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WEST NEW GUINEA – AN INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE

The Netherlands and West New Guinea

During the first Ministerial conference of the Netherlands union at the end of March 1950, the Indonesian delegation seems to have taken a rather low-key stand on the New Guinea issue, supposedly in response to an assurance by Minister van Maarseveen that the island, if for some time left alone and kept out of public attention, would eventually become Indonesian.¹ It was decided to stage a special New Guinea conference later during the year. A Dutch-Indonesian commission was set up to prepare the groundwork for these negotiations, which included two Papuan advisers, Nicolaas Jouwe on the Dutch side and Silas Papare on the Indonesian side. The commission conducted a fact-finding tour of New Guinea from 17 May to 5 June. Only important population centres in the north, north-east, Merauke and Tanah Merah were visited, where meetings were held with prominent Papuan chiefs, colonial officers, political party leaders, and representatives of the Christian missions and private enterprise. But differences between the two sides proved to be so fundamental that the commission had to resort to producing two separate final reports.

The Dutch report started off by emphasising that political development in New Guinea had remained far behind other parts of Indonesia, where already, for thirty to forty years, people had been trained in democratic procedures and practice in various kinds of representative councils. So, the question as to whether the Papuans would be able to indicate in a democratic way if

they wanted to join Indonesia or not, could only be answered in the negative, and it was stressed that not only did the Netherlands take this position but also that Dr Hatta, during the RTC in 1949, had made this point.

It was for this reason the Netherlands had insisted, before signing the Linggajati Agreement, that it should be clearly laid down that New Guinea should be accorded a special status in regard to the Netherlands kingdom and to the United States of Indonesia. In this the Netherlands had been guided by its obligations under article 73 of the UN Charter, according to which those nations holding the responsibility of the administration of non-self governing territories, recognised that the interests of the inhabitants of those areas should be treated as paramount.²

During the RTC discussions, however, this argument had been dismissed, particularly by the BFO delegation, which had insisted that the predominant issue was the fact that New Guinea formed an inseparable part of Indonesian territory and that the question of catering for the interests of the indigenous population was only of secondary importance. Again the Indonesian members of the commission took the same position, arguing that Indonesia held unquestionable sovereign rights over the territory and discussions about this and the condition of its people were both irrelevant and inadmissible.³ The Dutch view that ethnologically and geographically West New Guinea belonged to the Pacific and was distinctly different from Indonesia proper was countered by Indonesian attempts to show the opposite by calling in the help of the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, zoology and botany.⁴ In return, the Indonesian historical claims to the territory, which harked back to the old empires of Srivijaya and Mojopahit and the prerogatives of the Sultan of Tidore over parts of New Guinea,⁵ were dismissed by the Dutch as irrelevant; and it was stressed that the hold of Tidore on the area had always been tenuous and that the indigenous population had never shown any attachment or loyalty to the sultan. In fact, the population had only bad memories of the sultan and there had been

no protests whatsoever when, in 1949, the merely administrative relationship had officially been broken.⁶

So the commission, rather than producing a workable compromise to speedily end the impasse, in fact seems to have aggravated the situation. In any case, with the submission in August 1950 of the commission's report, Dutch-Indonesian relations had already soured to such extent that the possibility of solving the New Guinea problem quickly had already greatly receded.

In the period immediately following the transfer of sovereignty in December 1949 two factors seem to have been crucial in determining Dutch actions. Firstly, there was the continued existence of the same political configuration in parliament, which precluded the achievement of the target of the two-thirds majority of votes needed to transfer West New Guinea to Indonesia. Secondly, the original goodwill towards Indonesia shown by the Labour Party and a section of the powerful Catholic Party was rapidly ebbing away, caused by what was perceived to be the anti-Dutch actions and policies of Indonesian governments. Many parliamentarians and a large section of the Dutch public saw the dismantling of the federal government system as a perfidious act. This, together with the constant stream of reports of ill-treatment of Dutch citizens and damage to Dutch commercial interests through sabotage, corruption, and labor unrest, caused Indonesia to be seen as untrustworthy. Moreover, negotiations were considered to be a waste of time as agreements with Jakarta would not be worth the paper they were written on. The imposition of a Javanese-controlled central government over the whole of the archipelago had stifled regional and local rights, including the freedom of self-determination. It was exactly these rights which the Dutch-designed federal system had tried to protect and its demise acted to reinforce the West New Guinea lobby in parliament and to add new recruits to its cause. But, as Palmier⁷ has argued it was the composition in parliament that was pivotal to the decision to remain in West New Guinea. Doubtless also a minority of colonial diehards and a widespread moral

condemnation of the way Indonesia had scorned legal commitments also played a role, although Lijphart's⁸ *Volksgeist* argument, laying the blame on supposed Dutch national traits of stubbornness and being sticklers for legality and religious morality, seems much overdone. These same traits can surely be found in many other nations, and an outstanding case in point is Lijphart's adopted country, USA, that very much outstripped the Dutch in this area by its largely moral and religious motivated fervour, reaching hysterical proportions at some stages, setting itself up as the saviour and protector of the rights of man against the worldwide onslaught of the anti-Christ, the evil empire of communism. The syndrome of the American will to win at any cost has become almost proverbial.

All this tended to harden public opinion in the Netherlands regarding West New Guinea. In the most recent treatise dealing with the West New Guinea question, Hans Meijer repeats Lijphart's argument that the dogged insistence on the part of the Dutch on the right of self-determination of Papuans was in general motivated not so much by considerations of principle but rather by emotional reactions to the Indonesian decolonisation process.⁹ Against this it must be pointed out that the protection of the rights of the various peoples and tribal areas of the Indonesian archipelago and the preference for a federal solution to an eventual Indonesian state was not new but dated back to the schemes for political development proposed after World War I by conservative figures such as Colijn.¹⁰ These ideas were still supported widely in the Dutch colonial world after 1945.

In May 1950, strong criticism of Indonesia in parliament, particularly from the Liberal Party, the CHU, and the third largest faction in the Lower House, the ARP, led to a motion of no-confidence, which, although beaten, still put the cabinet on the back foot. As a result Minister van Maarseveen announced that the government had not changed its view on the status of New Guinea and believed it should remain under Dutch control. Moreover, the parliament would be given the opportunity to

debate the issue before the commencement of the negotiations with Indonesia, scheduled for December. According to some commentators this concession by van Maarseveen was a costly mistake as it took away the initiative from the cabinet.¹¹

At this stage, however, there still existed sufficient support in the major parties, including the KVP (Catholics) and Labour (PvdA), to go along the road of negotiations in the hope of reaching a workable compromise. This hope was dented by Indonesia's rash action in abolishing the federal system.

Attempts by the government to control the damage were in vain as parliament was in an uproar and in no mood to listen to pleas for moderation. With the exception of some Labour members, whatever goodwill that may have existed towards Indonesia took a severe battering. Hence, the prospects of a real breakthrough in the forthcoming Dutch-Indonesian negotiations in December started to look distinctly dim, since the KVP also was changing its earlier willingness to compromise.¹²

Failure of Dutch-Indonesian negotiations on West New Guinea

During the conference, held from 4 to 27 December, the Indonesian delegation, led by the experienced Mohammad Roem, from the outset made any chance of success highly unlikely by insisting that West New Guinea by right belonged to Indonesia and therefore was not a matter open for negotiation. Indonesia was still willing to offer a number of concessions by leaving intact the existing Dutch predominance in the economic and financial field and giving preference to Dutch investment. Furthermore, Dutch civil servants would be able to remain and their pensions would be guaranteed, and the emigration of Dutch settlers and workers would be allowed. The work of Christian missions would also be safeguarded, and the local population would be given the opportunity to participate in the running of public affairs. A representative council would be established immediately and other measures would be introduced leading

to eventual autonomy. So, the Indonesians tried to beat the Dutch at their own game by taking them up on their loudly professed concern for the welfare of the Papuan people by leaving Holland in charge of most of the socio-economic development of the territory, albeit under official Indonesian rule. Finally, Roem demanded that the transfer of sovereignty should take place by the middle of 1951.¹³

On its part the Netherlands, although continuing to adamantly refuse Indonesian claims, held out its own palliatives and agreed that the eventual act of self-determination should be preceded by a period in which both parties would be allowed to mount their own information campaigns. Indonesia would thus have the right to further spread its own culture and language, although political propaganda would remain out of bounds. More helpful, perhaps, was the suggestion to set up a joint supervisory body, either a New Guinea council or a Ministerial conference of the Netherlands union, in which matters touching Indonesia could be directly discussed. Finally, the self-determination process was to be restricted to the Papuan people and was to be jointly supervised. The Netherlands also undertook to prevent New Guinea becoming a refuge for pro-Dutch Indonesians.¹⁴ After consultations with his government Roem returned from Jakarta on 23 December with the message that Indonesia rejected the Dutch proposals and demanded that the transfer of sovereignty should occur by June 1951.

In parliament the West New Guinea question continued to be hotly debated. Some Labour members, including the former prime minister, Schermerhorn, advocated the transfer of the territory to Indonesia. The Labour parliamentary leader, van der Goes van Naters, having openly defended this kind of action, was forced to resign. As a whole the Labour Party and the Catholic Party supported the government's handling of the issue and clearly rejected the Indonesian claims. The Liberal Party, however, was utterly set against any compromise at all. As a result Stikker resigned causing a cabinet crisis.

During an interview in 1973, the former prime minister, Drees, put the blame on the failure of the 1950 talks squarely on Indonesia, and particularly on Sukarno, who absolutely refused to compromise and even dismissed a Dutch face-saving formula to grant an autonomous status to New Guinea within the United States of Indonesia.¹⁵

The political composition of the new cabinet had hardly changed and was led again by Drees, while Stikker returned to the Foreign Affairs portfolio. On 17 March 1951, in an important announcement concerning the New Guinea problem, the government declared that in view of the existing configuration in parliament and the intransigence of Indonesia, the only sensible action in the meantime would be to continue the status quo. It was this so-called *ijskast* (refrigerator) formula which remained the basis of Dutch policy for most of the rest of the decade.

After the debacle of the December 1950 talks, the Indonesian government instituted a commission, under the leadership of the legal expert Professor Supomo to look into the possibilities of revising the RTC agreements in favour of Indonesian interests. The Hague government indicated agreement in principle to reopen talks, including a discussion on New Guinea, providing Indonesia would show sufficient willingness to compromise. New negotiations, which started in The Hague in January 1952, almost immediately foundered because of the Indonesian argument that according to the RTC agreements West New Guinea had always been legally part of the Indonesian state. The Netherlands again refuted this, but its suggestion to submit the matter to the International Court of Justice was dismissed by Indonesia on the grounds that the dispute was not judicial, but politically based. The Supomo delegation proposed that during the interval preceding the Dutch general elections in June 1952, New Guinea should be administered jointly by both countries. Unfortunately the Indonesian mission was called back abruptly to Jakarta owing to a cabinet crisis, and this proposal was never studied by the Dutch government.¹⁶

As a result of the 1952 Dutch general elections the centre of power moved more towards the right of the political spectrum. While the Labour Party (PvdA) gained three more seats, the Catholics (KVP) lost three seats to an ultra right, colonial die-hard, Catholic breakaway party, led by Welter, a prewar high colonial official and Minister of Colonies. The Labour-Catholic coalition, led again by Drees as prime minister, continued in office, and was now supported by the other protestant sectarian parties namely the CHU and ARP. The Liberals had moved to the opposition benches. This caused West New Guinea to become even more entrenched than ever as a source of division between the Netherlands and Indonesia. The Queen's speech on the opening of parliament on 16 September 1952 made it clear that the 'refrigerator' policy would be continued. Significantly, now also the right of self-determination and the attainment of eventual Papuan self-government and independence were openly elevated to the status of official policy.

Two other important developments leading to a deepening of Dutch intransigence regarding West New Guinea were the appointment of Joseph Luns as Minister of Foreign Affairs and the growing criticism by the Labour party of the reigning anarchy and corruption in Indonesian political and economic life, which, it was believed, was clearly leading towards the emergence of a totalitarian state. This caused more Labour members to change their earlier preference for a Dutch withdrawal from New Guinea and to support the official government line. The rapid ascendancy of Joseph Luns, an hitherto little-known career diplomat in Washington, to the apex of power as Foreign Minister, seems to have been more the result of the machinations of his soul mate, the powerful Catholic leader Romme, than the product of his own innate abilities.¹⁷

Indonesia and West New Guinea

The Netherlands West New Guinea policy of keeping the

territory out of Indonesian hands had been one of the factors responsible for a steady deterioration in relations between The Hague and Jakarta. It was the irredentist ranting of Sukarno and other nativist-inclined radical nationalists such as Mohammad Yamin that had succeeded in engraving on the national mind the return of West Irian to the fatherland as imperative. Greater Indonesia should be restored to the grandeur of the long-gone Madjapahit empire, that supposedly had pushed geographically into other parts of South-East Asia. Despite the lack of hard historical evidence for the existence of an earlier Indonesia-like nation state this mythical dream readily appealed to the Indonesian nationalist psyche. The vast majority of Indonesians believed that West New Guinea, as part of the former Netherlands Indies, should belong to its successor the Republic of Indonesia; and the continued existence of the Dutch colony of West New Guinea was felt to be a threat to Indonesia's national security. In interviews conducted by the author many Western oriented Indonesians stressed that they could not see why the Netherlands insisted on holding on to an economically underdeveloped and backward territory unless darker motives were at work.

The West Irian question had been driven to the brink by the PNI and PKI both of which had attached themselves to the Sukarno bandwagon. The West Irian campaign acted as a life-line to the leftist radical-nationalist and communist factions providing protection against the ever-increasing power of the military. As was related in the previous chapter, in 1954 renewed negotiations had been held resulting in the Luns-Sunario protocol. Another attempt by the Hararap government, during the Geneva negotiations in 1955, to come to some arrangement regarding New Guinea had failed, causing the lowest point to be reached in Dutch-Indonesian relations.

The Dutch position had by 1956 grown so irrevocable that parliament voted to have West New Guinea enshrined in the constitution as part of the Netherlands kingdom, emphatically

closing off any avenues for Indonesia to find a solution by diplomatic means.

Growing criticism in The Netherlands about official West New Guinea policy

In the Netherlands, however, criticism against the official West New Guinea policy had been growing. The cry of big business and the Dutch community in Indonesia not to sacrifice the vast Dutch economic stake for the sake of a useless show of national grandstanding nevertheless failed to make an immediate impact on the government.

The first crack in the hitherto almost unanimous support for the government's New Guinea policy occurred in 1956 and came from an entirely unexpected quarter: the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church. In the past it was this church that had provided most of the moral justification of the Netherlands colonial enterprise, and it had been its political counterparts: the ARP and CHU which had been the soul of the opposition to Indonesian independence. From the beginnings of the century the ARP had been the main architect of Dutch colonial policy with leaders such as Kuyper, Colijn, and Idenburg leaving their distinct imprints. After 1945 their rejection of revolution and the support of a policy of gradual social-economic Indonesian development remained in place and in 1949 Kuyper's ideals of moral vocation and Christian guardianship towards underdeveloped peoples were continued in West New Guinea. Hence, great consternation was caused in the Dutch Calvinist world by 'The Call for Reflection' issued in June 1956 by the Dutch Reformed Church criticising the government's West New Guinea policy for poisoning Dutch-Indonesian relations and driving the Netherlands into an untenable position internationally. The Netherlands was morally bound to do its utmost to get out of this existing quagmire, although everything possible should be done to guarantee Papuan rights. The synod wanted negotiations to be re-

started and dismissed Dutch historical claims and the profession of unselfish motives as too feeble to justify continued Dutch rule of West New Guinea. It questioned whether Dutch policies were genuinely directed at Papuan socioeconomic development, or whether lost national pride caused by the loss of the Indies played a role. It further argued that an artificial separation of West New Guinea from Indonesia, with which age-old relationships had existed, made Dutch insistence on a free choice rather suspect. Finally, the synod pointed out that the West New Guinea question was influenced by the vagaries of international politics and that Dutch rule could well have been terminated long before its Papuan policies had been able to come to fruition. The synod's attack had its origins in an earlier draft report of the Missions Council of the Dutch Reformed Church that had expressed serious concern about the damage caused by the New Guinea issue to missionary work in Indonesia.¹⁸

The 'Call for Reflection' had a devastating effect on the faithful, causing anger and refutation. The cabinet and parliament remained generally unmoved. Its major effect, however, was to open up national discussions, gradually leading to a wider demand for policy change. The first significant outcome was a petition signed by 116 mainly leftist and pacifist-inclined intellectuals, including many university professors, arguing that continued Dutch rule was not absolutely necessary to safeguard Papuan human rights, and political parties were urged to reconsider their positions and institute a commission to study and advise on adopting a more realistic policy.¹⁹

Of crucial significance was the fact that some Labour Party ranks became disaffected and their latent uneasiness about the West New Guinea developments burst into open criticism during a party conference in early 1957. A situation developed whereby the Labour members of cabinet and those in the Second Chamber stuck to the official government line while Labour deputies in the First Chamber became very critical of the government's West New Guinea policy and even advocated Dutch

abandonment of the territory in favour of international control. As a result of this split the party executive called on the Wiardi Beckman Stichting, the Labour Party research bureau, to prepare a study on the West New Guinea question. Its report appeared in July 1958 and rather than a UN trusteeship it favoured West New Guinea joining Papua-New Guinea and other adjacent islands into a Melanesian federation.²⁰

The cabinet and most of the non-socialist factions in parliament remained unwilling to allow any fundamental change in its West New Guinea policy. In fact the Indonesian takeover of the Dutch economic sector at the end of 1956 and its final nationalisation in 1958, made reaction in the Netherlands even more bellicose and obdurate.

The USA and West New Guinea

By 1958, however, the USA started to exert its powerful influence over the whole of the West New Guinea issue, taking away most of the initiative from the Netherlands. The chance for the Dutch to realise their plans to guide the Papuans to nationhood and independence had in the last analysis always depended on Washington's fiat. The extent of Australian support for the Dutch position was similarly dependent upon America.

The rights of the Papuans to national self-determination would normally have found general support from Americans. But the issue was pushed aside by the all-engrossing task and missionary zeal engulfing the USA in its anti-communist crusade. In this campaign to obliterate the Red anti-Christ and safeguard the all-powerful dollar the rights of the Papuans faded into insignificance.

From 1948 onwards after the Sukarno-Hatta government's victory against the PKI in the Madiun rebellion, Washington had definitely placed itself on the Indonesian side. Pushing its traditional anti-colonial line the USA was supportive of the postwar revolutionary wave in which the European colonial states were

replaced by independent indigenous states. At the same time Washington tried to expand its historical open door policy designed to secure Western capitalist trade and investment ventures. With China on the verge of falling to the communist colossus, and Indo-China and Malaya at the risk of a similar fate, Indonesia, with its strategically crucial position straddling the South-East Asian trade crossroads, became an absolutely essential bulwark for the Americans to stop any further Soviet or Chinese southward aggression. In addition there was a further impetus to deny communists access to the vast, strategically vital, Indonesian stocks of rubber and oil.

In 1949 the military impasse in Java and Sumatra had largely been broken by Washington forcing the Netherlands to the conference table and to transfer sovereignty to the United States of Indonesia. Like the Dutch the Americans put their faith on the hope that the existing politically moderate Indonesian forces would remain in charge and lead the country gradually towards economic rehabilitation and development.

The insistence by the Dutch on keeping West New Guinea was only grudgingly tolerated by the Americans, but never openly supported. Initially Washington took a neutral stand and, keeping a low profile, tried to sail around the two cliffs of Dutch NATO membership and the all-important objective of keeping Indonesia anti-communist.

Immediately after the abortive Dutch-Indonesian conference in December 1950, a high State Department official told Dutch Ambassador van Roijen that it was deplorable for the Netherlands to risk good relations with Indonesia for a useless piece of territory. Although dismissing Indonesian claims on the territory as spurious and the threat to boycott Dutch business interests as pure blackmail he insisted that negotiations should continue out of fear of harming the moderate Natsir government and pushing Indonesian politics further to the left.²¹ So it was by no means clear that Washington, when put to the test, would openly support Dutch sovereignty over the territory.²² This was epitomised

in the American view that West New Guinea was of little value in the fight against communism as compared to the linchpin position held by Indonesia.

