records of this meeting exist, but Kennedy's talking points suggested he tell Subandrio:

... a sudden attack on West New Guinea when a peaceful solution seems possible would raise grave problems for the United States at a time when we have assumed major responsibilities in Southeast Asia.... if a major attack is mounted against West New Guinea the United States would be faced with very grave decision with respect to our own attitude and course of action. We can not be indifferent to the safety of lives in West New Guinea if fighting occurs at a moment when a peaceful solution is clearly in sight.³¹⁶

Kennedy seems to have gone further, suggesting that the Seventh Fleet might fight on the side of the Dutch — at least, this was the impression left upon the Dutch and Indonesian delegations.³¹⁷ Although some Indonesian generals still wanted to attack in order to win a clear-cut military victory,³¹⁸ Subandrio had reached the limit of concessions, and so agreed to the deal that had emerged. De Quay's report to parliament dispelled any doubts as to the winner. "We are ashamed before the world," he said. "We were

forced into it against our will and against everything we honor... The Netherlands could not count on the support of its allies, and for that reason we had to sign."³¹⁹

The final deal was signed at the UN on August 15, 1962.³²⁰ This came just in time for Sukarno's independence day speech, in which he noted that the struggle for West Irian had consumed all of Indonesia's resources, and promised to turn to the final point in his cabinet program, the provision of basic needs.³²¹ Kennedy immediately circulated a memo to all government departments asking for suggestions on how to "capitalize on the US role in promoting this settlement to move toward a new and better relationship with Indonesia."³²²

Even at this stage, Indonesia sought and obtained a few minor but symbolically powerful victories, particularly over the question of which flags would fly over the next year, which nearly broke the deal. In the end, it was agreed that the Dutch flag would be lowered on the day of transfer to the UN, then raised alongside the UN flag. On Dec. 31 it would be lowered for the last time and the Indonesian flag raised in its place, fulfilling Sukarno's vow that the red-and-white banner would fly in West Irian "before the cock crowed" on a new year. On May 31, the UN flag would be lowered and Indonesia's banner fly alone.³²³ This sequence was followed scrupulously, and across the country third flagpoles that had been reserved for the West Papuan flag were removed.³²⁴ The first day of Indonesian sole administration was then celebrated with a bonfire of West Papuan flags.³²⁵

e) A nation gels: the West Papuans on their own

Less than one year passed between the Luns plan and the New York agreement ending Dutch rule in West New Guinea. In this period, however, the Papuan nationalist movement took on a new assertiveness in reaction to the movements of powerful outside forces – Indonesia, the Netherlands and the United States. Papuan nationalists sought accommodation through one or more of these patrons. Regardless of which patron was preferred, however, Papuan nationalism was no longer pro-Dutch or pro-Indonesian, but pro-Papuan.

New Guinea Council leaders lobbied actively at the UN, stressing racial solidarity with African governments, with special appeals made to the most vocally anti-colonial states. A new anthem was floated, "Dutch New Guinea is New Africa." Nicolaas Jouwe led the charge, writing:

Many, many times you have heard about us from the Dutch and Indonesians, without having known us. Now we will take the floor ourselves. We are living in the Pacific, our people are called Papuans, our ethnic origin is the Negroid Race.... We do not want to be slaves any more.... Why do we Papuans have to become victims of a battle for prestige between certain groups which feel powerful? ... Indonesia as well as the Dutch are strange to us.³²⁶

Some of the strongest Papuan anger was directed at the United States, once seen as the land of hope and racial equality, but now looking like an accomplice of Indonesia in denying the very existence of a Papuan nation. In April 1962, an angry telegram to Kennedy declared: "We Papuans are not Indonesians ... forced participation in Indonesian administration would be equivalent to a slave trade carried on by members of the United Nations."³²⁷ All these efforts failed, however, to extend their African support beyond the Brazzaville group – and even these states began to falter in their support.³²⁸ With the Melanesian/African avenue closed, race as a unifying factor finally gave way to territory.

