

Papua, a multi-faceted history

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The old German TV-production *Anatomie einer Krise*, just introduced and shown to us by Rogier Smeele, gave us a look into the life of Papua in the period preceding the transfer of the administration from the Netherlands to the United Nations. It might be true that a film does not have the power to replace a written text, but it certainly has a narrative quality of its own. The medium confronts us very directly with the affairs and sentiments of the past. We saw the hoisting of the Morning Star and the parading of the Papua Volunteer Corps through the streets of Hollandia. We also saw the members of the New Guinea Council discussing the future of their country. All of them, events that tended to underline the policies of the day. The Papuans seemed to be well on the way towards a future as an independent nation. That remained the parole for the months to come. Even in the final days of the Dutch administration the Vice-Minister, Theo Bot, assured the public that it was still possible that the future would develop along the lines set out by the Netherlands. Though it was stipulated in the New York Agreement that the Papuans had to pass through an Indonesian interim-administration first, in the end they would have the opportunity to speak for themselves in an Act of Free Choice.

It was also the approach adopted by members of the Papua elite, though most of them had serious doubts about the viability of the plans. These were demonstrated during the interim-administration of the United Nations. A small group of Papuans that had been among the key players in the Dutch approach was offered a safe haven in the Netherlands. Most prominent among them were Nicolaas Jouwe and Marcus Kaisiepo. Those who remained in New Guinea had to face Indonesian rule and find ways and means to come to terms with it. It would prove no easy thing to do and, for the Papua population as a whole, much disappointment and misery was in store. Their introduction to the wider world, that had only begun during the first decades of the twentieth century, now took a turn for the worse. The question for them was and still is, how to define a position towards the Indonesian state that would be conducive to their survival and further development as fully entitled members of the human race.

The book that is launched today tells the story of the entrance of the Papuans into the modern world. The beginnings can be traced right back to the sixteenth century. During the first three hundred years of their presence in Asia, the Dutch were not very interested in the island at all. For them, New Guinea represented little more than a borderland that delineated their sphere of influence in Asia. It was only much later that the inhabitants became the object of their economic and educational aspirations as well. From 1949 on, different opinions on the future of the Papuans led to an increasingly bitter conflict between the Netherlands and the newly

created Indonesian state. In my book I tried to give a full account of these developments. For that reason it had to cover many aspects of life. These included international affairs, Dutch internal policies, internal rivalries in Indonesia and in New Guinea and the adaptation of the Papuans to Western culture. I had to cover the tactics of colonization and decolonization and the way these worked out for those involved. In telling the story, I based myself as much as possible on verifiable written information of the time. Moreover, I listened to the tales as told by those who were involved in the process, trying to check their memories with the written sources and vice versa. In other words, I took refuge in the time-honoured techniques of the historical trade, in which the hope of coming to a trustworthy reconstruction of the past has not succumbed entirely to the post-modern conviction that such a thing is completely impossible.

Here a word has to be said about a misunderstanding that is still very much alive today. It is the idea that I should have written a 'report'. Using that term, one is easily led to believe that what we have to deal with here is an analysis, leading up to clearly defined conclusions adapted to the needs of policymakers, lawyers and administrators. This was certainly not laid down in the terms of reference that were defined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Institute of Netherlands History. Nor was it my intention. I was only asked to explain, as clearly as possible, the meaning of the Act of Free Choice, how it came about and the way in which it was executed. The result is an historical study that focuses on the history of West New Guinea in the twentieth century, carried through in full strength up to the year 1970 and rounded off with a few lines on the main developments up until the turn of the century. The approach is that of an ongoing story, presented in a chronological order. Yet, that order is regularly interrupted by excursions into the background of the various themes that determined the course of events. In this way, the different fields of diplomatic, political, cultural, economic, military and administrative history are linked together, making it possible to discuss them separately and yet detect the links that kept them together.

Notwithstanding the narrative approach, the story inevitably must lead to conclusions as well, and I have not hesitated to formulate them to the best of my knowledge. Yet, I took care not to enter too much into the field of speculation. The danger here lies in the fact that too specific statements on one aspect of the story inevitably must have consequences for one's opinion on the others. For that reason, I preferred to study these separate fields in a detached way, emphasizing the relevant forces within their own context. History, more often than not, is not the result of a grand conspiracy or some great and inescapable development towards a predetermined goal, but the result of the workings of many unequal forces, the outcome of which could have been rather different if one of them had reacted differently. So, history remains an open-ended story, and I took care to give the reader ample opportunity to be aware of it.