Certainly, any hopes still held by the Netherlands Department of Foreign Affairs about American support for the Dutch position received an unwelcome jolt when, in 1954, attempts to include West New Guinea in the SEATO treaty failed. It leaked out that Bonsal, director of the office of South-East Asian Affairs in the State Department had fully informed the Indonesians regarding discussions about SEATO between the Under Secretary of State Bedell Smith and Luns in Geneva, and had made clear to Jakarta that:

... our position is completely neutral concerning New Guinea. We do not want a trouble spot nor shall we take any action to strengthen the Dutch position here. The Dutch contribution to the defence of the South Pacific by including New Guinea is not important to us. Of course we will inform the Dutch of our defence plan in the South Pacific, they being a loyal member of NATO, but we are not interested in getting New Guinea to join ...²³

In 1953 the State Department told a British embassy official in Washington that the USA had never considered the legality of the Dutch claim and did not have a position on this point.²⁴

There was, though, a section in the State Department, including Bonsal and Allison, which wanted the USA to abandon its neutral stance and squarely support Indonesia on West New Guinea. American Ambassador Cochran, one of the main architects of the RTC agreements, in his last report on leaving his Jakarta post, had also emphasised the need for a settlement arguing that as the Dutch were only in West New Guinea temporarily, Indonesian friendship could be cultivated to the extent that the country could be included in a Pacific security system.²⁵

Still, Washington maintained its non-committal stance, although it exhorted the Sastroamijoyo cabinet to put all its ef-

forts into socio- economic development and to leave the West Irian question in abeyance until it could demonstrate to the international community its ability to put its own house in order.²⁶

Washington and Sukarno

The Hague was deeply disturbed by the indifference of the USA to the ever-intensifying anti-Dutch atmosphere in Indonesia. The unilateral Indonesian abrogation of the RTC agreement in 1956 had not even caused a ripple in Washington. When this was followed by an announcement by Secretary of State Dulles of an imminent state visit to Washington by Sukarno, it caused a furious reaction in the Netherlands. A livid Luns and the national press accused Dulles of clearly having violated his often-stated neutrality principle. The Dutch reaction became vitriolic when a State Department official, Robertson, tried to parry these accusations by referring to Mao Tse-tung's abrogation of all overseas debts and the imprisonment of innocent foreigners, including many Americans, and charging that this had apparently not stopped the Netherlands officially recognising the Peking regime.²⁷ These Dutch protests seemed to have little impact on the State Department, which categorised them as having only nuisance value. The Dutch stand on West New Guinea was irrelevant in itself but had to be endured for the sake of the NATO alliance.²⁸

The new American policy of establishing deeper friendly relations with recently independent and uncommitted Asian nations, of which Dulles's tour and Sukarno's state visit were a part, according to van Roijen did not affect USA neutrality towards the West New Guinea question. In fact, during his visit to Washington Sukarno had been spurred by Dulles into adopting a more conciliatory approach to the Netherlands by making it clear that the American policy on West New Guinea had not been changed.²⁹

Sukarno, though, tried to save his position by stating that in

Washington he had gained the distinct impression that in the long run the USA would support the Indonesian claim on West New Guinea. This view was based perhaps on the assurances he had received from the pro-Indonesian faction of the State Department. In Indonesia the USA received another blast in the national press with the communists chalking up another winner and the communist *Harian Rakjat* thanking Dulles for clearly demonstrating that America belonged to the colonialist camp.³⁰

During 1957 when Dutch-Indonesian relations were fast deteriorating, the passive policy of Washington towards the West New Guinea question began to be seriously criticised by its diplomats in the field. The first advocate for a change of direction was the newly appointed Ambassador to Jakarta, John Allison, who all along had been favourably disposed to the Indonesian claim, and now supported by his faction in the State Department wanted to help Indonesia into the saddle. He suggested that in view of the real danger that the West New Guinea issue would drive Indonesia into the communist camp, Washington should force the Dutch to the conference table. Allison's package deal firstly envisaged the transfer of the territory to Indonesia on the condition that Dutch investments would be guaranteed. Secondly, the actual transfer of sovereignty would take place after five years during which period the USA would continue economic aid. Thirdly, also after five years, Indonesia would be associated with the ANZUS treaty, becoming a formal member. Bringing Indonesia into the Western security fold should satisfy Australia and stop its opposition to an Indonesian takeover. The deal depended on Sukarno's efforts to deliver his part of the bargain by distancing himself from the communists. If he remained obdurate on this point then he should be forced out of office. Allison later claimed that the heads of Royal Dutch Shell and the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Jakarta were supportive of his plan.³¹

The communists, though, were an essential part of Sukarno's power play and the extent of his power was determined by his ability to keep in balance the major political forces in the coun-

try, that is to say the armed forces, Islam and the communists. The loss of one of these fundamental ingredients would seriously weaken his power and the structure of guided democracy. It was foolish to expect a vain and power-hungry individual like Sukarno ever to give up his dream of leading his people into a nirvana of social justice and economic prosperity. Certainly the State Department had far less confidence in Sukarno's promises and absolutely rejected Allison's plan, transferring him soon after to Prague.

USA support for anti-Jakarta rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi

As it stood, by the end of 1957 the American flirtation with Sukarno during his state visit was turning sour and the State Department was giving up on the 'Washington of Indonesia' and actively plotted his downfall. The outbreak of the anti-Sukarno and anti-central government rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi by moderate and more Western oriented politicians and anti-communist warlords was seen as a godsend to the State Department, which decided to lend active military support to the rebel forces.

Early in January 1958, Ambassador van Roijen was informed by the assistant secretary of Far Eastern affairs, Robertson, that the State Department had completely written off Sukarno and was stopping the delivery of arms to the central government until he had been removed from power. Asked about his most suitable replacement van Roijen pointed to Hatta, but warned that Sukarno's support was still far too strong for him to be dethroned. Robertson also intimated that moderate Indonesian politicians had been told that their requests for USA support would only be granted after they had broken with Sukarno. Van Roijen was also asked about General Nasution and the rebel leadership and Robertson was very surprised to hear that, according to Dutch reports, the percentage of communists in the Indonesian armed forces corresponded to PKI electoral support.³²

Any Dutch hopes that Washington's discarding of Sukarno might result in more open American support for their West New Guinea position were almost immediately crushed as the American Embassy in The Hague insisted that the anti-communist struggle remain the main objective. The message was that the Netherlands should expect further American pressure in case a moderate Indonesian government wanted to discuss West New Guinea.³³

The Dutch government for its part held great misgivings about the open support for the rebels by Secretary of State Dulles that would cause them to be depicted in Jakarta as puppets of foreign subversive elements. According to Luns the Americans had rushed in, severely compromising themselves towards Sukarno and the central government without being reasonably sure that a substantial turnaround in the Indonesian political situation could be effected. He argued that it was still an open question whether the rebellions in the outer islands would be lifted from their provincial level to incite the nation as a whole.³⁴

Sukarno, with the PKI close on his heels to maintain the revolutionary fervour in the country, needed tangible results on West New Guinea and took a far more bellicose stance. Indonesian armed infiltration was stepped up and the Dutch feared that a full-scale invasion backed by Russian-supplied naval vessels and aircraft would be a distinct possibility.

Dutch demands for American military support in West New Guinea

The request by the Netherlands for a clear American military commitment in the case of a frontal Indonesian attack was not forthcoming. All that Dulles was willing to offer was a rather ambiguous statement to the effect that such an eventuality would not leave the USA indifferent. Attempts by van Roijen to obtain a more solid assurance from Dulles received the stock response that this would drive the anti- and pro-communist forces together

negating the effect intended by the direct support of America to the rebels.³⁵ Nevertheless the Australian embassy in Washington reported that in effect Dulles had promised aid to the Dutch in the case of a major Indonesian attack.³⁶

The Dutch fears about a possible failure of the anti-Jakarta rebellion proved to be well-founded. After the successful landing and campaign of pro-central government troops in Sumatra and Sulawesi the rebel cause was doomed. This caused Washington to pull out all stops in Jakarta to repair the damage. As part of this conciliatory process and its continued efforts to steer Indonesia away from being trapped in the communist orbit also, a more pro-Indonesian stand emerged in American policy towards West New Guinea. Dulles told van Roijen in detail about the American help to the rebels and went on to stress that after the failure other ways had to be found to stop a PKI takeover. Any concessions that would help the pro-Western factions in Indonesia would have to be granted.³⁷

To smooth ruffled Dutch feathers, Ambassador Young, during a meeting with Luns on 28 May 1958, read aloud an explanatory telegram from Dulles that referred to an instruction to Howard Jones in Jakarta to make it clear to the Indonesian government that to maintain good relations with the USA depended on abstaining from military action against Netherlands New Guinea:

... the Dutch and Australian governments know officially that the United States of America would be greatly concerned about an Indonesian military attack on Western New Guinea ... the Dutch government need not now or in the future harbour any concern about the United States attitude towards an Indonesian military attack on Netherlands New Guinea ...³⁸

Obviously Dulles was, in these words, giving a much stronger commitment than previously and more credulous souls than Luns could be pardoned for taking American promises as genuine.

Still, the Dutch quest for an entirely unreserved American

defence undertaking persisted. During an informal meeting with Dulles on 18 September at the UNO in New York, Luns reviewed the recent history of the American-Dutch relationship. Admitting that, compared with China and eastern Europe, the Indonesian problem was relatively less important to the USA, Luns emphasised that in contrast for the Netherlands the relations with Indonesia and the West New Guinea question were of crucial significance. As a long-time faithful ally in NATO the Netherlands was exceedingly disappointed with the lukewarm American support for the Dutch cause in Indonesia. Censuring the role of the USA in the Indonesian revolution and dismissing the UNCI as a failure he upbraided Washington for its unwillingness to demand that Indonesia pay damages claims for the nationalised Dutch business sector. Also, the recent American decision to deliver arms to Indonesia was attacked. Luns warned that the lack of a public American declaration of military backing for the Dutch could well entice Jakarta into staging an all-out attack on West New Guinea. Dulles replied that, on the contrary, the USA considered Indonesia to be of vital importance in the framework of the Western Pacific defence strategy. Indonesia was an absolutely essential link in the rather thin defence line stretching from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and New Guinea to Australia. The USA did not expect the Netherlands to give in to Indonesia on the question of West New Guinea. In return Luns replied rather tartly that in that case the Netherlands should surely not be expected to pull the chestnuts out of the fire singly.³⁹ Ambassador van Roijen was less impressed by Dulles's stand and confessed to Australian Ambassador Beale that he did not believe, as matters stood, the Americans would involve themselves militarily in West New Guinea. Beale seems to have been of the same opinion.⁴⁰ Van Roijen's appreciation of the situation was in fact born out by American actions during the following months.

In early October, President Eisenhower admitted to Luns that after the war the United States had pushed Indonesian independ-

ence too fast and was now reaping the bitter results. But he stressed that despite his mistrust of Sukarno and the Indonesian government he stood behind the State Department's policies. Eisenhower, repeating Dulles's assurances of American support in case of an unexpected Indonesian attack, recognised New Guinea's strategic importance and indicated his total opposition to an Indonesian takeover.⁴¹

After the secret meeting with Eisenhower, Luns submitted a memorandum asking the USA to state equivocally that it would take all appropriate measures to stem Indonesian aggression against West New Guinea. This request was restated by Dulles in a draft statement emphasising that the USA was firmly opposed to the use of force to effect territorial changes whether this affected Taiwan or West New Guinea and comparable issues in other countries. Still he played down the possibility of an Indonesian attack pointing to the assurances of the Indonesian government that force would not be used.⁴² To a request from van Roijen for further clarification Dulles replied:

We are not in a position to make advance statements. I expect when it occurs, we would give you logistical support and find other ways to help you. You could count on the same patterns as we have shown in other parts of world. We acted, as you know, in Lebanon and in the Formosa Straits. But definite promises can not be given as prior authority of Congress is necessary ...⁴³

Luns pointed out to the cabinet that American promises were stronger than before and believed that Dulles's reference to the Formosa Straits could actually be taken as a kind of guarantee of American military support.

In January 1959, Luns told van Roijen that immediate guarantees for military help from America, Britain and Australia could not be expected. But he stressed that constant harping of the idea of an Indonesian invasion hanging as a Sword of Damocles over the Dutch might in the end produce the desired result from the Americans.⁴⁴ As one recent Dutch commentator

put it: 'Luns for years cherished Dulles promise of October 1958 like a young boy looking at his pet rabbit.'⁴⁵

In reality a different scenario was evolving as constant Dutch requests for Allied consultations to plan logistical support were steadily ignored on the grounds that the Dutch fear of Indonesian aggression was overstated. Luns's suggestion to have units of the Seventh Fleet visit West Guinea ports as a deterrent to the Indonesians was brushed aside in Washington. In May 1959, Luns berated the USA for the miserly way it was treating one of its staunchest allies and threatened to leave NATO if military aid was not offered to the Dutch in West New Guinea. All the State Department was willing to do was to repeat its refrain of the American belief that an Indonesian attack was not imminent, thus making any American military involvement premature.⁴⁶

In June 1959, the Netherlands, in order to reinforce its West New Guinea defences, delivered a 'shopping list' to the Americans, which included twelve long-distance patrol planes, nine troop transport helicopters, two landing craft, and various other military items and stores.⁴⁷ The American embassy in The Hague assured the Dutch cabinet of a sympathetic response by the State Department and added that, during the current Congress session, the American government would secure agreement on the delivery of nuclear power plants for Dutch submarines.⁴⁸ But the matter shifted from the promised sympathetic review into another highly annoying case of procrastination. In July the new Secretary of State, Herter, indicated that the situation looked promising, though possibly not all items would be delivered. In reply Luns underlined that anxiety was rising in the Netherlands about the vast arms build-up in Indonesia that clearly had exceeded the need to maintain internal peace and order.⁴⁹ A fortnight later Luns bitterly complained to Ambassador Young about America's delaying tactics regarding the 'shopping list' and stated that the Netherlands might be forced to transfer military personnel and armaments from its NATO force to the Pacific.⁵⁰ The vacillating policy of the USA government on the West New

Guinea issue continued until the advent of the Kennedy administration in 1961.

Australia between Scylla and Charybdis

Almost immediately after gaining power in December 1949, the new conservative Australian government went far beyond the earlier, fairly quiet, although persistent, prodding of the Labor government over West New Guinea, when it imperiously, and vociferously demanded that under no circumstances should the territory be surrendered to Indonesia. The new Australian Foreign Minister, Sir Percy Spender, in January 1950 during a visit to Jakarta, told Dr de Beus, a high official in the Netherlands High Commission and later Ambassador to Australia, that although he considered good relations with the newly independent Indonesian state to be of great importance, it was on the other hand absolutely vital to Australian national interests that West New Guinea should stay outside Indonesia. Spender made it clear to de Beus that he intended to tell the Indonesian government of the Australian position.⁵¹

Spender followed up this initial approach on 8 February 1950 with a formal note to the Dutch Ambassador in Canberra, emphasising that West New Guinea held the same vital strategic interests to Australia as Papua and New Guinea:

The Australian Government does not regard Dutch New Guinea as forming part of Indonesia. We believe that the peoples of West New Guinea have little in common, except a past common administration, with the peoples of Indonesia. Their developmental problems are separate and the level of political development necessitates placing them in a category quite different from the United States of Indonesia. In fact, we regard Dutch New Guinea as having much in common from an ethnic, administrative, and developmental point of view with our own territories of New Guinea and Papua ...

Australia therefore was anxious to hold discussions with the Netherlands as quickly as possible about the future political status of New Guinea and asked to be kept fully informed about any Dutch-Indonesian negotiations about West New Guinea. Furthermore, if necessary, Australia was willing to offer financial help in the development and defence of the area.⁵²

When delivering this note to the Dutch embassy counsellor, Hasselman, Dr Burton again repeated the offer of substantial financial support and stressed that as Sukarno had publicly declared West New Guinea to be part of Indonesia it was high time for the Netherlands to reveal publicly their future plans regarding the area.⁵³

These rather impetuous Australian moves initially caused some considerable distrust among the Dutch, who still had fresh in their minds Australian activities during the Indonesian revolution, and feared that this might be a new example of unwanted meddling and interfering in internal Dutch affairs and even a renewal of Australian imperialistic expansionism.

An interesting illustration of this suspicion is provided in a dispatch of 15 February 1950 from Jakarta to The Hague by High Commissioner Hirschfeld, who stressed that the note, in addition to emphasising Australia's adamant opposition to an Indonesian takeover, also showed that it wanted to play a controlling role in West New Guinea. Thus he advised that while Canberra should be thanked for the Australian support of the Dutch cause, it should at the same time also be told that any attempts by Australia to obtain a direct say in political and security matters in West New Guinea would be extremely unwelcome, unless a reciprocal arrangement be offered regarding the Australian part of the island. As it was, this unexpected Australian initiative was seen as untimely, coming just when the political situation in Indonesia was still fluid, keeping alive the hope that fruitful Dutch-Indonesian cooperation could be achieved. Hence, it was hoped that Australia could be persuaded to postpone sending a similar note to Jakarta, at least until after the first

Ministerial conference of the Netherlands-Indonesian Union in March had been concluded. This would prevent Indonesia from accusing the Dutch of having engineered this Australian move on West New Guinea. It was clear, however, that Hirschfeld considered West New Guinea relatively unimportant in the scheme of Dutch interests in the archipelago. Seen in this light he seems to have been quite willing for West New Guinea to be administered under the aegis of the Netherlands-Indonesian Union, or to transfer sovereignty to Indonesia in return for further concessions to the Dutch. He further warned that if the worst scenarios should eventuate and Dutch-Indonesian negotiations should fail, and the Netherlands government insisted on retaining West New Guinea, it would take massive investment to develop the territory properly. At the same time security would be seriously affected by Indonesian armed infiltration and internal political unrest. Finally, Hirschfeld pointed out that as support from USA and Britain would be highly doubtful, an assertion which history proved correct, a Netherlands-Australian partnership would not be able to muster the necessary international clout to maintain its position to any length. These were rather prophetic words, indeed!⁵⁴

The Australian Foreign Minister, Spender, still continued to push the Dutch for a firm commitment on New Guinea. In late April 1950, he told Dutch Ambassador Teppema in Canberra, that Australia could no longer afford to sit idly by and wait for developments. He intended to make clear to Jakarta that it could not allow an Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea. Teppema's pleas for Australia to wait until July, when the results of the New Guinea Commission would be known, fell on deaf ears. After Spender's request for inside information on the frame of reference of the commission, and the nature of discussions held so far, was refused, Spender again stressed that Australia could no longer run the risk of being outstripped by events. He pointedly asked whether the Netherlands would be willing to transfer West New Guinea directly to Australia, or to make it into a

trusteeship territory either under Dutch or combined Dutch-Australian management. The ambassador replied that all this was very premature and could not be taken into consideration as in his view if ever a decision was taken to transfer the territory it would be to the United States of Indonesia. Finally Spender stressed that all efforts should be taken to avoid UN involvement as this would be harmful to Australian interests, and if it came to the point Australia would rather break off relations with the UN than to have to comply with its directions. Indeed this was a far cry from the passionate support of the UN by Spender's predecessor, Dr Evatt.⁵⁶

It was this Dutch stance that profoundly worried Australia, where political opinion was almost unanimously against the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia. The island was believed to be essential to Australian security and an important link in its northern defence cordon. It was a view reinforced by the threat posed by the victory of Mao Tse-tung in China in 1949, the Korean War, the Indo-China War, the Malayan Emergency, and the growing strength of communism in the Philippines and Indonesia. The traditional forward line defence policy was still paramount in Australian strategy, hence substantial Australian forces were involved in the Korean and Malayan campaigns. The fear of the yellow peril, this time in communist garb, pushing its way southwards came to the fore, causing in the 1950s and 1960s a kind of national neurotic reaction against communism. McCarthyism hysteria mounted against party members and fellow travellers who dared to attack or question the validity of the traditional colonial trinity of God, Queen and Country. It is only when viewed in this national frame of mind, nurtured by a terror of communism and a racist ultra nationalism, that the brash and emotional outbursts of Australian government Ministers, such as Sir Percy Spender, become understandable.