Indonesian pressure, meanwhile, served to solidify resistance, in much the same way that Indonesia's confrontation of Malaysia in 1963-5 transformed a shaky federation into a unified state. Nothing brings a country together like an outside threat. More than three quarters of students in West Papua's high schools in early 1962 supported Dutch rule and decolonization, with just 1% favouring Indonesian rule.³²⁹ "Now we are only for our own country," said Parna figure Frits Kiriho, the first Papuan to attend university.³³⁰

International realities, however, made accommodation necessary. By early 1962 it was apparent that the Dutch were giving in to American pressure, a tendency confirmed when they grudgingly accepted the Bunker formula, step by agonizing step, between May and July. Kiriho was the first leader to make the transition, touring eastern Indonesia with Sukarno in January and then telling a German audience that West Papua could prosper only as part of Indonesia, whose language it shared, and not in partnership with Papua New Guinea, since few West Papuans spoke English. His preferred solution was autonomy within Indonesia, followed by a plebiscite, the intervening period allowing time for Papuans and Indonesians to become friends.³³¹ Kiriho seemed to be tacking to accord with the eventual winner, but also remained true to the nationalist cause. His party, Parna, re-affirmed its call for independence by 1970 even after his tour with Sukarno.³³² In 1968, he argued that 95% of educated Papuans opposed Indonesia.³³³

Other leaders also took ambiguous stands interpreted as pro-Indonesian. Markus Kaisiepo, vice-president of the New Guinea Council, was now reported to be “secretly pro-Indonesian along with a large number of influential Papuan political leaders.”³³⁴ So was Takoro, the Council’s only woman member, who had previously signed many nationalist proclamations.³³⁵ Amos Indey led a student delegation to meet Sukarno, saying that “since Bunker forwarded his proposals for the settlement of West Irian, we then understood that our future lies in Djakarta.”³³⁶ When Indey’s group returned, the New Guinea Council resolved to send a delegation to Jakarta as well, a proposal which the Dutch colonial administration accepted only on the unlikely condition that Indonesian attacks stop.³³⁷

Meanwhile those the Indonesians called puppets cut their last strings. “I spit on the Dutch who promised us so much and gave us tears,” said Herman Womsiwor, vowing to lead guerrilla struggle against Indonesia from exile.³³⁸ Jouwe and his supporters left West Papua with the Dutch, but there is no evidence that remaining “pro-Indonesian” Papuan leaders criticized the “pro-Dutch” camp.³³⁹ Allegiance to Indonesia was always temporary, pending the act of free choice promised for 1969.³⁴⁰

The cry for independence persisted. Parna, the party of Bonay, Kirihio and Takoro, renewed its call for independence by 1970 as the first point in its program drawn up days after the New York Agreement.³⁴¹ A new National Council also met, agreeing to the Dutch-Indonesian deal but demanding that the UN authority recognize their flag and anthem and that a plebiscite be held by the end of 1963. It sent a delegation to Jakarta in October, and was able to secure a meeting with Sukarno.³⁴² A delegation from the New Guinea Council followed, led by Bonay, and eventually met Sukarno as well.³⁴³ Both delegations tailored their rhetoric to the political demands of their future rulers, including a call for a shortened period of UN administration, but stressed two messages: they were not Dutch puppets but authentic voices of the Papuan people, and West Papua had not dissolved into chaos on the Dutch departure, proving the people’s ability to govern themselves.

For Indonesia, however, the Papuan people were secondary to a symbolic taking of possession of the land, the completion of the territorial extent of the revolution. The role of the Papuans was simply to complete the Indonesian revolution, as seen in stage-managed enactments of Youth Pledge Day and a recitation by Papuan youths of the Indonesian Youth Oath (one country, Indonesia; one people, the Indonesian people; one language, Indonesian) with two added points: one flag, the sacred red-and-white;

one state, the government of the Republic of Indonesia.³⁴⁴ Sukarno arrived for his first visit to his newest province on board his largest warship, the Irian, to accept the title *Maha Putera Irian Barat*, Great Son of West Irian. Plans were announced for a superhighway, complete with tunnels, running from Sabang to Merauke.³⁴⁵ Nor was Boven Digul forgotten: in 1964, the first stones were laid for a new Heroes' Monument on the site.³⁴⁶ In Jakarta, it was all symbolized with the erection of a new Irian Monument.