Within these limits, my reconstruction sheds light on many points that up to now were more or less shrouded in darkness. That certainly is largely attributable to the fact that I was offered ample access to the most relevant archives. That was not only true for the Netherlands. The kee-

pers of the archives in the United States, Australia, and the United Nations were very helpful as well. Moreover, the project matched precisely with the other project I was working on during these five years, namely the digital edition of documents on Dutch Indonesian relations during the years 1950-1963. This combination made it possible for me to focus fully on the affairs of New Guinea and Dutch-Indonesian relations during that period. As always, I profited much from the cooperation with Marian Schouten, who was my partner in the documentary project and whose factual knowledge and shrewd analyses were of great help. Moreover, the case of New Guinea has attracted attention from many different quarters recently, and I felt immensely stimulated by the work of various colleagues in many places of the world. Some of them are among the contributors to this seminar. Such an international setting creates a stimulating atmosphere, and for me it was a pleasure to take part in it. It is only unfortunate that, despite demonstrating a keen interest in the project, the Indonesian Government was not willing to support it. I hope to have found some compensation for the resulting loss from my many previous contacts with Indonesian politicians, students and just simple citizens. Moreover, there were instructive meetings with many Papuan informants and, not to be forgotten, there was the work of colleagues who had interviewed them before. Here I should mention the names of Richard Chauvel, John Saltford and Dirk Vlasblom, who have been prolific in the field. Effective cooperation can take place by progressing separately. It must be added, that much help and fruitful information was given by Leontine Visser and Jos Amapon Marey, who have an intimate knowledge of things going on in the land of the Papuans. Initially, Jos Amapon Marey tended to define our collaboration as one of a colonial civil servant with his Papuan adviser. We learned very soon, however, that such words had outlived their utility and that it would be better to replace them with the simple term of 'friends'.

The rise of Papua nationalism

Having said all this, you might expect me to give at least some idea of the content of the book. I will try to do so. My first remark must be on the decades preceding the Second World War. Most authors on the subject take it for granted that in these times it was all backwardness and neglect on the part of the Dutch. Yet, in my opinion that idea needs some amendment. Actually, it is largely a reflection of the frustration of contemporaries who had more ambitious plans with the territory than could be realised at the time. Yet, it does not imply that nothing at all was done. Ample reading in the files and reports of the period has convinced me that the results were far more far-reaching than is generally accepted. In 1941, at the beginning of the war in Asia, much of what was typical for the latter-day Papua-world was already present. Since the arrival of the first protestant missionaries in the second half of the 19th century and the establishment of the first administrative centres around the turn of the century, missionaries and government officials had steadily worked for the gradual introduction of the inhabitants of the coastal zones of Papua

into the complexities of the modern world. The work had been carried out slowly and with limited means, but it had been done effectively. It is doubtful whether more speed would have led to greater results. As it was, western thoughts and ways had penetrated the Papua world gradually, without disturbing its ways of living immediately or completely.

The effect, nevertheless, was that in 1941 in some of the coastal zones an elementary lettered society existed and the first traces of a modern elite could be found. Contacts had been made between people of different tribes and Christianity was taking root as the new religion. The Second World War indeed caused stagnation, but not a complete breach with that development. The withdrawal of Dutch control led in many places to a revival of magic modes of thinking. Yet, these too showed signs that some of the new elements had already been introduced. Such was the case on the island of Biak. Here, a messiah arose who promised to reshape the golden past. His followers ran into the thousands. His program contained many traditional elements. Yet, it included modern ideas as well, such as proto-nationalistic representations of a new Papua State with a flag and new modes of organization. It reflected a longing for social justice and modern techniques. The leaders of this Koreri tried to adapt their traditional way of living to the promises of a new world through magic means. It happened not only in Biak, but in other places as well.