A few days after his stormy interview with Spender the Dutch ambassador signalled to The Hague that despite his attempts to calm matters in the Department of External Affairs, the politi-

cal atmosphere was so tense and emotionally laden that rash action could well occur. He feared that being unwilling to wait for the report of the Nieuw Guinea Commissie, Canberra might try to force the issue before the beginning of Dutch-Indonesian negotiations, and possibly would either hold talks with the Indonesians without reference to the Dutch, or would send a warship into New Guinea waters for a flag-showing exercise.⁵⁶

In reply to the Australian note the Dutch Foreign Minister, Stikker, pointed out that Spender had misinterpreted the role of the New Guinea Commission, which in reality was only to report to their respective governments about possible ways and means for further negotiation. The commission had not been charged to provide any definite solutions. The Netherlands government was at a loss to understand Australia's change of heart only a few months after it had, in a successful manoeuvre, saved the RTC from ruination, by having the contending parties agree to further discussions on the West New Guinea question postponed until the end of 1950. Surely the Netherlands could not be expected to suddenly abrogate its obligations incurred under the RTC agreement, including the undertaking, of which the Australian government was fully aware, not to transfer sovereignty over West New Guinea to third party.⁵⁷

Spender did not relent and, on 10 May 1950, informed the Dutch that a note regarding Australian concerns over West New Guinea would be handed to the Jakarta government the following week.⁵⁸ Bipartisan support on the West New Guinea question in the Australian parliament is illustrated in a speech in early June 1950 by Dr Evatt, who, while acknowledging that the future of the territory was primarily a matter between the Netherlands and Indonesia, nevertheless insisted that Australia's vital interests also were involved and should be accommodated. Evatt argued that Australia's task in its own part of the island would be adversely affected by an Indonesian takeover of the western part. Presumably he was referring here to the probability of Indonesian revolutionary fervour jumping the border. He further

stressed that New Guinea was, ethnically, distinctly different from the rest of Indonesia, which precluded any validity to Jakarta's claims and had in fact led the Netherlands to be invited to join the South Pacific Commission in 1946. Hence, Evatt claimed Australia had a right to participate in Dutch-Indonesian discussions, and a UN Trusteeship should be established either under Australian or joined Dutch-Australian control. But if the Netherlands decided to vacate the area, Australia, following well-established colonial practice, might consider offering to purchase the territory.⁵⁹

Still, the new Menzies government went much further in supporting a continued Dutch presence in the area than Labor had ever envisaged. The more conservative section of the Australian electorate had always been highly critical of the strong support from Labor of the Indonesian republic. The Liberal-Country Party coalition indeed went to some considerable lengths to ensure The Hague of its disapproval of Labor's anti-Dutch policies and actions during the 1945 to 1949 period. For example, the Dutch consul in Melbourne, Colonel Wright, wrote to a Dutch diplomat friend:

Neither he (Menzies) nor myself, and for that matter the same applies to many thinking Australians, have any doubts as to the tragic errors of the previous government here in regard to their policy over the Netherlands Indies generally. I may assure you that Bob told me categorically that his government definitely would back the Dutch up to the hilt if they decided *definitely* to retain New Guinea. In my opinion the reason why Sukarno is making such an issue of this point is that he knows very well that once the Dutch are out of New Guinea all hope of ever getting back to any influence at all, of any nature worthwhile, in that part of the world, is gone. I think and hope on our side we also recognise that once Sukarno gets Dutch New Guinea, notwithstanding his protestations, he will not rest happy until he gets the Australian section under his control also ...⁶⁰

Prime Minister Menzies, in fact, did not hide his antipathy to Sukarno and publicly voiced his strong opposition to an Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea. In an interview with the Dutch representative to the UN in New York, he stressed his pro-Dutch stance during the period of Indonesian revolution and that he certainly had not changed his mind on that score. He welcomed Dutch immigration to Australia and stressed: 'We want to retain you as our neighbours in New Guinea and want nobody but you. In no case do we wish the Indonesians to take over ...'⁶¹

According to Menzies the Dutch should not be unduly worried about opposition in the UN and should take a leaf out of the book of South Africa and Israel, which had both been successful in defying the organisation's demands. Finally, he was adamant that his government would continue to push its view also in Jakarta and made it clear that he did not trust Indonesian assurances regarding Australian New Guinea

These Australian-Dutch diplomatic exchanges led to a meeting between Spender and Stikker on 29 August 1950. Stikker began by repeating that the Netherlands at that stage would be prevented from entering into definite agreements with Australia, because of its current commitment to conduct further negotiations with Indonesia. No doubt also, Stikker, who actually was disposed to give away New Guinea in order to safeguard and strengthen Dutch economic interests in Indonesia proper, saw Australian initiatives as unwelcome complications, which should be defused as quickly as possible. On his part, Spender reiterated that under no circumstances would Australia be prepared to tolerate a situation in which Indonesia would gain a foothold in New Guinea. Although no cabinet decision had yet been taken on this point he insisted that in the case of an armed Indonesian invasion or infiltration Australia would take up arms itself. Stikker replied that even if the Dutch government wanted to vacate New Guinea to Indonesia, this would be impossible as the required two-thirds majority in parliament required for such

a move would, in view of the ruling political configuration, prove to be unobtainable.

So, during forthcoming negotiations the Netherlands would maintain the status quo, which probably would cause the Indonesians to place the issue before the UN. Still Spender remained unsatisfied and argued for a united Australian-Dutch resolve to remain absolutely unmovable in their position regarding New Guinea. Realising that the active support of both Washington and London would be necessary, he undertook to lobby both governments by emphasising the high strategic value of the island in the Pacific defence system. Spender felt that Britain would be more responsive to this line of argument than the USA, as it wanted to protect its supply of foodstuffs from Australia and New Zealand. In addition the Americans, owing to the Korean War, had recently decided to extend their defensive line westwards below the Equator. Yet the most fundamental reason, according to Spender, underlying Dutch-Australian policy would have to protect the right of self-determination of the Papuans and their eventual achievement of self-government and independence. In addition, Spender argued, it was of crucial importance to insist that New Guinea belonged ethnically and geographically to the Australian sub-continent and not to Indonesia.

On the other hand it seems that some of the Dutch concerns had sunk in and Spender conceded that, in view of the forthcoming negotiations with Indonesia, it would be improper for Australia to become openly involved. This would have to wait until after the failure of talks, something of which he seems to have been quite confident. In the meantime Australia would offer the Dutch navy and merchant fleet full cooperation and the use of repairing and bunkering facilities, including those on Manus Island. Moreover, he suggested that informal machinery should be set up to facilitate the discussion of common defence, economic and socio-political questions. Furthermore, a concerted internationally staged public relations exercise should be mounted to propagate the Dutch-Australian stand on West New

Guinea. Rather significantly, feelers already put out by the Dutch for Australian support by the way of UNCI regarding the Ambon question, were countered by the argument that this was an internal Indonesian affair. Only when the American and Belgian members of the commission would be willing to approach the Indonesian government on the Ambon issue would Australia follow suit.⁶²

Dutch sources continued to report about strong indications of Australian armed intervention in case of a Dutch withdrawal from West New Guinea. As an example, the Netherlands ambassador in Manila reported on 26 September 1950, that an Australian military intelligence officer, Second Lieutenant Weaver, had intimated to him that the Australian armed forces wanted to occupy West New Guinea as soon as the Dutch decision to withdraw had become known. The Japanese air raids on Darwin, Broome and Townsville, launched from airfields in Timor and New Guinea, were still fresh in the minds of Australians. Australian military authorities had pressed on Menzies their view that Australian security demanded immediate access to West New Guinea in order to maintain direct connections via Allied territory with American bases in east Asia. This might also make it necessary to put out of action possible enemy air and naval bases (such as in Morotai, Timor, and Surabaya), and to secure oil supplies from North Borneo and Indonesia itself. The Australian government, according to Lieutenant Weaver, was of the opinion that it would be impossible to conclude a military security pact with Indonesia, because of that country's foreign policy of 'active neutrality' toward potential aggressors such as China, Russia and Japan. Australia, although fully aware that an invasion of West New Guinea would cause widespread international condemnation as had happened to South Africa after its occupation of South-West Africa, was still convinced that the demands of national security were so pressing that it had no alternative.⁶³ On 7 November 1950, the Dutch Consul General in Singapore reported that the Australian representative, McIntyre,

had handed a note to the governments of Singapore and the Malayan federation asking for their reaction to an Australian takeover of West New Guinea in case the Dutch decided to leave.⁶⁴ This was followed by a report from Canberra about unnamed Liberal parliamentarians who considered Australian armed intervention unavoidable in the case of an Indonesian takeover and mention was made of a supposed offer to send Australian bombers to Biak on a 'demonstration' flight.⁶⁵

The Dutch ambassador in Manila stressed that it would be profitable to the Dutch cause to impress upon the Jakarta government, by providing clear documentary evidence, that Australia's position regarding New Guinea was irrevocable and went far beyond what was believed in some Indonesian diplomatic circles as to be Spender's exaggerated bluster.⁶⁶ It is doubtful whether Australian pressure at this stage substantially influenced the Dutch decision to stay on in West New Guinea.

Australians were even more adamant about keeping West New Guinea out of Indonesian hands than the Dutch themselves. In fact Canberra was rather worried about a possible Dutch withdrawal from the territory as the Dutch Labor Party in particular was initially only lukewarm about continued Dutch rule. Debates in the Dutch press and parliament were dutifully transmitted by Australian diplomats to Canberra. Initiatives by some Dutch Labor parliamentarians to have West New Guinea transferred to Indonesia caused Australian misgivings.⁶⁷ A conversation between the Australian ambassador in The Hague and Reuchlin, Director-General of Political Affairs in the Dutch Foreign Affairs Department, further increased Australian fear about Dutch intentions. Reuchlin believed that in view of the political and economic chaos and the escalating anti-Dutch mood in Indonesia that the Netherlands should leave its former colony altogether. In fact Dutch business was already looking for investments elsewhere particularly in Africa and many Dutch technicians and other experts, though badly needed in Indonesia, wanted to leave. New Guinea was economically useless to the Dutch, who might

still decide to hang on to it merely for reasons of national morale. The ambassador added that this represented the view of only one section of upper-level Dutch bureaucrats and that by no means were all similarly disposed: ‘Reuchlin also said that he fully realised the importance of the island to Australia. He added – “Speaking personally – Australia really ought to control the Western half as well ...”’⁶⁸

Gradually, Australian dispatches from The Hague started to show a more positive tone, suggesting that nationally a general trend was appearing in favour of the retention of West New Guinea. Furthermore, worthwhile Dutch-Indonesian negotiations were not on the cards and the union was doomed to failure.⁶⁹

The policies of R.G. Casey

The change in the Australian Foreign Affairs portfolio from Spender to Casey introduced a more subtle approach to relations with Indonesia. The Dutch ambassador in Canberra reported that the Minister of Territories, Hasluck, under whose control Papua and New Guinea resorted, was more hawkish on the West New Guinea question than either Casey or Foreign Affairs chief Allan Watt. Unlike Spender, neither Menzies, Casey nor Watt had ever raised with him the possibility of Australian military cooperation. It seemed that Spender had acted without full cabinet approval. The only person who privately had supported Dutch-Australian military cooperation was the Navy Chief of Staff, Sir John Collins, who had always been a great friend and ally of the Netherlands.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Casey’s smoother and more careful diplomatic style had certainly not pervaded his department as a whole as is evident from the blunt remark of Ambassador Hood in Jakarta to Dutch High Commissioner Lamping, that in the case of the Netherlands deciding to transfer West New Guinea: ‘... we will just take it over ourselves ...’⁷¹

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Developments in Dutch politics, and in particular anything touching on the West New Guinea issue, were monitored closely by the Australian mission in The Hague. On 15 July 1952, Ambassador Stirling wrote that the retention of West New Guinea still received majority public support in Holland, but this situation could not be expected to continue indefinitely, unless genuine efforts of international support and encouragement were forthcoming. As Stirling summed up:

I believe we still have a fair chance that the Dutch will remain in New Guinea, at any rate through the next few critical decades, after which we hope the situation in Asia will have stabilised ...⁷²

This hope seems to have been based more on wishful thinking than a real grasp of the highly volatile nature of Indonesian politics at the time. In fact, Casey instructed Stirling to play down Spender's 1950 offer of Australian financial support for West New Guinea as Australia should not be involved officially. In addition budgetary constraints were mentioned.⁷³

The hardening of the Dutch stand on West New Guinea in 1952 also caused The Hague to place more urgency on the need to cultivate Australian support for establishing tangible cooperative arrangements between both parts of the island. A Dutch Foreign Affairs paper of 1953 detected a basic change to have taken place in Australian postwar policy towards the newly independent South-East Asian nations. Australian support of the Netherlands claim on West New Guinea was based on political expediency and contemporary national defence needs caused by political instability and the ever-increasing communist threat in Indonesia. Positive changes in this situation could well alter the view of Australia towards the West New Guinea issue. To prevent such an eventuality Australia and the Netherlands should be drawn more deeply into the development of the island as a whole by close and effective mutual cooperation between both the eastern and western parts. The objective should be to effect a certain administrative integration which would make it much

more difficult for Australia to change later, when circumstances had changed, and to become perhaps more accommodating to Indonesian demands. For a start Ministerial and official visits to the two areas should be encouraged and organised as soon as possible.⁷⁴

Casey also indicated the need for more effective cooperation of this kind, although he did not show the same enthusiasm as the Dutch Foreign Office. He told Ambassador Winkelman that there was a great need to improve sea and air communications especially and suggested that an Australian offer of six Catalinas would be useful. But Casey did not take up Winkelman's point that it certainly would not be desirable for the two areas to develop differently.⁷⁵ Australia remained cautious and insisted that any cooperative ventures should be kept at a low key and with the minimum of publicity. Always lurking at the back of Canberra's mind was the crucial need not to have the already shaky relations with Jakarta deteriorate even further.

The extent of the Australian commitment on cooperation between west and east New Guinea and the principles underlying it were firstly officially set out during the visit of Ministers Luns and Kernkamp (Overseas Territories) to Canberra in July 1953. The Australians restricted their agreement on cooperation to local issues such as quarantine, health, labour and land questions and shied away from any political and defence involvements. Dutch proposals for frequent contact between the respective governors and high officials received only lukewarm support and the demand for the eventual integration of both colonies was dismissed as being too drastic by Casey, who only made rather vague references to cooperation regarding political, economic and social development. The Australian government seemed relieved that the Dutch had not insisted on a formal treaty of support.⁷⁶

Still, on its part the Netherlands delegation considered that a positive outcome had been achieved despite the rather vague wording and carefully crafted contents of the agreement designed

to limit possible fallout from Jakarta. It was the first time that Australia had officially supported the Dutch side, reluctantly and circumspectly crossing the Rubicon about three-quarters of the way. Plimsoll, Assistant Secretary of External Affairs, agreed with Ambassador Lovink's assessment that Australia was trying to ride two horses simultaneously, though adding that Australian support of the Dutch had never wavered.⁷⁷

The fundamental reason behind this subdued and hesitant Australian stand regarding the West New Guinea issue was the hitherto uncommitted position of its major defence partners, namely USA and Britain. Australia was militarily too weak to provide a decisive edge to the Dutch defence in West New Guinea. Hence a great deal of Australian diplomatic activity was directed at getting Washington and London on side. But like the Netherlands also, Australia was only able to elicit vague and lukewarm promises. Casey, in March 1957, told Winkelman, the Dutch ambassador in Canberra, that he had complained to Dulles about the American neutralist stance on the West New Guinea question. He argued that this had encouraged the increasingly powerful Indonesian left to escalate the problem to the point where Australia felt threatened. As to his question as to what America was intending to do Dulles replied:

... that the justice of the Netherlands' and Australian standpoint had never been denied by the American government, but it had taken up a 'tactical' position along the lines of 'lesser evil'. In other words, to avert an even stronger anti-Western atmosphere in Indonesia would occur for the profit of the Communists if America offered open support to the Netherlands and Australia ...⁷⁸

Winkelman commented that, although this brought out little that was new, it was pleasing to note that for the first time an Australian confrontation with Dulles on West New Guinea had been reported to him quickly. He also pointed out that Dulles was introducing a more delicate dimension to the American position of neutrality.

In 1957 the growing communist threat and Sukarno's sabre rattling over West New Guinea caused Australia to strengthen its cooperation with the Dutch in New Guinea. In November a joint statement on administrative cooperation in New Guinea was issued in which existing arrangements were substantially upgraded, and among the mutually agreed principles reference was made to the responsibility of both governments to safeguard the inalienable rights of the indigenous population in accordance with the UN charter. Furthermore, it was stressed that, geographically and ethnically, both parts of the island were closely interrelated and administrative and developmental cooperation would be of benefit to the Papuan population as a whole. In this light the Netherlands and Australia should direct their political and social-economic policies in tune with this existing ethnic affinity on the island as a whole. Both governments were determined to continue their development policies to the point where the indigenous people themselves would be able to decide on their own political future. As a result Dutch and Australian liaison officers were appointed and a special Dutch envoy on New Guinea affairs was stationed in Canberra. In addition to extending and deepening existing programs in agriculture, forestry, and health, particular attention was paid to education. In all these measures the objective was to stress cultural and ethnic common bonds in the island. In Australian reports the call of 'consonant' developments in all fields became a common theme between 1957 and 1960. In Australia the idea of combining west and east New Guinea and the adjacent islands into one nation, a Federation of Melanesia, first mooted by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns, was receiving public support. A more detailed plan was presented in January 1958 by J.R. Kerr, the director of the training school for Australian colonial officers. Casey, although more circumspect had, in December 1957, stated that a single political unit of New Guinea as a whole could be a possibility. He followed this up with a stronger line of support in The Hague, arguing:

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... it is most important that the two administrations should not pursue policies that are in conflict on any basic matter or which would hinder understanding between people in the two halves of the island, if at some future date they should decide, of their own free will, that they want to come together politically. Melanesia and Indonesia are distinct entities ...⁷⁹

The Australian Labor Party showed itself to be even more adamant than the Liberal government on keeping West New Guinea out of Indonesian hands and, in 1958, Evatt revived his earlier idea of bringing the whole of New Guinea under Australian trusteeship.⁸⁰

But by 1958 the ejection of the Dutch from Indonesia and the nationalisation of their economic stake were followed by Sukarno's stridently belligerent calls for the liberation of West Irian. This was fanned further by the communists and other leftist groups, causing the time left for the Dutch and Australians to gradually steer their colonies to independence to evaporate very quickly. Indonesia was heavily arming itself with modern weapons from communist countries and Indonesian firing power would soon surpass that of the Dutch and Australian armed forces combined. In fact, the relative ease by which the central Indonesian armed forces under Nasution had been able to defeat the Sumatran and Sulawesi rebels showed the existence of greater military discipline, as well as tactical and logistical ability, than had been expected. This worried both the Dutch and Australian governments and military leadership, although the popular Australian saying that 'one digger was worth seven of the little yellow bastards' was still having the run of the pubs at the time. The feeling of the ordinary Australians towards Indonesia and anything Asian was far removed from the high sentiment expressed in December 1957 by Casey, who, in the usual 'have your cake and eat it' mode, stated:

It is therefore most important that in Australian statements and actions in the present Indonesian crisis should not give the im-

pression that Australia is motivated by considerations of colour or by some wish to see force applied against a former colonial people ...⁸¹

Surely, even at that time it must have seemed to be a case of self-deception and wishful thinking to believe that educated Indonesians could be duped in that way. In fact whatever goodwill Australia had enjoyed in Indonesia had long since dissipated. To most Indonesians Australia was seen as a bastion of Western imperialism. Australia's policy of trying to satisfy both contenders in the West New Guinea issue was becoming untenable and the time had come for the government to show its true colours especially in regard to the matter of military support for the Dutch in the case of an Indonesian invasion. A few days later, Casey, now prevaricating, ordered the ambassador in Washington, the formidable Sir Percy Spender, to urgently plead with Dulles that the USA could no longer stand aloof on West New Guinea and also to stress that Australia felt exposed to danger.

