

AMBASSADE VAN HET KONINKRIJK DER NEDERLANDEN
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MIN. v. BUITENLANDSE ZAKEN	
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Met verwijzing naar berichtgeving langs
andere weg heb ik de eer Uwer Excellentie hierne-
vens aan te bieden een afschrift van de Aide
Memoire die de Australische Ambassadeur alhier,
Sir Percy Spender, aan de Secretaris van Staat op
29 augustus jl. overhandigde, tijdens diens
démarche inzake Nederlands Nieuw Guinea.

De Ambassadeur
voor deze,

Spender

Zijner Excellentie
de Heer Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken
te 's-GRAVENHAGE

SECRET

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
WASHINGTON D.C.

29th August, 1957

AIDE MEMOIRE

FOTO-Bt.Z.
No. 154434^a

The United States Government will be familiar with the Australian Government's attitude towards the Indonesian Government's claim to Netherlands New Guinea and with the position taken by the Australian Delegation at the last three sessions of the United Nations General Assembly when it opposed the inscription of the Netherlands New Guinea item on the agenda and any resolution casting any doubt on unqualified and continuing Netherlands sovereignty over this territory or seeking to undermine that sovereignty.

The Australian Government's firm belief shared by all political parties in Australia, is that the Government of Indonesia has no legal, moral or other basis for its claim to exercise sovereignty over this territory. It is the Australian view, moreover, that it would not be in the best interests of the inhabitants of Netherlands New Guinea should this territory come under Indonesian control. In this connection it is particularly noteworthy that the Netherlands Government has solemnly and publicly undertaken to give the inhabitants of the territory, when they are capable of doing so, the opportunity to exercise the right of self-determination. The Government of Indonesia, on the other hand, seeks to incorporate this territory thus making it a part of the metropolitan territory of Indonesia and prejudicing the right of the inhabitants to determine (when they are capable of so doing) their own future political and governmental status. There is, it should be noted, absolutely no evidence of any movement

amongst these primitive people of Netherlands New Guinea towards union with Indonesia. Moreover, as will be well-known to the United States authorities they are ethnologically, culturally and linguistically distinct from the Indonesians. These considerations all underline the fact that this question is not a normal colonial issue.

It is only a matter of six months since the Assembly rejected a proposal for a "good offices commission" on this item. There have been no developments since that time which support the view that the Indonesian claim merits further consideration at this Assembly. This is especially relevant when account is taken of the heavy agenda which confronts this Assembly session.

There have, however, been certain developments in Indonesia itself which, in the Australian view, add strength to the case of those governments which seek to restrain the Assembly from undue intervention in the assumed role of an interpreter of treaties and a forum for adjusting territorial claims. The principal development in this respect stems from the current political instability in Indonesia. In the present circumstances it seems very likely that the passage of any resolution favourable to Indonesia would encourage the Indonesian Communist Party (which has recently shown a somewhat alarming improvement in its electoral position whilst campaigning as the supporter of President Soekarno) to rely upon United Nations endorsement of the Indonesian position on Netherlands New Guinea in advocating even more extreme policies. The position and prestige of the moderate political elements may thus be considerably weakened.

It remains the Australian view that additional tensions and frictions will, in fact, be created between the Netherlands

and Indonesian Governments as a result of the encouragement which the Indonesian Government would receive from the passage of any resolution. Even a so-called "moderate" resolution calling for some form of negotiations would have this effect because it would give credence to the view that Indonesia has some claim to the territory and that there is, therefore, an issue for discussion between the parties chiefly concerned. A "moderate" resolution indeed could prove very dangerous since it conceals the real purpose of the Indonesian Government in order to attract greater support whilst opening the way to the achievement of that purpose which is to obtain sovereignty over the territory.

The Netherlands Government could not accept such a resolution especially as the Indonesian Government would certainly argue that the Assembly had implicitly recognized the Indonesian claim that sovereignty resides with it and that all that remained was for negotiations to be held for the transfer of the territory to its control and related matters. The position which necessarily would be taken by the Dutch, of rejecting the Assembly's recommendation could have an adverse effect on the standing of the Netherlands Government and of the Western Governments in the United Nations. It is quite conceivable that countries unreservedly supporting Indonesia against the Dutch (e.g. the Soviet group) would be prepared to exert pressure on the Netherlands to carry out the resolution passed by the Assembly. The dispute could then become a real international issue, of deep concern to Australia and the SEATO powers. Indeed, the effect of the carriage of any such resolution would inevitably create a serious situation.

It is, of course, of the utmost importance for Australia as a member of SEATO that Netherlands New Guinea should not be controlled by, or available to, a government which, it is conceivable, could become both Communist and expansionist, although the emergence of such a regime is a development which the Australian and the United States Governments wish to do all in their power to avert. The importance of the territory as a strategic link between the Philippines and the United States Pacific island chain on the one hand, and Australia on the other requires no elaboration. It is obviously equally important that the Territories of Papua and New Guinea for which Australia is responsible and which are of equal strategic importance should also be kept free from the risk of Communist influence spreading from the neighbouring territory and be protected from the administrative disorder which could follow the introduction of an administration lacking the resources and experience to control and develop that territory adequately.

It is a matter of considerable concern to the Australian Government that, in spite of a lack of enthusiasm for the Indonesian claim on the part of a number of governments which habitually support the Indonesian Government within the United Nations on the issue, there is a very real risk that through the conversion of two abstaining votes to two supporting votes (this possibility cannot be ignored, for instance in the case of Laos and Cambodia) and a transfer of two or three Latin American votes from support to abstention, together with the supporting votes of two new Afro-Asian members (Ghana and Malaya), which is certainly a possibility, an Indonesian resolution could obtain the requisite two-thirds majority.

It would appear to the Australian Government that the adoption of any Indonesian resolution would confront the United States and like-minded governments, with a serious issue in the face of United Nations pressure, which could only be relieved, so it appears to the Australian Government, either by Dutch cession of sovereignty (which will not take place and which it is hoped the United States Government would agree should not take place) or by moving the United Nations to drop the matter after Dutch-Indonesian talks had failed or had not taken place (an action which would have, it will surely be agreed, little chance of success). It is submitted that the only governments who would profit from such a dilemma are the Communist governments who would be presented with a signal opportunity to exercise strong pressures on Western governments through pretended support for the newly independent Asian and African nations!

It is the hope, therefore, of the Australian Government that the United States Government, particularly in the light of recent events in Indonesia, will, at the 12th Assembly of the United Nations, see its way clear to support the position taken by the Netherlands Government on this item. Such an attitude by the United States Government would, in the Australian view, have a most beneficial affect on the voting position in the Assembly and would assist in the process of impressing upon those governments who may well be doubtful about the validity of the Indonesian case, that no benefit is to be gained from continuing to debate an issue in which one party has no basis for its claim to annex the territory involved.