This episode of what we may call 'naïve adaptation' did not last long. Already in April 1944 the western penetration began anew. It did so in a spectacular way with the arrival of the land, sea and air forces of the American general Douglas MacArthur on the shores of Hollandia. They dropped huge quantities of all the riches of the world along the coast and in no time constructed a vast network of roads, harbours, airfields, warehouses and buildings. To the onlooking Papuans it was the fulfilment of the old prophecies on the return of the golden age of yore. Yet, the element of modernity was not lost on them either. It was stimulated by the fact that American negroes, who were as black as the Papuans themselves, apparently played an important role in the incoming armies. They even asked them to lend a hand. It strengthened the self-confidence of the Papuans and kindled their ambition to become like them.

They were stimulated to do so by the incoming Dutch administration that started a development program which was speeded up after 1950. The following successive governors were linked to this administration: J.P.K. van Eechoud, S.L.J. van Waardenburg, J. van Baal and P.J. Platteel. In retrospect it was a rather effective enterprise that was gladly supported by most of the population within its reach. Yet, the Dutch administrators demonstrated a considerable restraint in speeding up the process of 'pacification' and development too much. That was evident in the discussions from the 1950s on the need for a rapid introduction of the administrative system into as yet unknown parts of the interior. Some of the most prominent officials pleaded for a slowing down of the process. According to them, such expansion was only allowed to happen once the government had sufficient numbers of trained civil servants, teachers, police, military personnel and missionaries at its disposal. When the follow-up would fall short, it would be difficult to control the process. Therefore, it was only

in the second half of the 1950s that more attention was paid to the pacification of the Central Mountains. In 1962, when West New Guinea was transferred to the United Nations, the process was far from complete.

That restraint was not only the result of a lack of means and men. Essentially, it was a deliberate policy based on earlier experiences with the phenomenon of regression. When a new administration began pressing too hard for change, people would increasingly be forced into opposition. This was patently evident in the so-called Obano Revolt that took place in the Wissel Lakes region in 1956. It was not a modern-political revolt, but primarily a matter of resistance by a traditional society towards incoming influences from outside that upset the universe the population had known for ages. In later years, under Indonesian rule, such revolts took place again. The logic of the theory obliges us to ascribe these at least partially to the same causes. Yet, by then the revolts were stronger and more difficult to suppress. That must be attributed to the tendency of the Indonesian administration to enforce its policies with an unrelenting fierceness. Yet, there were other differences as well. By the 1960s, the champions of the resistance were members of a new elite who had experienced the workings of a modern administration. From 1965 on, such revolts happened against the background of the impending Act of Free Choice, giving them distinct political overtones.

Seen from a greater distance, developments in West New Guinea did not differ essentially from those in the rest of the former Netherlands Indies. Everywhere, a process of modernization took place that changed the mindset of the inhabitants, the character of the state and the attitude of the inhabitants towards it. Sure, the Papuans had a culture that differed markedly from that of the rest of Indonesia. It had its effect on the kind of nationalism that developed here. Yet, it was the matter of phasing that added much to the differences. In New Guinea, everything happened decades later. Indonesian nationalism as it had originated on Java during the 1920s did not touch the Papuans. The Korori might have had some proto-national undertones, but these certainly did not include the concept of an independent Indonesia. It was still so at the time of the proclamation of that independence on 17 August 1945. Moreover, at that time there were additional factors that contributed towards setting the Papuans apart from the rest of Indonesia. New Guinea had already been free from the grip of Japan for more than a year and Papuans had actively participated in crushing the remaining Japanese troops. The coming of MacArthur with his black soldiers had kindled a pride in their identity as black men. Moreover, the sufferings of the war had come to them mainly through the hands of Ambonese officials of the pre-war Dutch administration. It had sharpened already existing anti-Indonesian feelings. Curiously enough, these 'anti-amberi' sentiments were not transferred to the returning Netherlands administration. The renewed Dutch interest was much appreciated and Jan van Eechoud, the leading official of the time, saw fit to tap into these sentiments. He opened for them the prospect of further development and managed to stir enthusiasm for it under the tiny elite of young Papuans from the North Coast. It was for that reason that Van Eechoud was baptized by them the Bapa Papua, the father of the Papuans.