The Netherlands on its part continued to press Australia for overt military support. Luns told the Australian ambassador, McClure Smith, that the absence of military cooperation between the two countries would have disastrous consequences. Strictly secret technical military planning was now absolutely necessary and the Dutch people should be told that Australian military backup could be counted upon and that a formal agreement was in the pipeline. Apparently McClure Smith did not entirely preclude the possibility of military planning but made clear that a binding agreement was certainly not on the cards. Pointing to the present very weak Dutch military position in New Guinea he argued that a willingness to shore up their defence capability could make it more attractive for Australia to agree to close defence cooperation. The head of the Dutch Foreign Affairs Department, van Houten, contended that as USA and Britain were not expected to change their tune, the Netherlands should concentrate their efforts on Australia, which had shown some

willingness to lend military aid, but had as yet refused to publicly declare its support:

Australia will prefer for the Netherlands to pull the chestnuts out of the fire and will only come to the party when it becomes clear that the Netherlands will no longer be able cope on its own ...⁸²

He pointed out that when, in the case of a large-scale Indonesian attack, Dutch lives were being lost public opinion in the Netherlands would move away from supporting the government's West New Guinea policy if no aid from its Allies materialised. This should be put forcefully to the Australian government, because:

Without a definite commitment by Australia we run the risk not only of becoming involved in war that in the end would prove to be beyond our capacities, but also would markedly raise the risk for us to fall victim to an Anglo-American policy reconciliation with Sukarno ...

But if Australia was fully wedded to a policy of military support, it would be nearly impossible for Washington to maintain its pro-Indonesian position when confronted with a resolute stand by two reliable allies on military aid and the creation of a Melanesian federation.

The Australian government remained unwilling to bite the bullet without American backing. During a cabinet meeting on 3 June 1958, Casey suggested that any agreement for military staff discussions with the Dutch should exclude intelligence exchange and stressed that only the USA possessed the clout to influence the course of Indonesian actions on West New Guinea. Hence, Australia had to keep on pressing the Americans at the highest level about the dangers of Indonesian aggression. It was also noted that after the expulsion of Dutch economic interests from Indonesia it could be expected that the Netherlands intention to hang on to West New Guinea had become even more determined.⁸³

The Australian government agreed with the Dutch assessment that an Indonesian invasion of West New Guinea was a distinct possibility. But military cooperation with the Dutch was complicated by the fact that Australian planning and military capacity was dependent on its main ally, the USA, which had to be consulted by Australia before deciding to throw in its lot with the Dutch. It was a step that Canberra did not dare to take on its own. Instead it was decided to pressure Washington again to try to restrain Indonesia. In addition, Australia was to mount an international effort to have Indonesian aggression condemned and to elicit the widest possible support for the protection of Papuan rights. It was thought that this would kindle support in parts of the Third World such as the Philippines and Thailand. The possibility of a future union of both parts of the island into a Melanesian federation should be publicised, although it would be emphasised that such a venture would be left solely to the initiatives of the Papuan people themselves.⁸⁴

Dulles responded in the same reassuring vein to Australian concerns as he had done to Luns. Of interest in this regard is an Australian report of early June from Washington claiming that, in recent meetings, Dulles in effect had promised the Dutch help in case of an Indonesian attack.⁸⁵

Australia continued to stall and in July 1958, Ambassador Lovink, after a meeting with Casey, reported to Luns that in his view Australia would not come immediately to the rescue in the case of an Indonesian invasion, although it would continue to try to convince America that such an attack should be seen as a *casus belli* under the ANZUS pact. The chances of success were rated very poorly by Lovink.⁸⁶

The position of the Australian defence establishment

At this stage the possibility of Australian military involvement could still not be discarded entirely and certainly some sections of the Australian defence forces made clear their willingness to

cooperate with the Dutch. The Netherlands navy attaché, Captain van Straaten, reported on an informal discussion with Rear-Admiral Gatacre, who on his own volition had emphasised the great necessity for mutual defence cooperation. He wanted the existing deadlock to be broken, and to start the ball rolling suggested an investigation into the possibility of the Dutch Seahawks using HMAS *Melbourne* and the Australian Sea Venoms landing on the Dutch aircraft carrier *Karel Doorman*. Other possibilities for collaboration mentioned were for a modern Dutch destroyer to escort the *Melbourne*, the devising of mutual oil supply tactics at sea, the question of supplying jet fuel, exchanging information about harbours, and logistical data. All this could be intensified later and he even envisaged the *Karel Doorman* at anchor in Jervis Bay and made it clear to van Straaten that the whole question was being seriously studied by the Australian armed services. But in the end Gatacre underlined that to organise anything beyond strategic planning depended on the fiat of 'big brother'; the USA.⁸⁷

In fact various studies were being undertaken by the Australian Department of Defence to assess the military situation in Indonesia, concentrating on such questions as the Indonesian capacity to stage a successful invasion of West New Guinea and what strategic planning and military buildup Australia would need in order to counter and defeat this aggression. In June 1958 the Defence Committee concluded that in the short term Indonesia would be unable to sustain protracted military operations as it lacked the necessary shipping and other logistical backup. Indonesia had a small-vessel navy that was considered inefficient by Western standards. Still, as had been proved in the anti-rebel operations in Sumatra and Sulawesi, it was able to land forces of brigade strength when unopposed. It was estimated that the army would, by the end of 1960, have at its disposal nine effective battalions at the most, estimated at 7200 men in total. The Indonesian airforce was still almost solely equipped with obsolete aircraft. The new jet planes to be provided by the commu-

nist bloc would still take another two years to become fully operational. But fighter-supported bombers and transport planes would be able to cover large parts of West New Guinea and a smaller area of north Australia.

In this Australian defence prognosis a number of other factors were singled out that could reduce the fighting capabilities of the Indonesian armed forces. One of these was the scenario of a communist takeover causing a purge of the armed forces bringing in its wake a period of instability and a diminished offensive capability. On the other hand a defeat of the communists would produce the opposite effect. Another limiting factor was that Indonesia's own arms industry was too small to supply its own war requirements. Most of the armaments had to be procured from overseas, a hazardous operation in view of the Indonesian geographical location. Straddling the main South-East Asian sea lanes made Indonesia susceptible to maritime blockade, which the Indonesian navy was too weak to lift.⁸⁸ It was thought unlikely that Indonesia, by the end of 1960, would be able to muster sufficient military strength to overrun the whole of West New Guinea. Admittedly, the Indonesians would have the capability to mount successful sea and air landings at battalion strength on the coast between Sorong and Merauke. But it was expected that the Dutch would be able to force their withdrawal fairly quickly. In the case of an invasion at brigade level the Dutch would be given enough warning to allow them to have reinforcements flown in. It was expected, however, that in view of its great logistics problems Indonesia would not attempt such hazardous major amphibious operations. Another possible scenario envisaged was that Indonesia, after having succeeded in securing a bridgehead in West New Guinea, would then call on the UN for a cease-fire that would enable the Indonesian troops to stay put. Such an eventuality would of course be detrimental to the Dutch position. There was also always the possibility that the Dutch, left in the lurch by the Allies in the face of ever-increasing Indonesian military pressure, would decide to leave.⁸⁹

The question of possible Australian military involvement had apparently been studied in some depth. The chief of staff's committee report of July 1958 assumed that Australian operations would basically be limited to West New Guinea, although adjacent targets in Indonesia proper would also be liable to attack. These included ports, airfields, shipping and other logistical facilities. Reconnaissance operations would also have to be undertaken. There was no danger of nuclear attack, although the Indonesian forces were being bolstered by extensive aid from the communist bloc. On this basis the chief of staff laid down firstly that consultation, staff planning and exchange of intelligence were absolutely crucial. Secondly, it would be essential for action to be prompt and effective as only a few weeks were available to defeat the Indonesian forces and to prevent UN interference. Australian involvement without American and British help would not be able to prevent an Indonesian brigade from establishing a coastal stronghold, although in time a Dutch-Australian force would be able to stop most further supplies reaching the invading army. This situation could change in the enemy's favour in line with the expected growth in Indonesian air power. Still, on the basis of the existing respective armed strength a Dutch-Australian force would be able to defeat an Indonesian attack. It had to be recognised that Australia's own offensive capacity was limited, as defence planning had been based on the assumption of combined operations with American and British forces. Hence Australia was weak in the field of photographic and tactical reconnaissance, ground and shipping attack aircraft, supply vessels, amphibious craft, and air defence. The report concluded that in the case where the Dutch were unable or unwilling to repulse the Indonesians and in particular the important defence installations on Biak were lost, an Australian operation would become unfeasible.⁹⁰

At the time Australia was able to contribute the aircraft carrier *Melbourne* with ten Sea Venoms and ten Gannets together with five destroyers, three frigates, two sloops, and two mine-

sweepers. An army brigade with one battalion and the Special Air Service Company were ready to be dispatched within forty-eight hours and the other units following within fourteen to twenty-one days. Twenty-four Canberra bombers, seven Neptunes, seven Lincolns, thirty-two Sabre fighters, eight Hercules and eight Dakotas were also available.⁹¹ The Dutch forces in West New Guinea could be reinforced by an aircraft carrier, two modern light cruisers, modern destroyers and frigates, submarines, front line fighters and bombers, and more Marines and army units. Combined with the Australians this would indeed have constituted a formidable fighting machine able to out-gun any Indonesian invasion force. But this meant that the Netherlands would have been forced to reduce its NATO commitment to a skeleton.

For their part, however, the Dutch military authorities in West New Guinea were not interested in intelligence cooperation, dismissing Australian agents as unreliable. Nor were they impressed by the size of the Australian defence establishment: 3500 men in Australia, 800 in Malaya, and eighty Sabres that would be no match for the Migs being supplied to Indonesia.⁹²

In any case the Australian government was very divided on the military aid question and the problem was compounded by mixed signals from Washington such as Dulles repeating to Australian Ambassador Beale the remark made to Luns during the NATO conference in Copenhagen in May, to the effect that 'sometimes I wish the Indonesians would attack Dutch New Guinea because then we could put an end to the present regime'.⁹³

Perhaps this was a lamentation on the blow suffered by America through its unfortunate involvement in the failed Sumatran and Sulawesi rebellions. In reality Washington continued to refuse to take sides in the West New Guinea question and both Dutch and Australian diplomatic pressure on the American government proved fruitless.

In the Australian cabinet a number of Ministers emphasised that Australian public opinion would be outraged if the Indone-

sians were allowed to take over West New Guinea with impunity. Others again argued that Australian support of the Dutch would cause widespread hostility in South-East Asia. Some objected to merely following the American lead as being too negative and desired Canberra should frankly put to Washington the view that Australia felt fully obliged to support the Dutch in the case of an Indonesian attack.⁹⁴

It was recognised, though, that the Americans would not change their stand and that they considered Dutch New Guinea to be little more than a nuisance and that a strong anti-colonial feeling existed in the State Department. In contrast there was considerable evidence that the USA would abandon its neutral stance and side with Indonesia as it was unwilling to put its interests in South-East Asia in jeopardy and, as during the Suez crisis, would likely desert its allies. On the other hand Australia did not want the Dutch to leave West New Guinea and so it should render support as much as was politically feasible, but any Australian plans for a military engagement should be discarded. The Dutch should not be told this bluntly, but they should be kept in the dark as long as possible. Australia realised that, as a small nation dependent for its security on the goodwill of the USA, it had very little leeway in pursuing its own foreign imperatives and in the final analysis would be forced to conform with Washington's dictates.⁹⁵

In December 1958 the Australian joint intelligence committee revised its earlier estimates of Indonesian offensive capacity, and the date for a possible invasion was brought forward. It pointed out that the large spending spree on armaments, including heavy weapons, clearly surpassed the requirements of internal security and pointed to offensive uses in the future. Despite the lack of hard intelligence evidence pointing to an imminent attack the report concluded that it would be unwise to discard the possibility that the Indonesians were planning an attack as early as March 1959 concurrently with a move in the UN. The Indonesian assault was expected to be in the form of commando

and paratroop infiltrations at battalion strength, while large-scale landings seemed less likely.⁹⁶

Australia in retreat

It was in January 1959 that Australia officially retreated from the Rubicon when Prime Minister Menzies stressed to Ambassador Lovink that it would be impossible for Australia to ally itself militarily with the Netherlands without the cooperation of the USA and Britain. All Australia could do was to keep on impressing on the Americans the great importance of New Guinea for Australian security. Lovink bluntly replied that mere vague promises would no longer do and he feared that the moment would arrive at which an isolated Netherlands would no longer be willing for the Sword of Damocles to fall on it in the defence of the vital interests of an uncommitted outsider. Hence the Netherlands, bereft of allied military backup, would be forced against its will to begin talks with the Indonesians. Furthermore, he pointed out that the invitation to Dr Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, for a formal visit to Australia surely had done little to bolster Dutch confidence in Australian promises. Menzies retorted that Subandrio's visit had to be seen as part of a diplomatic jousting match. Lovink remained unconvinced and reported to The Hague that as matters stood no Australian military help could be expected.⁹⁷

Subandrio must have been pleased to see that the initially bellicose Australian stand on West New Guinea in the early 1950s had now been whittled down to a mere whisper as is clear from the following official statement made during the visit: 'The fact is, that on the question of sovereignty Australia does support the Dutch. Australia is neutral on the matter of whether negotiations are to be held ...'⁹⁸

Menzies informed Lovink that Subandrio had been told that Australia no longer opposed a change in the sovereignty of West New Guinea provided this was achieved by negotiations. This

was seen by Lovink as a sell-out.⁹⁹

The Dutch government was acutely aware of the difficulties Australia was facing in trying to maintain at least a working relationship with its nearest neighbour, Indonesia, and at the same time safeguarding its national security. In fact a Dutch Foreign Affairs background paper for the use of Prime Minister Drees during the visit of Prime Minister Menzies to The Hague in June 1959 pointed out that what for the Netherlands was the Far East for Australia was the 'near north'. The Netherlands' national existence was not endangered, while Australia's security was directly threatened. It argued that the key to successfully outflanking Indonesia's plans lay in the harmonisation of rapid political indigenous development in the Dutch and Australian controlled parts of New Guinea. Australian cooperation at the local level had improved a great deal and the Secretary of the Department of Territories, Lambert, had shown keen interest in the Dutch proposals for accelerating political development. His Minister, Hasluck, though would try to torpedo this initiative. Hasluck held antiquated views on colonial policy, believing that Australia would still be given thirty or forty years in which to gradually lead Papua and New Guinea towards self-government. It was suggested that Drees should direct Menzies' attention to the virulent anti-colonial movements in Africa, a version of which would soon engulf New Guinea if speedy indigenous political reforms were not taken in hand. The only means to reinforce the Dutch-Australian position in the island was to speed up the process of establishing an independent sovereign Papuan nation. It was a policy that would surely be supported by the UN and the Third World generally and so would seriously weaken the Indonesian claim.¹⁰⁰

In order to keep the Dutch on side the Australian cabinet had to take a hard look at the available options. In February 1960, in a long submission, Casey argued that it was imperative for the cabinet to clearly decide on the policy to be followed on West New Guinea and to consider the possible implications of this for

Australian New Guinea. He argued that although the strategic importance of Indonesia was much greater to Australia and the USA than West New Guinea, its loss on its own would not assure a non-communist Indonesia. A communist takeover in Indonesia was an internal threat not an external one. Moreover, there was no evidence that the West Irian issue had played a decisive role in the surge of communist power in Indonesia, although admittedly an Australian change of policy in favour of an Indonesian takeover might result in a momentary improvement of relations. But obviously worried about further possible neo-imperialist ventures by a clearly aggressive Indonesia he asked how long this state of bliss might last, and he pointed to the possible Indonesian demand for the 'liberation' of Papua and New Guinea, Portuguese Timor, and the British Borneo territories. An Indonesian takeover of Dutch New Guinea would mean that the Australian territories might be bordered by a communist state, and apart from this possibility it would be preferable, for Australian strategic defence and commercial reasons, to avoid an Asian country gaining direct access and political influence in the Melanesian world.

Casey outlined the same train of thought pushed by Spender in 1950 and he strongly pressed the cabinet to take a clear decision on what Australia really wanted to happen in New Guinea in the immediate future. He emphasised that a continued Dutch presence in West New Guinea provided a buffer against further Indonesian aggression eastwards, and moves for unifying both parts of the island could be of benefit to the security of Australia and elevating it as the major political and economic power in the South Pacific. Hence the Dutch should be encouraged as much as possible to hold on to West New Guinea without Australia entering into a military arrangement. At the same time everything possible should be done to minimise the damage to relations with Indonesia. Thus, in the end, recourse was taken to a policy of fence-sitting that made it impossible to satisfy either side. In essence Casey admitted this when stressing that Australia

was hamstrung as long as the USA and Britain kept on refusing to divulge more precisely their responses to an Indonesian invasion. Hence, to agree to the repeated Dutch requests for military staff, talks would be useless and Australia could only continue by barraging Washington and London to provide an effective military response.

Turning to the question of Papuan unification Casey, though supporting it in principle, remained circumspect and kept insisting that a much longer time span than the Dutch had in mind would be needed to effect an orderly transfer of power to the Papuan people. He still suggested that cabinet should come to a decision in principle and devise a framework within which the voluntary political association of west and east New Guinea could be achieved. A new formal, public, arrangement should be avoided and cooperation with the Dutch should continue on the basis of the 1957 agreement. Fundamental changes in terms of Papuan political development remained a highly sensitive question in terms of relations with Indonesia and therefore should be dealt with at government level and in great secrecy. Indonesia would soon realise that the new measures were directed at eventual political fusion and were meant to bring pressure on the UN. This would not cause grave difficulties provided that Australia, in public announcements, put the emphasis on eliminating obstacles to the free exercise of the right of self-determination and made positive efforts to promote integration.¹⁰¹

It is hard to imagine that anybody in cabinet would have believed that the Indonesians and the Third World would have been taken in by this kind of diplomatic doubletalk. Still, Casey went to ludicrous lengths in this process by decreeing that all replies to Dutch requests and proposals should be made orally with no written evidence to be left behind. The fear of matters offensive to Indonesian sensitivities being leaked seems to have reached pathological proportions, and truly the roaring Australian lion of the early 1950s seems to have been transformed into a paper tiger by the end of the decade.

In fact, little happened to Casey's grand design. During subsequent Dutch-Australian meetings Dutch demands for synchronising the education, political emancipation and the inclusion of indigenous representatives in deliberations were refused. The rejection of these crucial elements in the Dutch development strategy could only reinforce The Hague's growing realisation that the Australian government's involvement was only half-hearted.

According to a report from the Dutch embassy in Canberra,¹⁰² Prime Minister Menzies, observing the rapid and unruly decolonisation taking place in Africa, had come to the conclusion that Australia would have to accelerate the political emancipation process in Papua and New Guinea. This call for a change in direction came too late. Not only because the parliament remained divided and Menzies was unable to have his ideas accepted, but also, and more crucial, was the advent of the Kennedy administration in the USA which took away both the Dutch and Australian initiative in the West New Guinea question. The only chance to obtain USA and UN approval would have been a strong united Dutch-Australian front setting out to defend the right of Papuan self-determination and show serious efforts to create a Melanesian federation. But as it turned out, in Canberra, national interests were allowed to run roughshod over the human rights of the Papuans of West New Guinea. Concerns of Realpolitik pushed aside the Rights of Man perhaps setting a precedent for a policy adopted by Australia twenty-five years later in the case of East Timor.

The demise – 1960-1962

In 1960 the West Irian question was reaching boiling point. Indonesia broke off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands, the armed buildup continued, armed infiltrations into West New Guinea were increasing, and a full invasion seemed imminent. The nationalisation of the Dutch business sector apparently had not satisfied the ever-growing nationalist fervour and clearly

Indonesia was preparing to take West New Guinea by force. The Netherlands was becoming acutely worried particularly as Allied military support was by no means sure. It was decided in The Hague to strengthen the existing thin defences in West New Guinea and to engage in some sabre-rattling of their own by sending the aircraft carrier *Karel Doorman* and two destroyers for a visit.

On the other hand the Netherlands realised that it stood virtually alone internationally and was being seen, together with Portugal, as the last remaining old-style, diehard colonialist country, and this isolation forced it to take a policy change. This involved a two-pronged attack: firstly an attempt to have West New Guinea placed under a UN trusteeship without Indonesian involvement, and secondly, an acceleration of political development consisting of more education and direct Papuan participation in government by the setting-up of more councils crowned by the opening of a national representative council.

