

## WHY DOES EVERYONE FLY WEST PAPUA'S MORNING STAR FLAG EVERY YEAR ON 1 DECEMBER

On 1 December 1961, the Nieuw Guinea RAAD and the Netherlands Administering Power, raised the Morning Star flag alongside the Dutch flag in major towns across West Papua. This was a significant event in West Papua's self-determination project that had been initiated by the passage of UNGA Res. 448 (V) in the United Nations General Assembly in December 1950.

### West Papua as a Non-Self-Governing Territory

Self-determination in West Papua (then West New Guinea) was set in motion by the US General Douglas MacArthur, in accord with the terms of the Atlantic Charter. In 1944, as head of the Allied (invasion and) occupation, MacArthur appointed Dutch Resident Jan van Eechoud to lead the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged people with training projects and institutions for what both believed would become an independent state. By the end of 1944 van Eechoud had established a Police School, the Papuan Volunteers Battalion (PVK) and a Public Service Training School. The PVK was a defence force of 400 armed soldiers, and the Public Service School would produce 150 graduates, including members of the New Guinea RAAD. By 1946 van Eechoud's administration was helping districts to form Consultative Councils, and in 1947 West Papua joined the South Pacific Commission which had been established to 'promote the economic and social welfare of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the South Pacific'.

Article 73 (Ch 11, UN Charter) defines the **sacred obligation** of an Administering Power to prioritize the interests of the people and advance self-government. All development—social, economic, political—in West Papua after 1950 was based on the self-determination principles adopted by the Netherlands Inter-Departmental Commission in 1951, aired in Queen Juliana's 1952 address, and enshrined in Dutch legislation in 1953. **Article 73 obligations remain, by law, until the Non-Self-Governing Territory attains a full measure of self-government; in other words until a valid act of self-determination. There has never been a valid act of self-determination in West Papua.**

By 1960 there had been major advances in education and health in West Papua, and concerted efforts to develop an export economy that dovetailed subsistence economies. By then, the Netherlands was investing Fl 91M per year (up from Fl 15M in 1950) and had published regulations to 'papuanise' the civil service (to 90-95% over a period of ten years) with teachers, nurses, police, administrators—including top positions requiring tertiary qualifications. The Administrators had taken care to build appropriate institutes for a modern democratic state. This included three Papuan-majority advisory councils in 1951; and elected regional councils in Mimika in 1953; Yapen, Hollandia, Schouten Islands, Manokwari and Sorong in 1955; Fak-Fak in 1958; and Biak-Numfor in 1959 (existing since 1948 as Kankain Kankara Biak). These councils were tasked with implementing and enforcing ordinances, regulating and administering local affairs, and levelling tax.

After territory-wide elections in February 1961, the New Guinea RAAD was inaugurated "officiating as a Parliament, with all its powers" (Governor Platteel) on 5 April 1961. Twenty-two Papuans had been elected to the 28-seat institution including a woman, Tokoro-Hanasby. Members had parliamentary immunity and rights of petition, interpellation, amendment; and shared legislating power with the governor and departmental heads, including responsibility for framing the budget.

The New Guinea RAAD was inaugurated in front of thousands of representatives from every region in West Papua, an array of international media, and 135 officials from the South Pacific Commission, and representatives of the governments of Britain, New Zealand, and Australia. Australia's delegation included Paul Hasluck (Minister for Territories), Alistair McMullin (President

of the Senate), Brigadier Cleland (Administrator, Papua-New Guinea), and six members of the Papua-New Guinea Legislative that was scheduled to open five days later.

**During the inauguration Governor Platteel spoke of the future:** “Dutch New Guinea is a small country, but may set a great example. May God grant you the wisdom to make use of the Council’s work. He will bless your deliberations.” **State Secretary for Home Affairs Dr Bot** said the RAAD should make its wishes known on self-determination (referendum) within twelve months since by 1970 only a few foreign experts would still be needed, adding that Holland would continue to give material and financial aid to help achieve independence (SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 6 APRIL 1961). **Queen Juliana in a recorded speech said:** “Netherlands wants your people to take a dignified and equal stand in the community of the modern world and the United Nations ... this is the first step on the road that leads to the exercise of self-determination. May that turn out to be short. Remain yourself and enter in the form that you choose based on your own nature.”

**On 1 December 1961**, the New Guinea RAAD implemented its 19-30 October resolution to call the new nation ‘Papua Barat’, to raise the Morning Star flag alongside the Netherlands flag, to have ‘Hai Tanah Ku Papua’ as the national anthem and the Victoria Crowned Pigeon as the state symbol.

**On 19 December 1961**, Indonesia violated the Non-Self-Governing Territory with a performative declaration of war to ‘annihilate the Dutch defence and occupy West Papua’. One month later, on 15 January 1962, three (Russian-built) torpedo boats, carrying 150 soldiers, mortar, transmitters and automatic weapons, engaged two Dutch frigates in the Arafura Sea. After one boat was hit and sank the Indonesian Navy aborted the mission. The use of force (in breach of the UN Charter) and aerial photos of Indonesia massing its Russian and American arsenal on nearby Ceram Island, as well as American aspirations for what became the Freeport gold-and-copper mine, activated the production of a UN ‘peace treaty’ in August 1962 that effectively but illegally gifted Indonesia with 459,412 kms<sup>2</sup> of Melanesian land.

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