The sentiment was to grow stronger with the years to come. That was especially so after 1950, when West New Guinea from one day to another was cut off from the rest of Indonesia and became a separate government, placed directly under The Hague. The Dutch presence was now much more visible than before. The resulting active development policies and the increasing budgets were welcomed by the Papuans and strengthened their self esteem. Conversely, Indonesia was now beginning to show an inimical face. It made itself felt through small military pin-pricks. The infiltrating Indonesians were seen by most Papuans as enemies that formed a threat to their security. That feeling was strengthened by the Indonesian propaganda that came to them through the radio-stations in Ambon and Makassar. It was directed against the Dutch administration, but most Papuans felt it as meant for them too. So they actively participated in the defence of their country. Small wonder such things intensified their own sense of identity. It was also strengthened by the mutual contacts of the youth of the various Papuan tribes through common schooling and the common participation in the institutions of the colonial state. It was stimulated moreover by the policies of the Government, that pointed towards further development and, maybe, to a common future with the inhabitants of the eastern half of New Guinea that was administered by Australia. Indeed, the Netherlands and Australian administrations were discussing such programs and the small but gradually expanding group of better educated Papuans applauded them.

The rising national sentiment was voiced clear and loud in the debates in the New Guinea Council and in the newly formed political parties of the early 1960s. Here Papuans asked to have a flag and national anthem of their own. Their National Papua Congress, held in Hollandia in October 1961, can be compared with the Congress of the Indonesian Youth of 1928. On that occasion, the young nationalists of Indonesia pledged themselves to the ideal of a free and independent Indonesia. The meeting in Hollandia was a prelude to a free Papua. In doing so, the participants set themselves squarely against the ambitions of their predecessors on Java, thirty-four years earlier. This antithesis was further deepened after the transfer to Indonesia. In the early 1960s the Papuans had smelled the taste of a better future in freedom. The reality since 1962 meant a bitter disappointment, and it has been difficult for them to come to terms with it ever since.

West New Guinea and Indonesian decolonization

So far for the development of a Papuan identity. To a certain extent it was a rather normal process under the conditions of twentieth century colonial administration. Without a doubt it was accelerated by the exclusion of New Guinea from the transfer of sovereignty in December 1949. In most academic studies, this exclusion is attributed to resentment on the part of the Dutch and an inability to accept the end of their Indonesian empire gracefully. By 1966 the term Trauma of Decolonization had already been coined by the political scientist Arent Lijphart. There is some truth in the statement, but the reality is more complicated. The split of the country

was not only the result of Dutch traumas. We have already seen that the Papuans had remained outside the mainstream of Indonesian nationalism. For the pre-war period, that was certainly not the result of Dutch manipulation or pressure. There simply was no need for it. For the years that followed, the answer is more complicated. In my book I have tended to accentuate the Dutch preference for a federal construction in the era of decolonization in Indonesia. The approach is open to the suspicion that it was meant as a system of divide and rule and to continue Dutch supremacy in a different form. There are indeed elements of truth in this. Yet, at the time of its conception, it was also the obvious instrument to unite again the various parts of the country that had fallen to pieces through the forces of war and revolution. In it, the component parts would be united, though having a considerable degree of autonomy themselves. In Linggarjati, a rather elementary blueprint of a sovereign Indonesian federation was discussed with the leaders of nationalist Indonesia in November 1946. The outcome was laid down in a draft contract. The guiding principle was the right of self-determination, not only for Indonesia as a whole, but also for its component parts.

The draft that had been negotiated in Indonesia was a bridge too far for the Dutch policymakers in The Hague. It was criticized on many points. In the case of New Guinea it was argued that self-determination was not practicable for the time being since the population had not developed far enough to make such far-reaching decisions. The agreement was amended accordingly. It probably was not an act of great statesmanship by the Dutch parliament to do so, but it was nevertheless a defensible thesis and had nothing to do with a trauma or a psychological deviation of any kind. In this provision of 1946 we can already discern the outlines of the later Act of Free Choice. The Papuans had to speak for themselves when the time was right. It meant the starting point of the dispute with the Indonesian nationalists, who refused to accept the Dutch amendment. At the Round Table Conference (RTC) of 1949 that laid down the conditions of the transfer, much pressure was needed to have it accepted by the Indonesian negotiators. The exemption of New Guinea could only enter the treaty after heated discussions and in a rather imperfect form. In my book I examine the manoeuvres that led to that outcome, among others those of Van Eechoud who at that time was still the administrator of the territory. He did so with the support of the first generation of Papuan nationalists.