The fall in 1959 of the second Drees government, which until the end had stubbornly stuck to its guns, made it somewhat easier for the new prime minister, de Quay, to try another tack. De Quay had for some time been considering a form of internationalisation, that is the coopting of a number of neutral nations to the task of the socio-economic development of West New Guinea. This offered the possibility of getting the Netherlands off the hook without having to bow to Indonesian demands. He revealed this train of thought to some Reuter correspondents on 5 September 1960, thereby causing a furore in the national press and an instant rejoinder by Foreign Minister Luns, on the point of departure to New York, strenuously denying that the government had changed its West New Guinea policy.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the prime minister put the question up for discussion to cabinet and it was probably not coincidental that de Quay decided on this move with Luns being out of the country. Clearly cabinet solidarity on the West New Guinea issue had been seriously eroded. For example, the Minister for Defence, Visser,

argued that the Netherlands would probably not be given the time to reach its goal of developing the territory economically and socially:

The Netherlands has landed itself in such an isolated position as to force the government to investigate other ways and possibilities. The question has already been internationalised through the constant questions on New Guinea in the UN ... Sticking to the condition 'unless Indonesia will not get its way' indicates too much unwillingness to achieve a solution. The speaker would be willing to go very far to find a solution ...¹⁰⁴

Finance Minister Zijlstra argued that the interests of the Papuans should not be allowed to be pushed through to the great detriment of the Dutch people. Prime Minister de Quay stressed that merely to acquiesce in a position holding that no solution was possible was not the correct one under the present circumstances. If the government remained inactive it would run the risk of being superseded by events outside its control.¹⁰⁵ Luns had also moved closer to de Quay's position, but he was told by Secretary-General Hammarskjöld that a UN trusteeship for West New Guinea would be unattainable in the present political configuration in the assembly and the security council.¹⁰⁶

West New Guinea was again propelled to the fore of international attention in a speech by Sukarno at the Fourteenth UN Assembly meeting on 30 September in which he likened the territory to a colonial sword poised at the heart of Indonesia. He charged that the Netherlands had failed to act according to the laws of history, but that Indonesia was absolutely committed to reach its objective by its own methods.¹⁰⁷

In reply, Luns argued that the Netherlands was seriously engaged in developing the area economically and to lead the Papuan people to self-government and independence, and invited the UN to send a fact-finding mission to judge Dutch claims. He further challenged Indonesia to declare openly that it was not harbouring plans for military aggression. In a bellicose vein Subandrio

retorted that Indonesia could not be expected to remain passive when confronted with hostile Dutch activities.¹⁰⁸

On 5 April 1960, the Dutch government unfolded in parliament the outline of a ten-year development plan that included bringing the whole of the colony under effective Dutch administrative control. This plan envisaged the expansion of education, the systematic inclusion of Papuans in government by establishing local and regional councils, stimulation of private enterprise in economic development and the creation of employment opportunities, and finally a scheme of transmigration of Papuans to areas short of labour.

A move designed to catch international attention even further was the announcement of the institution of a national New Guinea Council, composed of a Papuan majority. The council was seen as an important training device for democracy and it was meant to be much more than merely a government decision-stamping body and as such was endowed with some parliamentary powers, such as the right of petition and interpellation, to advise on legislation and regulations, the drafting of ordinances including the right of amendment, and participation in budget discussions.¹⁰⁹

The Kennedy intervention

The New Guinea Council proposal was meant to act as an emphatic reminder to Indonesia that the Netherlands was very serious in creating an independent Papuan nation. By the time that this proto-parliament was inaugurated on 5 April 1961, the chances for a free Papuan nation being born had actually become exceedingly slim, owing mainly to the policy of the USA which, since the coming to power of Kennedy, had begun to veer in its support towards Indonesia. The basis for this had actually been laid during the last months of the Eisenhower administration when Dulles's successor, Herter, had taken heed of the State Department's advice that the American policy of 'neutrality' in

the West New Guinea question was no longer feasible, because Indonesia was being propelled ever more closely into the orbit of the PKI and the Soviet bloc. To solve the problem, Herter advocated placing West New Guinea under a UN trusteeship.¹¹⁰

Initially the Kennedy administration had supported the idea of a trusteeship, but from the beginning had adopted a much tougher stand towards the Netherlands than previously had been the case. Foreign secretary Dean Rusk, in a memorandum to Kennedy on 10 April 1961, stressed that the West New Guinea issue had to be solved quickly, meaning that the Netherlands should be forced to retreat by being denied American military aid in the case of an Indonesian invasion.¹¹¹

In fact a few days earlier Washington had already indicated its position by declining the invitation to attend the official inauguration of the New Guinea Council in Hollandia. In March, Ambassador van Roijen had already warned that an American policy change on West New Guinea was in the wind and Luns was enraged when told about the American decision to give Hollandia a wide berth.

Ambassador Howard Jones, early in 1961, had warned Washington about an imminent Indonesian attack and advised that the problem could only be solved by the USA ensuring a speedy Indonesian takeover. He emphasised that the powerful Eurocentric wing in the State Department should not only be made to see the inevitability of an Indonesian victory but also that the USA should be allowed to take some of the credit for this.¹¹² Jones's machinations received a considerable boost by the coming to power of Kennedy, who was widely perceived as being more sympathetic to Third World problems than previous presidents. Sukarno told Jones that Indonesia expected great things from Kennedy, who in fact soon obliged. The exhortations of Jones were now being given more attention in Washington than previously, because a change had taken place in the power configuration in the inner sanctum of advisers around the president. Hitherto, foreign affairs had been the prerogative of the State

Department, although its power had been impinged upon by other agencies such as the National Security Council (NSC), the CIA, and the Pentagon. The extent of this shift of influence had, however, been curbed as much as possible by dominating figures such as Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles. President Kennedy, in contrast, started off by diffusing the State Department's power and transferred more responsibility for foreign affairs to the NSC. He also surrounded himself with a coterie of young intellectuals such as his personal adviser Theodore Sorensen, and NSC members including McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow, Robert Komes and Robert Johnson, the last two being especially involved in Indonesian affairs, including the West New Guinea issue. This so-called Harvard 'mafia', most of the group being graduates of the president's alma mater, formed an iconoclastic, barnstorming think-tank to act as a counterweight to the more sedate and unwieldy State Department, now led by Dean Rusk and George McGhee.

Kennedy endorsed the crucial importance of the Third World in the gigantic battle against communism. In South-East Asia it was Vietnam that was seen as one of the most fragile links, a domino on the brink of falling over, setting a similar process in motion in neighbouring Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia, and finally reaching Indonesia, a nation reeling on the abyss of economic collapse in the wake of which the fortunes of the PKI could only prosper. As in South America, the dictatorial regime of the mercurial Sukarno had to be humoured, and the anti-communist groups in the armed forces had to be supported. The Americans put their hopes especially on the staunchly anti-communist General Nasution, who was considered to be the most serious contender for power after the expected demise of a very ill Sukarno. Having to choose between the two evils of communism and military dictatorship the Americans opted for the latter. This made the crusade of saving South-East Asia from the anti-Christ and safeguarding the values of a free and democratic world sound rather hollow. In this context of course West New Guinea had

to be surrendered to Indonesia, whether the indigenous people wanted this or not. In Washington the human right of self-determination of Papuans ended up in the wastepaper basket.

Kennedy's White House staff viewed a trusteeship for West New Guinea solely as a device for the Dutch to save face before handing over the territory to Indonesia.¹¹³

Luns fights on

During a visit to Washington, Luns remained unmoved by American plans and only agreed to a trusteeship providing the Netherlands were given the leading role. On this occasion also Luns's notorious propensity to tell jokes apparently lived up to its reputation. One of his offerings was about Indonesian infiltrators: '... they were simply eaten by the natives, but not on Fridays when they only eat fishermen.' This humour, though, did not work to soften the American view of Luns as a stubborn, die-hard character. Nor did it weaken their resolve to make it crystal clear that for the Netherlands the game was over and that USA military support was out of the question.¹¹⁴

Sukarno's state visit at the end of April 1961 turned into an American crawling charade to provide for the desires both political and carnal of the 'Great Leader of the Indonesian Revolution'. President Kennedy called him the George Washington of Indonesia, surely causing the first American president to turn in his grave, and presented Sukarno with a \$900,000 helicopter similar to his own. In addition, a \$100 million economic aid package was promised. In return, Sukarno indicated his agreement with the proposal for a short interim UN trusteeship to be followed by an Indonesian takeover and promised to put the PKI on the lash.¹¹⁵ Apparently Dean Rusk was happy to see the back of Sukarno, being appalled by his insatiable demands for call girls and his highly indiscreet behaviour.¹¹⁶

It seemed that Luns could not or did not want to realise that American policy regarding West New Guinea had undergone

fundamental change, and he kept on believing that the Dulles promises of military help were still in force. Reports to cabinet and parliament about his negotiations in Washington were coloured by this belief. Officials at the Dutch embassy in Washington had been warned by State Department sources that Luns's impressions of American policy on West New Guinea were plainly wrong.¹¹⁷

Luns, however, continued to act in his own stubborn manner, and in a speech in parliament in May 1961 declared that the government would accept a transfer of West New Guinea to the UN providing that the principle of self-determination would be upheld.¹¹⁸ This was followed up with more detailed proposals, the so-called Luns Plan, consisting of three main propositions:

1. Sovereignty had be transferred to the indigenous Papuan people;
2. For the time being the task of day-to-day government administration was to be entrusted to the UN;
3. The UN authority was to continue to educate and guide the Papuan people towards political self-determination.¹¹⁹

The Luns Plan showed a fundamental change in Dutch policy in that, for the first time, there was a willingness to part with its insistence on sovereignty over West New Guinea, although emphatically not to Indonesia. The plan earned wide support in parliament where the old diehard factions had finally been forced to realise that, in view of the Indonesian military threat, existing policy was no longer feasible. The rightist ARP, which was closely connected with the Dutch Reformed Church and in the past one of the most influential pro-colonial forces in Dutch politics, performed a complete about-turn and criticised the government for not going far enough in advocating direct negotiations with the Indonesian government. Perhaps this was a belated reaction to the Synod appeal of 1956.¹²⁰ More likely it was due to an ARP politician, Biesheuvel, who had his eyes opened

during a sojourn in Washington when told by Ambassador van Roijen and State Department officials about the real position of the USA regarding Indonesia and West New Guinea. This proved to be remarkably different from the assurances propagated by Luns in the Netherlands.¹²¹

During a cabinet session on 21 July 1961, Luns seemed not entirely confident of the American support for his plan. Having pointed out that the American government recognised the primacy of the right of self-determination and did not consider the Dutch policy on West New Guinea as opposing its South-East Asian and Indonesian policy, he still warned that American support could not be expected under all circumstances.¹²² Luns's assertion that his plan was actually based on the secret Dutch-American talks during the summer seems to have been exaggerated. In fact, Washington held great doubts about the Dutch proposals, which in essence were designed to keep Indonesia out of West New Guinea. This ran completely counter to American plans to use the opportunity created by this fundamental change in the Netherlands' political position to facilitate Indonesia's takeover of West New Guinea.

Jakarta's negative reaction to an American suggestion for a UN commission and a UN investigation, as proposed by the Dutch, confounded the State Department. Rusk tried to temporise by attempting not to upset either party. This inaction led to more intense discussions among the rival factions in the State Department and within the presidential staff on the question of what policy to follow. American representatives in NATO advocated open USA support for the Netherlands, a solid post-war ally and a country with a long history of ties of friendship. In Washington early in October, Luns referred rather sarcastically to America's duality: one voice talking about support for the Netherlands and another one simultaneously cajoling it in agreeing to hand over West New Guinea to Indonesia.¹²³ Adlai Stevenson, American Ambassador to the UN, considered the Dutch plan as reasonable because it allowed, although indirectly,

an Indonesian takeover without a Dutch loss of face. Similarly, Howard Jones was in raptures about the clause regarding Papuan self-determination to be enacted later by a plebiscite with an inbuilt pro-Indonesian result.¹²⁴ The Americans appreciated the Luns Plan though plainly ignored its real intentions that were to keep the territory out of Indonesian hands.

It was under these inauspicious circumstances that, in September 1961, the Luns Plan was presented to the UN General Assembly. The Americans in the end decided not to support the Dutch proposal mainly because it tried to bypass the Indonesians altogether. It was this aspect of the Dutch plan that incensed Subandrio who, in a very fiery speech, retorted that Indonesia would only be willing to allow Papuans a say on the extent of autonomy within the Indonesian state. Washington advocated bilateral talks to which Luns finally agreed on the condition that these were to be secret and at a venue of his choosing. This meeting, between Luns and Dutch UN delegate Schurman on the one side, and Mohammad Yamin and Indonesian Ambassador Zain on the other, utterly failed. Breaking the secrecy condition Indonesian newspapers reported that Luns had dominated the meeting laying down impossible demands while the Indonesians were unable to get a word in. Indonesian complaints of not having previously been informed of the Luns Plan, were put aside by Luns with the retort that this was their own fault as Indonesia had broken diplomatic relations meaning that now Indonesia meant to the Netherlands even less than Outer Mongolia. It was a remark not exactly meant to smooth Indonesian ruffled feathers.¹²⁵ It seems that Luns intended the talks to fail and he hinted at this in his report to cabinet on 27 October 1961 when he stressed that Indonesia had put the sovereignty of West New Guinea as a pre-condition.¹²⁶

When it became clear that Indonesia could muster forty-one votes in the UN assembly, consisting of the communist nations, the Islamic bloc, and other Asian and African countries, the Luns Plan was doomed to failure. The situation was further compli-

cated by the submission of two other motions. The first was by India designed to strengthen the Indonesian claim. The Indians were motivated by considerations deriving from their planned armed invasion of Portuguese Goa that later occurred on 17 December. This was the main reason for Nehru's support for Indonesia who hitherto had always showed his distaste and contempt of Sukarno's antics.

The Brazzaville proposal

The second submission hailed from the Brazzaville group of African nations, former French colonies that had been granted independence by President de Gaulle on the basis of the principle of self-determination and with the choice of remaining in the French Union. During a meeting at Tananarive in September the group had supported the right of the Papuans to self-determination. The two Papuan members of the Dutch delegation, Nicolaas Jouwe and Herman Womsiwor, had been actively involved in the construction of the Brazzaville resolution, which laid down that Indonesian-Dutch negotiations without any preconditions should take place as soon as possible. It was urged that the right of self-determination of the Papuan people should not be prejudiced and the UN Secretary-General's good offices should be sought. If by 1 March 1962 no result had been achieved a five-member UN commission should be appointed to investigate the possibility of establishing an interim international authority.¹²⁷

The Brazzaville concept contained sufficient elements of the Luns Plan for the Netherlands government, prodded by the USA, to signify its agreement. Washington itself also supported the Brazzaville plan, which gained fifty-three votes for and forty-one against, and nine abstentions. This result still remained below the three-quarters majority needed for the motion to be carried. A subsequent Indian resolution gained forty-one for and forty against with twenty-one abstentions, a result less favourable to Indonesia than in 1957. It showed that the whole of the world

had not closed its eyes to the plight of the Papuans, although this provided cold comfort to the Netherlands, now being forced to find a solution outside the UN.

In fact the demise of the Brazzaville resolution caused the Netherlands position to weaken considerably, particularly in the USA. The Asia-orientated group in the State Department had been reinforced at the end of November 1961 by the appointment of W. Averell Harriman as Under-Secretary for East Asia, who together with the White House 'mafia' advised President Kennedy to push the Dutch towards direct negotiations with Indonesia. Robert Komes stressed that after the failure to reach a solution through the UN it was essential for the USA to opt for a pro-Indonesian position, because it seemed inevitable that West New Guinea would end up in Indonesian hands. This shift in policy should be made immediately so as to leave the USA the opportunity to ingratiate itself with Sukarno. Another presidential advisor, Robert Johnson, agreed with the assessment that Indonesian control was a certainty, adding that this was also the view of rationally thinking Dutchmen including the Dutch ambassador in Washington, van Roijen.¹²⁸ President Kennedy took this advice and instructed Howard Jones to explain to Sukarno that during the UN debate the USA had actually tried to find a method by which Indonesia would be able to obtain most of its objectives.¹²⁹

The Netherlands abandoned

In Washington the die had been cast and the Netherlands had to be persuaded or, if necessary, forced to follow the American line. In The Hague those in the cabinet were in a quandary not knowing how to proceed; their minds were made up by President Kennedy. The State Department stated blandly that the New Guinea question had to be put to rest immediately. To Robert Johnson the Papuan right of self-determination paled into insignificance compared to the disaster of a possible communist take-

over in Indonesia and it should have been made absolutely clear to the Dutch that the USA was siding with Indonesia.¹³⁰

Continuing war-like utterances by Sukarno, and reports of a further build-up of Indonesia's invasion forces caused a great deal of anxiety in the Netherlands. During an interview with Harriman it became patently clear to van Roijen that in the case of an Indonesian attack the Dutch would be on their own. Harriman stressed that the USA would follow an active role on the diplomatic front trying to solve the New Guinea problem and strongly pushed for bilateral negotiations without preconditions.¹³¹ Other State Department officials also tried to convey to van Roijen that owing to the ominous military situation which, according to expert advice could result in an invasion within six months, the Netherlands' chances of avoiding a bloody conflict were diminishing by the day.¹³²

The Americans responded to van Roijen's questions about military protection only in the usual vague way and pushed the matter of negotiations, but could see the sense of the Dutch proposal for a third party to attend such talks, as this would tend to keep negotiators in a reasonable frame of mind. Van Roijen replied that so far only the Netherlands had been prepared to make concessions and that it was high time for Indonesia to shift from its obdurate stand and follow suit, and he added that the Netherlands, despite its moral victory at the UN, was still willing to continue to seek a basis for negotiations.¹³³

In a dispatch of 20 December 1961, van Roijen clearly stated that in his view American military support in West New Guinea was now out of the question:

As I have reported previously the Kennedy administration is bent on getting rid of the problem. The events in Goa and the risk of an Indonesian military adventure have led the State to the conclusion that a solution must be found now ...