Yet, even then, the exemption did not necessarily imply separation from the rest of Indonesia. In the RTC-agreements the possibility for a solution within the larger context of the Indonesian federation and the Netherlands-Indonesian Union was held open. This option faded away in the following years as a result of the developments in Indonesia where new political realities created their own priorities. The federation was pushed aside for an Indonesian unitary state, the Union came to nothing and the Netherlands applied itself to the development of Western New Guinea according to its own ideas. For the rest of the 1950s the government got full support for this policy from large majorities in the Dutch parliament.

In this way, the conditions were set for a serious conflict between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The question has been asked before: was New Guinea the cause or consequence of the two countries drifting apart? A definitive answer is difficult to give, but the outcome of my research tends to confirm the thesis that it was part of a conflict that would have happened anyway. The Hague defended its interests in Indonesia against Indonesian claims to the contrary. Actually, New Guinea was both subject and catalyst in the conflict. For leading circles in Jakarta the fight for New Guinea was both an end in itself and a readily available tool in the internal struggle for power. Territorial claims are often a welcome asset in the public debate. For the Dutch, resentment over failed policies was certainly a stimulating factor. Here, Lijpharts trauma may find its place. Yet, many in the Netherlands seriously felt that there was work to do for the good of the Papuans, and that they had an obligation to do so. For the explanation of this sentiment psychiatry hardly seems applicable.

Seen from a legal point of view, both the Dutch and the Indonesians had some good arguments on their side. Indonesia could easily argue that the territory had been a part of the Netherlands Indies and that full and complete sovereignty had been handed over to Indonesia under point one of the Charter of the RTC Agreements. The Dutch could claim, with good reasons as well, that the second point stipulated that New Guinea was left out of the transfer, and that the status of the territory still had to be discussed between the two contending parties. Initially, the conflict was conceived as one of interpreting the text of the RTC Agreements. Indonesia, however, rejected a proposal made by the Netherlands to leave the decisions in the hands of the International Court of Justice. That refusal was the expression of a mixture of uncertainty, unwillingness, hurt pride and, last but not least, political opportunity.

The dispute became near to insoluble when Indonesia from 1951 onwards defended its position with the argument that the island had been a part of the Indonesian Republic ever since the Proclamation of Independence of 17 August 1945. So, a discussion on sovereignty in terms of the RTC-agreements was a bygone affair. What mattered now was to make arrangements for the handing over of the administration to Indonesia. From an Indonesian point of view it might have been a logical thing to do, since they increasingly tended to regard the proclamation as the single birthmark of their state. Yet, for the Dutch, setting aside the complete discussion leading up to the RTC Agreements was quite unacceptable. So further negotiations came to nothing. I have mapped out the subsequent events rather fully in my chapter on the Geneva Conference of 1955/56, where all the sore points in the relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia were discussed. My central argument is that in Geneva neither of the two parties was willing to make even the slightest move on the point of New Guinea, while in Jakarta political forces that were intent on a complete break were gaining ground daily. The way out was a break on the less dangerous point of arbitrage in conflicts on economic affairs. It can be argued that it was the best option for the two negotiators, the foreign ministers Joseph Luns and Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung. Through it, they could limit the damage as much as possible. The weak spot in my argument, however, is that neither of them ever said so and continued

to blame each other. However that may be, events in Geneva made clear that Indonesia was entering its second revolutionary phase, marked by the concentration of power in the hands of president Soekarno, balanced against that of the army and the communists.