Unwilling to endanger the Dutch position regarding sovereignty and the question of Papuan human rights the Americans

believed they had found the solution in a procedural approach by which both parties would agree to waive the initial demand for no preconditions. The presence of a third party was considered necessary to ensure fair reporting of views and standpoints. According to van Roijen the State Department believed that under these conditions an agreement was conceivable in respect to the fundamental question of an interim administration and a plebiscite. The impression was that Indonesia would not insist on setting up its own administration but would agree to a structure supervised and administered by the UN. Indonesia only wanted access to the territory to redress Dutch influence, a point that already had been agreed upon under the Brazzaville scheme. In a final, crucially important observation, van Roijen commented that if the Indonesians remained obdurate the USA would fully support the Dutch position, but – and this was absolutely essential – not to the point of stopping Indonesian armed attacks and to allow a complete break in relations.¹³⁴

The urgency for a solution of the West New Guinea problem was also widely shared in government circles in the Netherlands. A memorandum from the Indonesian section of the Foreign Affairs Department bluntly put it that in view of an imminent danger of Indonesian military action the Netherlands' reaction could only be to agree to renewed negotiations. Under the circumstances the only possibility of reaching an agreement with the Indonesians was for the Dutch to tone down their insistence on Papuan human rights. But any change in Dutch promises would pose a serious danger to public order in the territory and the safety of the 14,000 Europeans living there. The Papuan elite, whose national consciousness had been encouraged by the Dutch government itself, would not sit idly by if the Dutch government should now try to tinker with their rights without consultations. Hence, during any negotiations the Papuan population would have to be represented and the Indonesians had to be told that the Netherlands no longer held a free hand on Papuan human rights. It was a problem to convince the Indonesians that the

Netherlands would cease to use the self-determination issue to perpetuate their influence on the indigenous population. It seemed necessary to sound out the Indonesians in advance about their stand on Papuan rights and Papuan participation in the talks. It could be expected that a number of influential Papuans would try to avoid the outbreak of aggressive behaviour and chaotic conditions in West New Guinea. In the margin of the report it was noted that although these ideas might not conform with official policy, differing views could be important and should not be ignored.¹³⁵

Prime Minister de Quay, during a cabinet session of 22 December 1961, pointed out that the government had to act to continue to look to the UN to provide a solution or to follow the American initiative of bilateral negotiations with a third party in attendance. A proposal to take recourse to the Security Council in case of an Indonesian invasion was rejected because such a move was likely to be ineffectual as the recent example of Goa had proved. Another possibility canvassed was an appeal to the Decolonisation Commission of the UN, but this also was dismissed because of insufficient international support. Another Minister wondered whether, similarly to Aceh, Indonesia would be willing to accord West New Guinea the status of Daerah Istimewa (Special Territory). Minister Zijlstra dismissed the idea of a Melanesian union as illusory. In the end Luns declared his support for conditional talks with the clear understanding that the Netherlands remain wedded to the principle of self-determination and opposition to an Indonesian takeover if the Papuan people disagreed with it. The cabinet declared itself in favour of this formula and had this transmitted immediately by Luns to Washington.¹³⁶

The State Department took this message to mean that The Hague was keen to leave West New Guinea providing a face-saving formula would be found. Reality proved to be different. Both parties continued to skirmish, putting obstacles in the way of preliminary talks. Luns had apparently still not been converted

and kept on hammering the State Department for American military support. For his part Sukarno remained unwilling to compromise, and Indonesian military preparations for a full attack continued and armed infiltrations were being increased.¹³⁷

The Vlakke Hoek incident

This brinkmanship brought the possibility of the outbreak of full-scale war ever closer, particularly so after a spectacular naval engagement on 15 January 1962 at the Vlakke Hoek near Etna Bay. A Dutch Neptune surveillance aircraft had spotted on the radar three objects in Dutch waters speeding towards the New Guinea coast. The Dutch frigates *Eversten* and *Kortenaer* were alerted and reported three ships at 40 kilometres from the Vlakke Hoek. At twenty-two hours the Neptune pinpointed what proved to be three Indonesian MTBs at 19 kilometres from shore running at speeds of about 32 knots. The Indonesians opened fire on the Dutch plane which was followed by a barrage first by the *Evertsen* and later by the *Kortenaer*. One of the ships, the *Matjan Tutul*, was hit and sunk and the other two turned around and fled in a south-eastern direction; the Dutch warships were ordered by the navy commander and Governor Platteel to stop their chase. Fifty-two Indonesian survivors were picked up. The dead were buried at Kaimana, and the wounded were transported to hospital in Biak. Nine sub-officers were flown to Hollandia and thirty-nine ratings were detained at Sorong. From interrogations it transpired that the MTBs belonged to the Jaguar class in use by the Soviet navy, and in addition to their normal complements carried motorised rubber boats, and more than 100 soldiers, armed with mortars, automatic weapons, transmitters, and a three-week supply of food. Their objective had been to land near Kaimana and to annihilate the Dutch defence. The operation was under the command of Colonel Domo. Apparently the *Matjan Tutul* had been hit aft and the ammunition store had exploded killing its commander, Wiratno. In addition a top navy officer,

Comodore Sudarso, was missing, presumably killed.¹³⁸ This Indonesian naval disaster was received with great Schadenfreude in the Western press, particularly in the Netherlands and Australia. Although this was overshadowed by the fear of Indonesian retaliation leading to open warfare. The Americans were worried about possible Dutch preventative strikes at naval strongholds in Ambon, Surabaya and Jakarta. This scenario was not entirely unrealistic as such actions had in fact been seriously proposed by the Dutch military to the cabinet.

In fact, Howard Jones was sufficiently alarmed and was preparing plans for the evacuation of American personnel, as he was seriously worried that the inflammable Indonesian masses would direct their anger against the USA, putting American lives at risk. Rusk ordered Jones to tell Sukarno that the USA would stop all deliveries of arms and supplies, including parachutes and aircraft parts. Unexpectedly, Sukarno took up a more warlike posture perhaps to present Robert Kennedy, during an imminent visit, with a *fait accompli*.¹³⁹

On the other hand Sukarno repudiated his earlier undertaking on unconditional preliminary talks with the Dutch. This became clear from a meeting of Subandrio and President Kennedy, Adlai Stevenson, and UN Secretary-General U Thant, during which Indonesia insisted on agreeing to negotiations only after a Dutch pledge of immediate transfer of power over West New Guinea to Indonesia. For its part Indonesia would bind itself to holding a plebiscite after five years.¹⁴⁰

Luns immediately rejected the Indonesian proposal viewing it as part of Sukarno's offensive package of psychological warfare combined with physical aggression to achieve his long cherished objective. He instructed Schürmann to direct U Thant's attention to Prime Minister de Quay's earlier letter to the effect that the Netherlands, in the case of further Indonesian hostile acts, was bent on dispatching armed reinforcements.¹⁴¹

The American response to the Dutch rejection seems highly peculiar since on the one hand they criticised the Dutch for their

weak defence efforts in West Guinea – ‘We could not mobilize American troops and call up young men in Kansas and Pittsburgh for a cause the Dutch themselves were unwilling to mobilize for’¹⁴² – while on the other hand they tried to persuade the Netherlands not to send anymore warships and troops in order to avoid provoking Sukarno even further. Obviously this kind of reaction could do nothing to repair the already damaged relations. In fact, on 15 January 1962, immediately after the naval incident at the Vlakke Hoek, the cabinet had decided to dispatch an extra 100 troops immediately. This operation was conducted through commercial charter flights using the route Amsterdam-Anchorage-Tokyo-Biak with soldiers in civilian dress. The Japanese suddenly refused further landing rights and the flights were now routed via Honolulu. But early in February 1962 the Americans also followed the Japanese example and closed their airports to Dutch military transports. Not to be denied, a new route was established through Curaçao – Dutch territory – Peru and Tahiti.

Public reaction in the Netherlands was furious and the rather lame explanation by Rusk did nothing to alleviate the situation. Nevertheless, after what was seen as an American betrayal, the Netherlands, of necessity, resolved to hold bilateral talks. Van Roijen complained to Rusk that it was the Indonesians, through their demands for an immediate Dutch withdrawal, who were responsible for holding up the proceedings. He moreover gave an assurance that the Netherlands had no objections on any subjects to be discussed, providing that it was clearly understood that the principle of the Papuan right of self-determination would not be for sale. The Netherlands continued to object to an Indonesian takeover against the wishes of the Papuan population and similarly rejected a trusteeship solely under Indonesian supervision. Van Roijen also insisted that an interim government, presumably under UN auspices, would be necessary not only to safeguard Papuan human rights, but also to avoid a possible bloodbath brought about by the strong anti-Indonesian feelings of the local population. To Rusk’s question as to whether the

Netherlands might agree to an immediate plebiscite, for example, thirty days after the signing of the accord, van Roijen replied that in his opinion, because of the existing widespread anti-Indonesian feeling in the country, the Papuan people would opt immediately for independence.¹⁴³

Unofficial Dutch-Indonesian contacts

In the meantime unofficial Dutch-Indonesian meetings were taking place. The pressure of the earlier Rijkens group of Dutch industrialists still continued, their activities gaining more notoriety owing to the revelations of the journalist Oltmans.¹⁴⁴ Other private lobbyists opposed to the official government stance on West New Guinea were becoming more strident. Prominent among these was Duynstee, a law professor at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. He had been one of the most outspoken critics of the Luns Plan because it had deliberately ignored any consultation or input from the Indonesian side and the contribution made by private Dutch contacts with Indonesian leaders. Duynstee lashed the Luns Plan for missing the crucial point that internationalisation would be doomed as long as Indonesia was opposed and so it increased the risk of war.¹⁴⁵ He told Luns about his contacts with Oejeng Soewargana, an Indonesian intelligence officer and close friend of General Nasution. The general wanted to establish contacts with the Netherlands government through the Indonesian military attachés in Paris or in Bonn, both trustful intermediaries, in order to achieve a peaceful solution. Nasution argued that war would severely weaken the hold of the Western oriented officers in the army on Java, and would increase the chance of the outbreak of a communist rebellion.¹⁴⁶ During a visit to Paris, Nasution told Kho, an Indonesian sociologist at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, that he stood for a peaceful settlement, which would improve the position of the TNI and he wanted to talk preferably with Stikker, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴⁷ During January 1962, Duynstee

intensified his efforts to achieve a breakthrough on the West New Guinea problem and held frequent consultations with Indonesian diplomats in Bonn. This resulted in Jakarta sending two senior plenipotentiaries to Bonn, who held a meeting with a number of Dutchmen, including some KVP politicians. De Gou, the KVP mayor of Venlo, was allotted the task of submitting a number of proposals to Prime Minister de Quay. These firstly stipulated that any possible talks were dependent on the Netherlands' prior undertaking to agree to hand over the territory, and secondly, in order to repair the mutual loss of trust between the two countries, it was deemed absolutely necessary to hold confidential talks at ministerial or ambassadorial level. Indonesia agreed to any venue with the exception of the Netherlands itself and was willing to discuss the presence of a third party, preferably an American ambassador. A significant gesture was an Indonesian assurance of taking over Dutch promises made to the Papuan people, including the matter of the right of self-determination, and a suggestion of a plebiscite after ten years.¹⁴⁸ Duynstee sent the same proposals to Queen Juliana in a letter of 3 February 1962. A departmental marginal note read: '... the Prime Minister should insist that the Queen should not involve herself in correspondence on this matter ...' The initials could not be deciphered.¹⁴⁹ On 1 February, de Gou had a stormy meeting with an angry de Quay, who sharply condemned this approach and dismissed the Bonn proposals.¹⁵⁰

Other groups also pressured the government to change course. On 17 December 1961, Professor van Hamel¹⁵¹ addressed a petition to the Queen for the appointment of confidential agents to meet with Indonesian counterparts to find ways and means to end the New Guinea debacle, with the special proviso that care be taken of Papuan interests.¹⁵² A similar petition signed by Professor Smelik was received by the prime minister on 9 January 1962.¹⁵³

Another approach suggesting confidential Dutch-Indonesian exploratory talks came from a certain van Eeghen, honorary

consul in Tanzania, who reported that the Indonesian government had empowered a confidential spokesman to negotiate using a procedure previously used in the case of Tanganyika. This would involve declaring West New Guinea a UN trusteeship territory under Indonesian administrative control, but with the Papuan people being given the opportunity to implement their right of self-determination at a later date. Van Eeghen reported later that the Indonesian Ambassador to Moscow, Adam Malik, had a message from Jakarta to be delivered to the Dutch prime minister. De Quay directed for this to be sent via the Dutch ambassador in Moscow. This resulted in Adam Malik travelling to London where he was received as directed by the Dutch ambassador, Bentinck.¹⁵⁴

In cabinet both the prime minister and Luns complained that the activities of the Rijkens lobby, and other groups, had harmed the official Dutch position and had created a false impression in Washington that the Dutch people no longer stood behind the government's New Guinea policy. Luns then emphasised that the Bentinck-Malik contact definitely should not be constructed, as the Indonesian press had implied, as leading towards negotiations.¹⁵⁵ Malik supposedly carried supporting letters from Sukarno and Subandrio in which the precondition of a Dutch transfer of power and an Indonesian promise to uphold Papuan rights were again repeated.¹⁵⁶

De Quay and Luns were also annoyed about these private initiatives as they were interfering with the current efforts of U Thant to find a solution. Furthermore, the presence of Indonesian intelligence agents during the secret Dutch-Indonesian meetings in Bonn were found highly undesirable. Hence, the Bentinck-Malik meetings were stopped and parliament was told that the government disapproved of meetings of parliamentarians and private citizens with Indonesian emissaries.¹⁵⁷ Still, according to CIA reports, official Dutch contacts and meet-

ings continued with Indonesians such as UN Ambassador Sudjarwo, Colonel Magenda and Adam Malik.¹⁵⁸

U Thant's activities flowed directly from the Vlakke Hoek incident when he had received messages from Sukarno clearly indicating a reversal of the earlier Indonesian agreement on unconditional preliminary talks. Sukarno rejected the Netherlands' proposal of a UN development committee for New Guinea as well as the idea of a trusteeship. All that Sukarno had been willing to accede was an immediate Indonesian takeover followed later by the implementation of the Papuan right of self-determination. After this had been resolutely rejected by Schürmann, the Dutch representative at the UN, U Thant asked what the Netherlands reaction would be to a possible public appeal by him to Sukarno to smooth the way for an immediate opening of a Dutch-Indonesian meeting to establish an agenda for negotiations with himself acting as the third party. Luns reacted very enthusiastically while the cabinet reacted positively and appointed van Roijen and Schürmann to attend the proposed talks.¹⁵⁹ Indonesia assented and deputised ambassadors Suwarno and Adam Malik.

The Indonesians immediately took a hard line rejecting any idea of internationalisation and were only willing to offer, at the most, a kind of provincial autonomy. But in essence, Indonesia seemed only interested in the matter of the transfer of power, and offered the Netherlands one week to come to a decision, putting on additional pressure by threatening war and the nationalisation of part-Dutch-owned enterprises. These bullying tactics were too much for the Americans, who told Jakarta to adopt a less strident and more reasonable tone. This resulted in the end with Sukarno agreeing to a short UN interim administration and to respect Papuan rights. It is clear that Washington was adamant in creating a situation conducive to a fruitful outcome of the imminent visit of Robert Kennedy to Jakarta, which had as its main objective to offset the ever-increasing influence of communism in the country. In fact, a communist diplomatic

offensive was being staged, highlighted by the recent state visits of Khrushchev and Chou En-lai. Lavish supplies of Soviet heavy weapons and the arrival of Russian 'advisers' made a large-scale Indonesian invasion of West New Guinea feasible; something that could only be an advantage to the PKI. Furthermore, this growing Indonesian military power, it was feared, could destabilise Western security in the Western Pacific.

The involvement of Robert Kennedy

Robert Kennedy's visit turned out to be very stormy and the earlier belief that he might fall under the mesmerising spell of Sukarno and his wily ways proved to have been off the mark. The visit started on a very sour note caused by the situation of Allan Pope, a CIA pilot who had been shot down over Ambon in 1958 during the American-supported Permesta rebellion. During his 1961 visit to Washington, Sukarno had promised to release Pope, but nothing had happened. Robert Kennedy's reminder of this promise was pushed aside by Sukarno in his usual cavalier way, indicating his unwillingness to comply in the short term. Apparently an altercation occurred during which Kennedy exploded in anger with the shouting being heard in the corridor. This had the desired effect and three weeks later Pope was released. This blunt kind of 'diplomacy' seemed also to have forced Sukarno to decide to abandon the precondition requirement for the Dutch to transfer power before the beginning of talks. A promise of American help, during the negotiations with the Dutch, undoubtedly would have acted as an inducement to adopt a more reasonable attitude, and it must also have become patently clear to the Indonesians that the Netherlands could not count on American military assistance during an Indonesian attack.¹⁶⁰

At the same time in Washington the axes were sharpened to cut down Dutch resistance to being forced out of West New Guinea. In a memorandum to President Kennedy, security ad-

viser McGeorge Bundy stressed that the time was ripe to apply 'real heat' on the Netherlands. It was argued that this was not a case of choosing sides, or of condemning colonialism, but the position of the West in South-East Asia was in question here. A war in New Guinea would escalate an already deepening security crisis in the region, where the USA was already fully committed in Laos and Vietnam. An Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea was inevitable, but to appease Dutch qualms Sukarno had to be pressed to agree to the right of self-determination of the Papuans, although Bundy believed that in the end he would not stick to his part of the bargain.¹⁶¹

Programmed this way, Robert Kennedy arrived on 25 February for a whistle stop in The Hague where he managed almost immediately to put a large number of ministerial noses out of joint. He had been told that in addition to Luns he should also talk with Prime Minister de Quay to ensure that the American standpoint would penetrate to the top. Kennedy started by buttering up his hosts stressing that, during the last six weeks, Sukarno and Subandrio had lost a great deal of international support owing to their unyielding stand. In Jakarta, however, he had finally achieved a breakthrough with Indonesia assenting to self-determination for the Papuans, and an interim government, providing the Dutch agreed to hand over the territory. Indonesia rejected U Thant as third party for the negotiations and opted for the USA in this role.

Luns treated Kennedy to a long review of Dutch-Indonesian relations since 1949 illustrating the untrustworthiness of Indonesia, since it had torn up agreements in order to achieve its objectives at any cost, including recourse to war. Apparently Dulles's policy of deterrence was no longer working and Indonesians were obviously under the impression they would get away with warlike acts with impunity. A strident example of this was the Vlakke Hoek incident. Luns continued his usual tirade against Jakarta and handed two memoranda to Kennedy, one which included the text of the 1957 Australian-Dutch cooperation

agreement, which he just passed on to Ambassador Rice. In the end, Luns, realising that the Netherlands was on the losing side, offered cooperation with American efforts to find a solution, providing a face-saving formula for the Dutch withdrawal was found. He closed his speech by throwing the lot of the Papuans to the wolves by stating '... that we certainly would not encourage the Papuan population to maintain ties with the Netherlands, which also would not be in the interest of the Netherlands itself.'¹⁶²

The Kennedy meeting with the Dutch cabinet was disastrous and most Ministers did not take kindly to the same bullying tactics he had used in Jakarta. Anti-colonial remarks during a dinner, and complaints about the lack of higher education facilities in West New Guinea, together with uncalled-for wisecracks such as Indonesia being more powerful and would therefore win, incensed people, and caused one Minister, Toxopeus, to leave the table disgusted with this 'loutish performance'.¹⁶³

Later, Ambassador van Roijen also branded Kennedy's behaviour as uncouth and arrogant. But he argued that, although Dutch public opinion was justifiably upset by Kennedy's antics, the reason for the people's surprise at hearing the real American position on West New Guinea was largely due to the faulty information supplied by the Dutch government in the past. The cabinet had for far too long continued to put its faith on the vague promises of Dulles in 1958, despite the regular warnings which Luns had been wont to denigrate and push aside.¹⁶⁴

Admittedly it was not that the whole of the cabinet and parliament had been hoodwinked by Luns's assurances, but the majority of parliamentarians in fact had become angry when it became clear, finally, that the game was up. Prime Minister de Quay wrote in his diary:

The visit of Robert Kennedy caused many of us to fully change our expectations. We were now convinced that ... our plans could not be realised. Kennedy put the question: 'Will the Netherlands

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fight if we will not join in?' We answered quite clearly: No, we will not commit such a stupidity, because we obviously are too far away and would be overwhelmed by superior numbers. It would be irresponsible to shed blood and fight on our own for the cause. This would be out of the question of course ...¹⁶⁵

Luns had still not fully capitulated and doggedly pursued Kennedy to Paris sticking to his old line, but to no avail. Not to be deterred he repeated his old refrain to Rusk and President Kennedy in Washington in March 1962, asking for assurances of American military backup. He also suggested that as a deterrent units of the American Seventh Fleet should visit West New Guinea. This was rejected by Rusk as impossible under the circumstances, impressing on Luns that the USA was forced to consider the West New Guinea question first of all in the light of national American interests. According to Rusk this American stand should not be seen as an interference in Dutch affairs, but rather it should be looked at in the context of the American worldwide responsibilities in the fight against communism. Future developments in Indonesia were a crucially important element in this pattern. For years the USA had tried to maintain a balance between the Indonesian military and the communists and wanted to retain its contacts with moderate political elements in the country. Dangling a carrot, Rusk stressed that the Netherlands was sorely needed in the rehabilitation and development of the Indonesian economy and should regain its historically prominent position after the solution of the West New Guinea problem and the establishment of normal diplomatic relations. Robert Kennedy had told him of being amazed at seeing, during his tour, the enormous goodwill towards to the Dutch which still existed in Indonesia and it would take the USA decades to build up a similar position. Luns, however, stuck to his guns and revealed that on the basis of reliable Dutch intelligence reports a large Indonesian attack was imminent and the Dutch government had decided to strengthen the territory's defences by dispatch-

ing another two destroyers and two submarines, and a further detachment of marines. Indonesian propaganda had also been stepped up, with radio broadcasts boasting that all white people would be killed. Luns insisted that after the start of secret talks the Indonesians, although claiming to work for peace in order to cause the Netherlands to desist from sending for reinforcements, would in fact continue to prepare for a large invasion. He appealed again to the USA and other Western powers to stop their arms deliveries to Indonesia. But Acheson replied that the American military mission in Jakarta was an important instrument for extending USA influence in Indonesian affairs.¹⁶⁶

The next day Rusk tried to allay Dutch fears of a full-scale invasion and told Luns that, although the USA could not back the Dutch political position, it would still use all possible means to prevent the use of force, although warning that this should not be taken to mean American military involvement. A decision on this would only be taken at the outbreak of hostilities emphasising, however, that in the case of a frontal attack the fate of Dutch citizens, women and children were uppermost on his mind and he promised to consider how the USA could help. In his dispatch to The Hague, Luns added that van Roijen had reported to him that Harriman had talked to him in the same vein.

Finally, and highly significantly, Rusk stated to Luns that according to American intelligence Sukarno's health was deteriorating. This made it even more important for Washington to keep its hand on the pulse of happenings in Jakarta and to remain in contact with and further cultivate moderate Indonesian political forces rather than solely concentrating on the volatile figure of Sukarno: 'We don't want this very important question decided upon by one son of a bitch ...'¹⁶⁷ Later in the day Luns was received by President Kennedy, who also showed his contempt for Sukarno. On the other hand Kennedy believed that Sukarno was trying to find a way out by way of secret talks initially designed to prepare an agenda for further negotiations. Luns indicated Dutch acceptance for an American third party at

the talks. But Kennedy was put out about the Dutch decision to send naval and army reinforcements and asked for a postponement until the Indonesian position on negotiations had been clarified. In the evening during a dinner party at the Dutch embassy, Kennedy repeated this request and restated his earlier undertaking that in the case of Indonesia engaging in open hostilities during the negotiations the USA would be forced to rethink its position. He added that a Dutch willingness to defer sending further forces would put extra responsibility on the USA. Luns signalled The Hague that apparently the chances of American armed involvement in the case of an Indonesian invasion had improved and also that American protection of the Dutch civilian population was likely.¹⁶⁸ Apparently Rusk showed him a typewritten note from President Kennedy referring to the help of the Seventh Fleet in the evacuation of Dutch citizens and confirming that a presidential order had gone out to set the necessary preparations in motion. Worried about Luns's known propensity of presenting coloured reports regarding the American position the State Department instructed its ambassador in The Hague, Rice, to convey this information directly to the cabinet.¹⁶⁹

Initially the cabinet was not impressed by Luns's meagre results in Washington and found the American assurances sadly wanting. The Minister of Defence insisted that in view of persistent Indonesian armed infiltrations the American request should be ignored and reinforcements sent immediately. Cabinet was divided with some Ministers arguing that the game was finished, pointing out that the Netherlands stood alone and that obviously the Americans showed little respect for the Papuans' right of self-determination, making it impossible to stick to the existing policies.¹⁷⁰

In the meantime Sukarno, in a pugilistic mood, continued to push the Americans to distraction in a merry-go-around by regularly alternating between conciliatory and warlike utterances. According to some important Indonesian sources, including Ali Sastromijoyo and Adam Malik,¹⁷¹ Sukarno probably did not

really want to go to war fearing that this might carry with it the seed of his own destruction as his power depended on his ability to balance between the major power contenders, namely the armed forces, the communists, and the Muslims. Furthermore, a number of high-ranking staff officers saw a large-scale invasion of West New Guinea as a dangerous venture. They pointed out that the Indonesian task force lacked sufficient logistic support and its success was dependent on a long distance supply line, which was open to enemy attack. The High Command was also loath to denude Java of its elite divisions in view of a possible communist uprising.

Sukarno's announcement on 4 March on Indonesia's agreement to take part in preliminary talks, was followed up on 8 March with a strongly warlike speech stressing that the liberation of West New Guinea would definitely occur in 1962 with Indonesia making use of all available options.¹⁷² In response the Dutch cabinet, by way of compromise, decided to direct naval units to sail through the Panama Canal and tour the west coast of the USA.

The Bunker Plan

On 16 March, Luns announced to the cabinet that the Americans had proposed to have the preliminary talks held in Washington with the American diplomat Ellsworth Bunker in attendance. The American government underlined the highly secret nature of this exercise and made strong appeals to both parties to avoid aggressive action. The Dutch cabinet remained sceptical because of the obvious Indonesian unwillingness to call off the invasion preparations, and in fact, intelligence reports pointed to Indonesian armed forces being moved closer to the operational area. KVP member Dr Marga Klompé put a question about the reactions of Papuans themselves regarding recent developments and their need to be represented at the talks. It seems that the old colonial paternalistic rule of 'everything for you, but noth-

ing by you' was still held strongly in some quarters even at this crucial time when the future of the Papuans was at stake. But it seems that also in the Netherlands the concerns of the Papuans were being pushed aside for the sake of Dutch national interests. As de Quay wrote in his diary: 'Watch out. We neither want war nor Communism. The rest is all of secondary importance

...¹⁷³

The talks commenced on 20 March 1962 at Huntland Estate, a secluded, private mansion near Middleburg, about 80 kilometres outside Washington. The Indonesian side was represented by Adam Malik and Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro; the Dutch side was headed by van Roijen and Schürmann. Bunker was assisted by Bob Lindquist, a State Department officer in charge of the Indonesian desk and formerly USA Consul in Medan. The Dutch in the beginning were sceptical about Lindquist, who during earlier dealings had shown a distinct pro-Indonesian bias.¹⁷⁴ The meetings were held in English, although in informal contacts both delegations used Dutch. Bunker opened the proceedings by explaining his own role, which was to act as the representative of UN Secretary-General U Thant. In his opening remarks van Roijen felt that the composing of an agenda for further negotiations should really not pose any great difficulties and suggested that in order to smooth the way the first matter to be handled should be to decide on the operation of the interim government. He put it that such an interim body should be able to ensure that the Papuans would be allowed a fair chance to decide on their political fate. It should also pay especial attention to maintaining peace and order in the territory since as a result of the Dutch withdrawal many Papuans were highly upset and the security situation was volatile. Finally, van Roijen suggested that with the establishment of an interim government the grounds for the hostility between Indonesia and the Netherlands should have disappeared and normal relations could be established.

Adam Malik wanted to know whether after the installation of the interim body and the departure of the Dutch the territory

would be handed over immediately to Indonesia. To this van Roijen reiterated that the Netherlands still stuck to its long-held principle that a transfer of sovereignty would not be effected against the will of the Papuan people.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, van Roijen assured Adam Malik that the Netherlands would certainly not object to a Papuan choice in favour of integration with Indonesia. This strengthened the American belief that the Dutch were no longer in principle opposed to an Indonesian takeover, providing a face-saving formula could be found. This assumption was certainly correct in regard to van Roijen, but it was a miscalculation in respect of most of the Dutch cabinet and a sizeable section of the Dutch nation.¹⁷⁶

For his part Adam Malik refused to discuss the mechanics of an interim government and the question of Papuan human rights, insisting that his instructions were strictly restricted to the discussion of the transfer of power to Indonesia in West New Guinea and the normalisation of Dutch-Indonesian relations. But van Roijen had been strictly forbidden from having a direct transfer of power to Indonesia included in the agenda and as a result the talks came to a halt.

Adam Malik flew to Jakarta in a bid to obtain wider negotiating room, but failed to return. This was taken as an indication that Indonesia was unwilling to restart discussions in the short term. President Kennedy, angered with this turn of events, told Sukarno he was greatly disturbed about these artificially contrived obstacles put in the way of a solution which was close to being achieved.¹⁷⁷

Indonesia continued to make difficulties and decided to apply more military pressure. A new infiltration of the island of Waigeo and a plane attack on a small Dutch naval vessel were reported. This caused the more hawkish Dutch cabinet members, including Luns and Defence Minister Visser, to insist that two destroyers and two submarines visiting the American west coast be directed forthwith to West New Guinea. In addition it was requested for another battalion of marines and an extra 2400

army personnel to be dispatched. In the end this was agreed to by cabinet.¹⁷⁸

Washington, although unhappy with the Dutch move, this time facilitated the crossing of the Pacific of the Dutch naval vessels. The troops though were transported via the Azores, Curaçao, Lima and Tahiti.¹⁷⁹

Bunker, in order to entice the Indonesians back to the negotiating table, tried to achieve a breakthrough by submitting to van Roijen a formula according to which Indonesia would participate in an interim UN government, to be followed by a definite transfer to Jakarta. The wishes of the Papuans would be tested in a plebiscite after a number of years. Van Roijen, although rejecting this plan, decided not to report this alarming discussion to The Hague in order to avoid a further fall in the Netherland's trust of American intentions. But it soon became clear that van Roijen had failed to persuade Bunker to abandon his plan, as, aided by the State Department and the White House, on 2 April he submitted a fully worked-out set of proposals.

By this time President Kennedy had decided that shock therapy, mainly applied to the Netherlands, was needed to start the talks off again. Apparently, President Kennedy had decided to take over the wheel himself and, giving in to the requests of his personal staff, had initially left Dean Rusk out of the picture and determined that the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia would take place after a Papuan plebiscite had been held. Rusk was informed of this crucial step two days later.¹⁸⁰

Rusk quickly countersigned the Bunker Plan under which the Netherlands would, on a specific date, transfer its authority to a temporary UN body. A mutually acceptable non-Indonesian administrator was to be appointed to oversee the government of the territory for a period lasting from one to a maximum of two years, using non-Indonesian and non-Dutch officials. To placate the Netherlands' qualms Indonesia once in charge would be bound to prepare arrangements with the assistance of the UN to give the Papuan population the opportunity to exercise its right

of self-determination. The signing of this agreement would signify the resumption of normal Dutch-Indonesian diplomatic relations.¹⁸¹

President Kennedy immediately sent a personal letter to Prime Minister de Quay strongly recommending the Bunker Plan and again stressing that the West New Guinea question should be seen in the context of the domino effect of communist aggression. If a war broke out because of West New Guinea the chances of Indonesia falling into communist hands would increase sharply.¹⁸² Ambassador Rice threw in his own contribution with the explanation that the USA was unwilling to fight for the Papuans, as they would be unable to deal with independence anyhow. Apparently Rice had never properly read the UN Charter of Human Rights or perhaps conveniently suffered a loss of memory.¹⁸³

Howard Jones reported from Jakarta that the Bunker Plan had been well received.¹⁸⁴ Sukarno accepted the proposals, though insisting that the interim government be shortened in order to enable Indonesia to take over in 1962.¹⁸⁵ In the Netherlands, as expected, the mood was very sombre.¹⁸⁶ De Quay wrote:

I was paid a visit by Ambassador Rice. Luns was also present and he presented a letter from Kennedy that provoked a great deal of indignation. He meant to transfer New Guinea to Indonesia 'indirectly'. A façade. Luns felt personally cheated ...¹⁸⁷

Similarly van Roijen was deeply upset and told Bunker that the plan was a mere face-saving exercise, that it would be seen by the Papuans as a betrayal by the Dutch selling out their rights for economic gains. He further criticised Bunker for not having provided a foolproof guarantee for the act of choice by the Papuans, as the role of the UN was kept at a minimum and was only worded in the vaguest terms. Bunker promised further amendments. Finally, van Roijen underlined that in view of continuing Indonesian military aggression, it would become even more difficult for the Netherlands to make more concessions as

this would be seen internationally as a case of blackmail.¹⁸⁸

Luns conveyed to Washington the dismay and shock of the Dutch cabinet dismissing the Bunker proposals as an example of rank appeasement rather than an honest American attempt at arbitration. Surely the Netherlands did not need the USA to help them to surrender, as this it could have done on its own volition a long time ago! He warned he would expose this shameful American treatment internationally.¹⁸⁹ At the 3 May NATO meeting in Athens, Luns waded into the Americans with no holds barred.

N.S. Blom, Under-Secretary for Indonesian Affairs, labelled the 'free choice' after a number years of Indonesian rule a mere mockery. A plebiscite would be absurd as there would be no real choice, because even in the hypothetical case of the Papuans being able to vote for independence, obviously no nation in the world, including the USA, would push Indonesia to give in. The Bunker Plan in essence meant the abandonment of the self-determination principle. He warned that the Netherlands would stand alone if it rejected the plan and pointed out that to fall back on the UN would be useless as U Thant, during the last few months, had been manipulated by the USA in order to bring about the existing situation. If the cabinet decided to continue with talks it would be up to the Papuans to state their views during the coming negotiations. The Netherlands should ensure that the Papuan representatives at the talks would be given the opportunity to fight for their own political future.¹⁹⁰

In the cabinet the situation was polarised, with the Ministers from the Protestant faction arguing that in view of the overpowering pressure of the Americans and the mounting Indonesian military threat, the essential objective of Dutch plans to create a free and economically viable Papuan state was no longer achievable. So, in the existing circumstances all the Netherlands realistically could do was to give in and accept the Bunker Plan. The Catholic Party was divided: Luns, Klompé and Bot, the Under-Secretary for New Guinea, continued their resistance, while Prime

Minister de Quay veered towards acceptance. So, the Dutch response could only be ambiguous and Bunker was requested to come up with more watertight guarantees for Papuan rights.¹⁹¹

Bunker's offer to insert the wording: 'adequate guarantees for safeguarding the interests, including the right of self-determination of the Papuans', still did not meet Dutch demands. Rusk, trying to push things along, pointed out that all clauses were conditional and Dutch delegates would be in the position to propose amendments to the Bunker proposals. He argued that the suggested amendment by Bunker indicated that at least in principle Indonesia now recognised the Papuan right of self-determination. This elucidation seemed to sway van Roijen to the extent that he recommended to The Hague not to reject the Bunker Plan.¹⁹²

On 25 April, Rusk, in a letter to Luns, again argued that the Bunker Plan provided a suitable framework for resumption of talks and that neither party would be committed at this stage, adding: 'My government will support an arrangement for the expression of self-determination by the Papuan people which would be real and not a mockery ...'¹⁹³

Luns's last stand

These were strong words that nevertheless still did not satisfy Luns. Sukarno again threw a spanner in the works by his insistence that there would be no talks until the Dutch halted the despatch of reinforcements. In addition, the obviously pro-Indonesian faction in Washington and their attempts to push the Netherlands towards a speedy decision in fact were counterproductive, and also, Dutch public opinion was in an uproar about what was seen as the shameful role played by the USA. A visiting mission of Papuan leaders to The Hague, at the time, made a strong impact on the cabinet. Finally, it was argued by Luns that after the recent shoring-up of the Dutch defences in West New Guinea the military situation there had been stabilised and there was no

need anymore to sacrifice principles for opportune reasons.¹⁹⁴ How this assessment could be squared with the estimates of Dutch intelligence reports showing that in terms of military firepower the odds were favouring the Indonesians, seems baffling and perhaps should be ascribed to Luns's wishful thinking syndrome. On more solid ground was Luns's observation that, according to reliable information, the Indonesian economy was on the verge of collapse and that there were serious rifts between Nasution and Sukarno, and suggested that the Netherlands should hang on a little longer for the Indonesian military threat to collapse. Finally, he dismissed the opposition Labour Party's demand for an immediate liquidation of the West New Guinea problem as grandstanding, directed at the coming elections.¹⁹⁵

Remaining obstinate as ever Luns was adamant that the Dutch bargaining position could actually be improved, a belief not shared by van Roijen, who actually had been appalled at Luns's intended fireworks at the Athens meeting, which in his view would produce the opposite effect. He had tried to steer Luns towards holding private talks with Rusk, but to no avail.¹⁹⁶ As van Roijen had foreseen, the tirade by Luns against the USA at the NATO meeting in Athens, an attack supported by most NATO members, especially Germany and France, greatly upset Washington. Subsequently, during private talks this caused Rusk to retaliate angrily, leaving it up to Luns to either replace Bunker or stop American involvement altogether. This caused Luns to retreat a little, although he was still intent on gaining some advantages. The outcome was that a mutual agreement was reached for both the Netherlands and Indonesia to remain free to include all their important concerns in the agenda for the final negotiations. This was seen by Luns as opening up the possibility of pushing the original Dutch position of a UN interim government remaining in charge until the completion of the plebiscite on Papuan self-determination.¹⁹⁷ In effect, Luns told Rusk that the Netherlands had not yet agreed to the transfer of the administration of West New Guinea to Indonesia, and he pointed

out that there were still qualms in The Hague caused by the fear that the arrival of an Indonesian authority in the territory could be accompanied by the injection of communist influence. Furthermore, Luns stressed that in view of the example of Ambon, Aceh, and Sulawesi, and other areas unhappy under Jakarta rule, it was crystal clear that the Indonesians would never honour their promise regarding the Papuans' rights of self-determination. In the end Rusk agreed with this so-called Athens formula.¹⁹⁸

Nonetheless the Americans proved unwilling to forget the Luns attack on their fidelity in front of the NATO leadership in Athens. The first sign of this was the recantation of the previous facilities granted by the Americans for the transport of Dutch troops and the transit of Dutch naval units. Washington was also tired of Luns's procrastinating tactics.¹⁹⁹ Relations took a further dive when it became clear in Washington that Luns, with his usual aplomb, had again indulged in too much poetic licence during a highly-coloured version he had presented to cabinet about his Athenian meeting with Rusk. Quite ironically the story had been leaked deliberately by some Dutch parliamentarians to the American embassy. But this was not all, as Luns had also, in cabinet, portrayed Rusk as in accord with his own assessment that time was working for the Dutch and the scope of the talks would be widened. Finally, he had intimated to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Second Chamber that a difference of opinion existed between the State Department and the White House on the West New Guinea question.²⁰⁰ Luns squarely denied the American accusations of trying to retard the talks and directed the blame at the Indonesians.²⁰¹

Washington continued its attack and charged Ambassador Rice to deliver a letter to Luns negating everything he supposedly had transmitted to the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee about the Athens meeting. In reply Luns showed his amazement about this American reference to a secret Dutch government meeting. Pointing out that all Dutch cabinet matters were confidential he was not at liberty to reveal either what

he or the prime minister might have said on that occasion. It was obvious that a number of Dutch members of parliament were trying to create mischief between the Dutch and American governments, a charge not denied by Rice. Then Luns went on the attack again asking what Washington had to say about the scandalous Indonesian military aggression that was taking place. To this query the ambassador remained silent.²⁰²

The Indonesian reply to the Luns-Rusk Athens initiative arrived finally on 15 May in the form of the resumption of airborne landings in West New Guinea. On 20 March, General Nasution during a speech in Semarang had referred to airborne attacks declaring that the Dutch delaying tactics would force Indonesia to take West New Guinea by force. This was followed on 2 April by a statement from Nasution in Bandung to the effect that 75 per cent of all Indonesian military efforts were directed at the conquest of West New Guinea and claimed that soon Indonesia would possess sufficient military strength to chase the Dutch out of the territory. On 11 March he exclaimed in a speech:

Indonesia is not prepared to wait for two years for New Guinea. It does not matter whether it will be returned to us by the United States or even Satan, as long as it happens this year. There are nine months left and we are not afraid to use force, as we are ready.

Then, on 15 May, there was the declaration by Nasution:

We will continue to drop and land volunteers in West New Guinea. And if this proves not to be sufficient we will call on the armed forces to act. We have received heavy armaments from the 'socialist' countries that in firepower surpass the Netherlands' NATO-supported forces. We cannot trust the Netherlands in transferring West Irian via negotiations ...

On 26 April, eighty paratroopers were dropped north of Kaimana, and seventy near Fak-Fak, followed the next day with forty-five near Mambumibu. On 7 May, sixty paratroopers landed on the south-west coast and on 19 May, eighty were

dropped on the Onin peninsula and 100 ended up near Teminabuan. From the interrogation reports of captured paratroopers it appeared that all the airborne operations had been conducted by regular Indonesian army units, supported by 'volunteers'.²⁰³

Notwithstanding these actions, Luns continued his delaying game, and in an interview with the American journalist Paul Ghali he is reported to have stated that Netherlands policy was directed towards creating an independent Papuan state, and it was willing to transfer the territory to the UN but not to Indonesia. This, according to Jakarta, proved that the Netherlands had rejected the Bunker Plan. The State Department and U Thant also came to the same conclusion.