Wavering doubts in Washington

The position of the United States of America is the third central theme in my book. Here, too, the story is too complicated to explain in a few words. During most of the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration took a rather neutral stand in the conflict between the two contending parties. That changed after the misfire of a reckless CIA-intervention in the internal Indonesian politics in 1958, which led Washington to conclude that the army was the strongest force within the Indonesian state. From that time on, it started a project to reconstruct the Indonesian armed forces, providing them with all kinds of weapons. It did so in competition with the Soviet Union, that had already started a program of its own earlier. As a result, the offensive capabilities of the Indonesian forces increased sharply in the following years. It created a direct threat for the Dutch. To counter that effect, the Americans asked Indonesia for assurances not to use the weapons provided by them against the Dutch on New Guinea. Though lightly given by the Indonesians, these were of small solace to the Dutch. Somewhat more assuring were promises made by the Americans to the Dutch to provide assistance in the event of such an assault materialising. For a while these promises looked rather reassuring. Taken to the letter, they were formulated strongly enough to have political meaning. It must be added that foreign minister Joseph Luns kept the Dutch cabinet informed, as was his duty. The trust put in these promises was the joint responsibility of the cabinet. However, when the assault came in 1962 the American promise for military assistance had shrunk to one of solely providing help with the evacuation of the territory.

In these critical years of changing American attitudes and increasing Indonesian strength, the Netherlands was governed by a conservative alliance led by the catholic prime minister, J. de Quay. Together with his Vice-Minister for Overseas Affairs, Theo Bot, he worked for a breakthrough in the impasse that had existed since the failure of the conference at Geneva. To this end, both came with suggestions for the internationalisation of the administration of New Guinea. In this way they hoped to share responsibility with more partners, preferably under the umbrella of the United Nations. The weak point in this policy was that it almost inevitably implied that new negotiations would have to be held with Indonesia. It was only with great hesitation that in the middle of 1961 foreign minister Luns decided to join De Quay and Bot on this road. He did so with the firm resolution to keep Indonesia at bay as far as possible.

The incongruity of that policy became clear during the ensuing negotiations in the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which the United States assumed a leading role. In the end it led to a statement from the Dutch Government on 2 January 1962 that it was willing to resume negotiations with Indonesia. The government in Jakarta did the same.

The direct result was a series of long, drawn out discussions on the pre-conditions for such talks. The remarkable thing is that both Luns and the Indonesian president Sukarno followed parallel policies. Both were bidding for time. Sukarno, because he hoped to have his assault forces in full swing before real talks would begin; Luns because he speculated that either the political system within Indonesia would collapse or the military expedition would crumble on its road towards the shores of New Guinea. It was again mainly American pressure that brought them back to the conference table before one of these options materialized. It led to the New York Agreement of 15 August 1962, which laid down the conditions for the transfer of the administration of West New Guinea to Indonesia. The matter of sovereignty was left out completely since further talks on it would lead to no results. According to the agreement, the Netherlands would transfer full administrative responsibility to the United Nations, which after a couple of months would hand over these responsibilities to the government of Indonesia. Upon insistence from the Netherlands and the United Nations it was further agreed that after some years of Indonesian administration a plebiscite would take place in which the Papuans could make a choice for continued Indonesian administration or some other solution. It was the most the Netherlands had been able to make from their promise of self-determination that had begun in Linggarjati fifteen years earlier. In the terms of the New York Agreement, the plebiscite was styled the Act of Free Choice. What it really meant is discussed in the closing chapters of the book.

An Act of Free Choice

The UN administration that replaced the Dutch in October 1962 was not much of a success. It was grossly understaffed and was lacking in quality and motivation. It could only act as a buffer that enabled the Netherlands to withdraw its personnel from New Guinea and allowed Indonesia to introduce its own officials and soldiers. The latter were very soon in a position to do as they liked, intimidating at will the Papuans in the streets. The administration soon acquired military overtones. In 1969, with the coming of the Act of Free Choice, the number of soldiers had increased to about 18,000. The period in between was marked by violence and plunder. The first revolt took place in Manokwari in 1965. It was suppressed for a while, but from that time onwards more Papuans tried to prepare themselves for the coming Act. Yet, their possibilities to do so were very limited. In that same year, 1965, the high-ranking UN-official José Rolz-Bennett visited the territory to discuss the forthcoming plebiscite with the local functionaries. For leading Papuans it seemed a golden opportunity to have their voices heard, but they were given no chance. Rolz Bennett simply refused to talk with them. His visit was also in vain as far as the Indonesians were concerned: at the time of his arrival both Sukarno and his foreign minister Subandrio left for a visit to China. It was a clear demonstration of the fact that, for them, the Act of Free Choice had no priority at all.