As it happened Luns was finally tripped up by the majority of his parliamentary colleagues voting to accept the Bunker Plan. The Lower House, already upset about the long delay in being able to debate the Bunker proposals, when finally confronted with them, deserted the cabinet. The general feeling in the House was that if it had been informed earlier the talks could have been restarted much sooner. Furthermore, Bunker's elucidation on 23 March on the question of Papuan rights was found sufficient and the Athens formula was deemed unnecessary. To the great chagrin of Luns and de Quay, reading the mood of the chamber the cabinet decided to scrap the Athens agreement. But a Labour Party motion calling for an unconditional acceptance of the Bunker Plan was found too drastic and the government was merely directed to resume talks on the basis of the Bunker proposals. An angry, but undeterred, Luns left the chamber, and managed again to put his stamp on the dispatch to U Thant stating that the Dutch government's decision to continue the preliminary talks did not mean that the Netherlands had agreed to the precondition of a transfer by the Netherlands of West New Guinea.²⁰⁴ This proviso was also conveyed to Ambassador Rice to whom Luns brought up his disbelief about how Washington could possibly put trust in such a completely unscrupulous and

devious character as Sukarno.²⁰⁵

All this of course achieved exactly Luns's objective of preventing the Indonesian willingness to return to Middleburg. Certainly Sukarno's suspicions of Dutch intentions were raised to a high pitch and as he told Howard Jones: "... I know the Dutch. They are deceiving the USA as well as U Thant ..."²⁰⁶

Van Roijen, long at odds with the cabinet, finally lost his patience and dispatched a highly critical appraisal to The Hague making it clear that the original Dutch plan of a UN interim administration followed by a Papuan plebiscite was no longer achievable. The plan to guide the Papuans to independence was doomed. All that remained was to lobby as strongly as possible to put in place the best possible guarantees for Papuan human rights. Even the chances in this respect were diminishing daily and he put it on the line that the Bunker Plan afforded the Netherlands its last chance. Deprived of American and other Allied military support the Netherlands could only conduct a defensive war, which the USA believed in the end was not sustainable. The result would be to surrender the Papuans unconditionally to the Indonesians. Van Roijen also disagreed with the policy of waiting for an economic Indonesian collapse. Firstly, this was not certain, and with an expected army takeover during such a scenario the military threat to West New Guinea would remain except that an invasion would be postponed temporarily.²⁰⁷ Following up van Roijen's letter the Indonesian Bureau in the Dutch Foreign Affairs Department stressed that during further negotiations the question of Papuan representation should be strongly pressed.²⁰⁸

From their side the Indonesians exploited the Dutch delaying tactics to the hilt, using this as a legitimate excuse to press on with their military buildup and to step up airborne operations.

On the brink of war

In Washington it began to look as though Indonesia was not

genuinely interested in a peaceful solution, but wanted, in a pique of anti-colonial rancour, to settle the issue by a military victory in order to enhance its national grandeur. Certainly Luns was convinced, and with some justification, that Sukarno wanted the return of West New Guinea as a result of armed struggle and not as a present from whatever quarter. Indonesian accusations of Dutch recalcitrance according to Luns were only a pretext to hide their warlike intentions. All along Sukarno had only been interested in humiliating the Netherlands, and the possibility of war had very much increased as a result of a recent change in Soviet thinking. Hitherto, Moscow had tried to prevent a war over West New Guinea, fearing that this would push the Soviet Union into a wider armed conflict with American forces. The Soviet arms deliveries to Indonesia had been intended primarily to keep the anti-American cauldron at boiling point. But the realisation that the Bunker Plan could succeed had moved the odds in Jakarta towards the Americans causing Moscow to re-define its strategy.²⁰⁹

In fact, the arrival of hundreds of Soviet military advisers and Soviet-manned submarines soon after Subandrio's arms buying spree in Moscow, seems to provide credibility to Luns's contentions. Soviet embassy actions in Jakarta also pointed to this, because immediately after news had filtered through about imminent sponsored Dutch-Indonesian talks to be held in Washington, Ambassador Mikhailov was very angry about this turn of events and his efforts to obtain more detailed information from the American embassy remained fruitless. Mikhailov, up in arms at this development, sped to the presidential palace and demanded that Sukarno write an explanatory note to Krushchev and warned that Indonesia was falling into a trap set by the Americans designed to take over former Dutch economic interests and also to grab the oil fields in West New Guinea. According to the Russians the USA was on the point of investing millions of dollars in Indonesia. Angered by Mikhailov's imperial tone the Indonesians responded with a sharp protest about this

unwarranted Soviet interference. Jakarta, keen to create a favourable impression in Washington just before the Middleburg meeting, reported this incident to the American embassy. Anything that might upset Indonesian-Soviet relations was welcome there. The Americans believed that this might rob the PKI and the Soviet Union of a potent weapon against the West and could take away the brake so far applied by Sukarno on the army to act against the PKI. Howard Jones's deputy, Henderson, however, emphasised that a delay in negotiations would help the PKI, which in any case would do its utmost to ruin the Middleburg talks.²¹⁰

Roger Hilsman, head of the intelligence and research section in the State Department, now concluded that Moscow was absolutely opposed to a peaceful solution of the West New Guinea problem. The Soviets were clearly upset about the American initiatives, although Hilsman believed that Khrushchev did not want to escalate the dispute towards war. One reason for this was the possibility of the Indonesians bungling an invasion attempt that would cause the Soviet Union a loss of prestige and might force it to intervene, resulting in direct confrontation with the USA. On the other hand an Indonesian victory would lessen Jakarta's dependence on the communists. Hence, it suited Moscow to simply keep the issue on the boil. The West New Guinea question served communist goals admirably as it highlighted the role of Moscow as the champion of anti-colonialism, helping to draw Jakarta and the Third World deeper into the Soviet camp. Since 1960, the situation had been complicated by the growing Sino-Soviet rift. An increasing orientation of the PKI towards Peking had caused tension between the party and the Indonesian government. The Soviets tried to exploit this situation by strengthening their relationship with Sukarno.²¹¹ Moreover, in its attempts to entangle Jakarta into its web Moscow continued to supply an enormous array of armaments, including heavy weapons, making Indonesia the most powerful military power in Asia outside China. The Indonesian Air Force had undergone

a virtual metamorphosis, growing from a motley collection of World War II-era piston-engine aircraft into a strong modern force, equipped with the latest Mig-19 and Mig-21 fighters, Tupolev-16 and Ilyushin bombers, and ironically, American Hercules transport planes. The navy was considerably enlarged and included the latest Soviet destroyers, submarines, a Sverdlovsk-class heavy cruiser, Italian MTBs and modern transport craft. The army was equipped with modern East European small arms, tanks, rocket launchers, and both surface-to-air and surface missiles.²¹²

The reported massing of Indonesian armed forces in the vicinity of West New Guinea caused a red alert in the Netherlands. A report of the joint chiefs of staff to the cabinet stated that since March the Indonesians had been clearly preparing for a major attack. Its strike power had grown rapidly to the point that at the beginning of June at least three battalions, supported by strong naval forces and holding air superiority, could be landed. Sukarno wanted an Indonesian feat of arms and by establishing a large bridgehead would have anchored Indonesian sovereignty on West Irian soil. This in fact would strengthen his position at the negotiating table. The Netherlands would be militarily outclassed and there was very little time left to find a political solution. The cabinet considered the situation not yet urgent enough to order the evacuation from threatened areas, as had been requested by Governor Platteel. The military authorities in fact supported Platteel and stressed that opportunities for the Dutch forces to take decisive action were rapidly disappearing.

So, on 13 July, the date on which the negotiations were resumed again, van Roijen was instructed by The Hague to demand Washington to call for a stop to the Indonesian war preparations. If this was not heeded the State Department had to be told that the Netherlands was considering a pre-emptive strike on Indonesian naval bases and airfields. On 27 July, the Dutch received intelligence information that the Indonesian task force commander had ordered the chartering of a large number of ships

and the transfer of another 8000 soldiers from Java to invasion massing points in East Indonesia. The Dutch chiefs of staff of the army and the air force told the cabinet that Dutch defence positions on the west and south-west coast were no longer viable and the troops should be relocated to the main defensive positions in the Geelvink Bay area. This move was opposed by the naval chief of staff arguing that these points would be immediately occupied by Indonesian troops and be used as bridge-heads from whence they could easily swarm out to make the defence position in Geelvink Bay untenable. In his view it would be preferable for the local commanders when attacked by overwhelmingly superior numbers to resist and then surrender. This view was shared by the cabinet. Again, on 31 July, the cabinet had to deal with another request of the Dutch armed forces commander in New Guinea to engage in offensive actions against various targets in the invasion massing area. The cabinet decided against this and restricted Dutch armed action to Indonesian ships and aircraft that had passed the 40-kilometre limit and were clearly moving towards the New Guinea coast.²¹³

After the Dutch government's announcement of its decision to return to Middleburg, Sukarno kept on playing his obstructive game. In letters to U Thant he was evasive and feigned a misunderstanding to Washington of the Dutch interpretation of the Bunker Plan. Adam Malik returned to Middleburg and the talks started again on 13 July.

Prior to this van Roijen had been recalled to The Hague for further consultations. De Quay wrote in his diary that van Roijen had complained to him that he did not have the trust of the cabinet. In fact, during the cabinet session van Roijen and Luns sharply clashed and de Quay tried to ease the hostile tension and to achieve a working relationship between the two, as he considered van Roijen indispensable to the negotiations.²¹⁴ Van Roijen was sent back with the following specific instructions:

1. to ensure an adequate guarantee for Papuan interests, including the right to self-determination;

2. peace and order to be secured by a UN police force;
3. hostilities to be suspended during the negotiations;
4. an eventual agreement to be ratified by the UN.²¹⁵

In Adam Malik's case the radius of operation was again strictly prescribed and bargaining about the crucial questions of the Indonesian takeover and the Papuan right of self-determination remained out of bounds. He was only allowed to discuss technical matters such as Dutch aid for economic development, and the nature and composition of the civil administration and economic concessions. In fact, the real negotiations commenced with the arrival on 18 July of Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, who, as suspected, almost immediately started to try to demolish those parts of the Bunker Plan crucial to the Netherlands. On 26 July, during a personal meeting with van Roijen, he demanded that the UN interim government should be reduced to a few months in order to comply with Sukarno's demand for a 1962 victory. But far more interesting was Subandrio's point that during twelve months' UN interim government, as envisaged in the Bunker Plan, Indonesia would still be forced to remain on a massive war footing. He argued that being saddled with such an enormous financial outlay could cause the country, already on the verge of bankruptcy, to be pushed into the abyss. Van Roijen replied that he could not see any valid reason after the signing of the agreement for Indonesia not to reduce military expenditure. Subandrio further stressed that the Indonesian military was suspicious of a long interim period during which too many political booby traps could be left behind and Westerling-like actions could be prepared. He referred here to the statement of a Papuan member of the New Guinea Council that the Netherlands intended to arm the Papuan population. Van Roijen tried to refute this by pointing out that the sole reason for instituting an interim authority had been precisely to avoid the outbreak of a Congo-like chaos. As a result, Subandrio offered to try to persuade Jakarta to agree to an extra two months of interim government, and in response to van Roijen's objec-

tion that this contravened part of the Bunker Plan, he asserted that from the beginning the Indonesians had told the Americans about their reservations concerning the time factor. Van Roijen retorted that he had never been informed about this and that such a fundamental change in the Bunker formula would justifiably cause the Netherlands to conclude that it had been deceived. This would accentuate even more the already strong anti-Indonesian mood in the Netherlands, putting the outcome of the negotiations at great risk. Subandrio argued that it would be folly to go to war on the time question, and volunteered that Nasution also did not want a large-scale military operation as this would drive Indonesia ever closer into the Soviet orbit, putting its non-alignment status at risk. Turning to the Dutch demand for the right of self-determination for the Papuans he abruptly obviated all previous Indonesian promises. As he put it Indonesia would surely not be required to accept such obligations, which went further than the rules applying to a UN trusteeship. This would be taken by Indonesia as a national affront. For full measure, Subandrio insisted that Indonesian forces already operating in West New Guinea should remain there and should be amalgamated with the UN troops. The Dutch were given an ultimatum of four days after which he and Adam Malik would return to Jakarta.²¹⁶

The reaction in The Hague was furious, while in the White House and the State Department patience was running very thin. The Americans seriously started to wonder whether Jakarta was really interested in a peaceful solution or only intending to humiliate the Netherlands. Rusk told Subandrio that while the USA would balk at such recalcitrant behaviour from the Russians, it certainly would not take this from the Indonesians. Rusk insisted that President Kennedy had to be called upon to lay down the law to the Indonesians and that Sukarno had to be told that if war broke out because of this nonsensical stand, the USA would be involved. McGeorge Bundy tried to calm Rusk down by arguing that although it was time to slap down Sukarno, it would

be dangerous if an inkling of this reached van Roijen.²¹⁷

In an interview on 26 July, Rusk left van Roijen under the impression that American military help was out of the question when he indicated that any such USA involvement would have to be preceded by a total mobilisation of the Netherlands forces to defend West New Guinea. This caused van Roijen to remark bitterly that even that would not cause the USA to lift a finger to help.²¹⁸

Subandrio was carpeted by President Kennedy and in a stormy interview was told that the USA was absolutely fed up with Sukarno's sabotaging antics. Kennedy stressed that it would be crazy to go to war when peace was in reach and made it clear that if Indonesia persisted on this course the USA could not remain indifferent and would have to reconsider its policy.²¹⁹ A somewhat chastened Subandrio emerged from this meeting and indeed started to adopt a more reasonable attitude.

In the meantime, in The Hague, the government was propelled into action by a reliable intelligence report about an expected major Indonesian attack during the first part of August.²²⁰ This caused the cabinet to cave in and inform van Roijen of its decision to concede to the Indonesian request for a shorter UN interim period and minimum UN supervision of the actual Papuan plebiscite.²²¹

Subsequently, during a meeting on 28 July, a breakthrough occurred and an agreement was reached on all outstanding points. This was followed by the signing of a preliminary accord, signifying the end of 350 years of Dutch colonial presence in the Indonesian archipelago and leaving the Papuans in the hands of another colonial power.

Notes

1. De Geus, 1984, p. 62-3.
2. *Rapport van de Commissie Nieuw Guinea (Irian) 1950*, 2e stuk Tekst en het Nederlandse hoofdbestanddeel, p. 5.
3. *ibid.*, pp. 6-7 and 8-9.

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4. *ibid.*, 3e stuk, pp. 22-43.
5. *ibid.*, pp. 54-6 and 61-4.
6. *ibid.*, p. 83.
7. Palmier, 1962, pp. 146-47.
8. Lijphart, 1966, p. 165.
9. Meijer, 1994, p. 255.
10. Colijn, 1928; Penders, 1968, pp. 224-31.
11. Duynstee, 1961, p. 190
12. *ibid.*, p. 192.
13. De Geus, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-6.
14. Duynstee, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
15. Gase, 1984, p. 38.
16. *ibid.*, pp. 40-4.
17. Meijer, *op. cit.*, p. 373.
18. Lijphart, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-4.
19. *ibid.*, 209; De Geus, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-1.
20. Wiardi Beckman Stichting, 1958, pp. 12-13, pp. 21 and 31.
21. BUZA, van Roijen, 6-19151, Ref. no. 338.
22. De Beus, 1977, p. 270.
23. BUZA, aan Washington, 19 Juni 1954. Afd. DGIN no. 75293-3636GS; Also consult Aust. Archives, A/838/238/45/1/4/5/1. Ambassador Tange 24 December 1953. Memorandum no. 1651/53.
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27. BUZA, van Roijen nl, 1942, 15 Januari 1957, ref. no. 10379.
28. BUZA, Washington, 23 Maart 1956, codebericht 34, ref. no. 10248.
29. BUZA, Washington, 22 Mei 1956, codebericht 220, ref. no. 11805.
30. BUZA, Jakarta -Hagenaar, 29 May 1956, codebericht 321, ref. no. 12013.
31. Jones, 1971, pp. 178-79.
32. BUZA, Washington, 2 January 1958, Ref. no. 5056.
33. BUZA, DOA Memorandum, 11 Februari 1958, no. 35.
34. BUZA, aan Washington, 14 Februari 1958, ref. no. 1910.

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35. BUZA, Washington-van Roijen, 13 Mei 1958 codebericht 380, ref. no. 9021.
36. Aust. Archives, Cabinet submission no. 1281. R.G. Casey, 8 July 1958. Appendix D, p. 3. Telegram no. 876 from the Aust. embassy in Washington, 2 June.
37. BUZA, Washington-van Roijen, 27 Mei 1958, codebericht 418, ref. no. 9368.
38. BUZA, Luns, Memorandum no. 55, 28 Mei 1958.
39. BUZA, New York, 17 September 1958, codebericht, 342, ref. no. 11984.
40. BUZA, van Roijen, 18 September 1958, codebericht no. 716, ref. no. 12008.
41. BUZA, New York, 2 October 1958, Schürmann, codebericht 289, ref. no. 12334.
42. De Geus, op. cit., Bijlagen I, II.
43. BUZA, Ministerraad, Notulen 10 Oct. 1958.
44. BUZA, Luns aan van Roijen, 6 January 1959, codebericht 8, ref. no. 68.
45. Koster, 1991, p. 32.
46. BUZA, aan Washington, 12 Mei 1959, codebericht 253, ref. nl. 3476.
47. De Geus, op. cit., p. 110.
48. BUZA, Luns Memorandum no. 69, 25 June 1959.
49. BUZA, Luns Memorandum, 13 Juli 1959.
50. BUZA, Memorandum no. 86. Luns to Minister van Defensie, Geheim, 31 Juli 1959.
51. De Beus, op. cit., p. 255.
52. BUZA, Afschift, P.C. Spender, Minister of State for External Affairs, to Mr P.E. Teppema, Netherlands Ambassador, 8 February 1950 (C. 5\630\74), Top Secret, 15288-1338 G-S.
53. ibid.
54. BUZA, Hirschfeld aan Min. van Buitenl. Zaken 15 Februari 1950, ref. no. 1603, 16542-1432 GS .
55. BUZA, Canberra 20 April 1950, ref. 4128.
56. BUZA, Canberra (Teppema) 25 April, 1950, Geheim, 42186-34 54 G. S.
57. BUZA, (Stikker) to Canberra, 2 Mei 1950 43983-3623GS Geheim.

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60. BUZA, Netherlands Ambassador, Rio de Janeiro, 16 June, 1950 no 3194, aan H.N. Boon, Secretaris-Generaal van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.
61. BUZA, Vertegenwoordiger van Nederland in de Verenigde Naties aan Minister Stikker, 5 August 1950, no 1969/537.
62. BUZA, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 29 August 1950, Foto no. 28838A.
63. BUZA, Memorandum no. 270 4 December 1950.
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65. *ibid.*
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67. Aust. Archives, Aust. Embassy the Hague to External Affairs, Cablegram I 1176-1, 18 Jan. 1951
68. Aust. Archives, Aust. Embassy The Hague to External Affairs, 1 May 1951, Cablegram 208 X 8011.
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70. BUZA, Ambassador Teixas de Mattos, 19 Juli 1951, c5/3385/565.
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74. BUZA, Memorandum van DOA/OP aan DOA no. 94, 2 April 1953.
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78. BUZA, Canberra ref no. 11913, 13 March 1957.
79. Verrier, 1976, p. 90.
80. *ibid.*, p. 88.
81. Aust. Archives, Cabinet Papers. Agendum no. 980. Secret 10 December 1957.
82. BUZA, Van Houten, Memorandum no. 58. 19 Mei 1958.

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83. Aust. Archives, Cabinet submission no. 997. Indonesia. Secret. 3 June 1958.
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 104. BUZA, Notulen Ministerraad, 9 September 1960.
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 108. *ibid.*
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 110. Koster, *op. cit.*, p. 43
 111. *ibid.*
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 117. Huydecoper van Nigtevecht, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
 118. Lijphart, *op. cit.*, p. 274.
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 124. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
 125. Huydecoper van Nigtevecht, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
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 128. Koster *op. cit.*, pp. 64-5.
 129. *ibid.*, p. 67.
 130. *ibid.*, pp. 67-8.
 131. *ibid.*, p. 69.
 132. BUZA, van Roijen 15 December 1961. codebericht 889, ref. 10618.
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 158. Koster, op. cit., p. 77.
 159. BUZA, Notulen Ministerraad, 26 January 1962.
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175. *ibid.*, p. 79.
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