The attitude of the Indonesian Government changed somewhat after the rise of General Suharto to the presidency in the following year. One of his first acts was to declare publicly that in the province of Irian Barat a plebiscite would be held. He did this not because he had any sympathy with the plight of the Papuans but rather because he wished to improve his international reputation. Economically, Indonesia was in ruins and international credit was the first thing that was needed for its survival. Suharto made clear that he certainly meant no separation and that the Papuans had to stick to the rules set by Indonesia. An outcome that was anything less than full-fledged support for integration with Indonesia would be unacceptable.

In my book I explain in some detail the way in which Indonesia organized the Act, the reactions of the Papuans as well as those of the international world. The research is based mainly on UN archives and those of Australia and the United States. Additional use has been made of interviews with Papuans and other persons who, in some way or another, had played a role in the episode. A word has to be said on the dissertation of John Saltford that had been published at about the same time I started my research. Since the chapters on the subject can be regarded as the essential parts of my book, I wanted to form my own opinion first. So I only consulted his book after I had finished my own concept. After that, I read John's writings and found that his was a fine piece of work from which I could still profit. The most important thing, however, was that essentially the outcome of our two research studies run parallel with each other, which strengthens the validity of both works.

That outcome necessarily was a negative one on the point of self-determination. We both could note that Suharto certainly lived up to his words. The Indonesian diplomats and military firmly took the lead and did not allow others to intervene in what they regarded as their exclusive domain. The Act of Free Choice was carried through under conditions that denied the Papuans even the smallest chance to speak for themselves. The procedures more or less followed the lines laid down in the New York Agreement, but all things were explained to the advantage of the Indonesian point of view, leaving not the smallest room for that of others. To a certain extent that was made possible by the fact that the formulations of the New York Agreement had left many essentials in the dark. The other reason was that the will to make the best of it was completely lacking on the side of the most interested powers, the policymakers in Washington and New York in the first place.

That can be demonstrated by the way the matter was handled. During the implementation of the Act of Free Choice in 1968 and 1969, the members of the UN staff in Indonesia and New York increasingly felt cornered by Indonesian ruthlessness, but did not dare to risk a clash with Indonesia. It was appreciated by them that the country at least outwardly was willing to operate through the United Nations again. In the autumn of 1969, when the Act of Free Choice had been brought to its predictable end, the leader of the UN-team in New Guinea, Fernando Ortiz-Sanz, reported to the secretary general of the United Nations, U Thant. He did so in rather high spirits, passing over all the things that had gone wrong and dwelling largely upon petty events that could be construed as victories

for his own mission. The Secretary General U Thant followed suit and in his own report to the General Assembly he observed with diplomatic refinement that in West New Guinea Indonesia had carried through an Act of Free Choice. Note the indefinite article! In such half-hearted terms U Thant indicated that he was not willing to discuss the merits of the event and the way his organization had lived up to the terms of the New York Agreement of 1962.

Notwithstanding its many shortcomings, that agreement had at least laid down that the Act of Free Choice had to be in accordance with international custom. In 1969 it seemed to be forgotten by most parties for convenient reasons. Only a limited number of African and Latin American countries seriously censured the way Indonesia had handled matters. Joseph Luns, still the Netherlands foreign minister, vented his dismay in the most careful words. He too took care not to antagonize Indonesia. On 19 December 1969, the General Assembly of the United Nations 'took note' of the Ortiz Sanz report with an overwhelming majority, thus giving its sanction to the ending of a conflict that had haunted the relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia for decades. It also left the Papuans to the care of the Indonesians.

In my book, I have revisited the history of the Papuans of West New Guinea from the old days of fragmentation and simple tribal life through the days of colonial administration to those of being a plaything in international politics. I have described the proceedings during the infamous Act of Free Choice as well, that made a mockery of the elementary principles of any consultation that is worth its salt. With its acceptance by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the question regarding the sovereignty over the land of the Papuans had disappeared from the agenda. If it will ever be revived or not is not for a historian to decide. It is a question that has to be left to lawyers more versed in the legal principles of the United Nations. The most important thing, however, is the development of future relations between the government of Indonesia and its easternmost subjects. Discussions on the subject will continue in the years to come. Throughout these discussions, elements from the past will pop up again and again. I hope that at such moments my book will render the services the initiators had in mind when they requested it, and which the author set out to provide during the long and pleasant days of writing.