

U. N. IS EXAMINING WEST IRIAN POLL

African Nations Want Close Look Before Approving It

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Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Nov. 15—The General Assembly is taking an extended look at the results of a poll in which residents of the Pacific territory of West Irian asked to be ruled by Indonesia.

The poll—a so-called act of free choice in which community chiefs were consulted by officials—was held last summer. The result announced by Indonesia was a unanimous decision to retain the Indonesian rule that began in 1962 when the Dutch left the area, formerly known as West New Guinea.

Last Thursday, when the issue arose in the General Assembly, a group of African countries demanded a chance for further investigation before the Assembly approved the result.

Instead of automatically approving Secretary General Thant's report, a group headed by Dahomey obtained adjournment of debate until next Wednesday.

A principal cause of their action seems to have been a Reuters news agency report from Indonesia that the au-



The New York Times

Nov. 16, 1969

thorities were going to transport 200,000 children—about a fourth of all the Irianese—to “civilized surroundings” to be brought up by foster parents.

This report followed complaints by those Irianese who feel no racial or cultural link with Indonesia that they feared that Indonesia was trying to suppress their indigenous language and culture.

Indonesian official sources here say that the children are merely being moved temporarily for better schooling. A group of Papuans fighting the union with Indonesia asserts, however, that the children are being taken from home to be culturally and politically indoctrinated, to be made into Indonesians rather than Vianese.

The status of West Irian has long been a troublesome colonial question.

West Irian is the western half of New Guinea, a huge island. The eastern end is divided between the Australian territory of Papua and the trusteeship area of the territory of New Guinea governed by Australia under United Nations authority.

By the “act of free choice” agreed to seven years ago and carried out in stages from last July to Aug. 2, West Irian, which had been a Dutch colony until World War II, completed the process of becoming part of Indonesia.

The operation was not a plebiscite or referendum of the people but a vote of 1,025 chiefs of groups totaling approximately 800,000 primitive inhabitants of Papuan, Melanesian and Negrito stock.

A Traditional Practice

It had been generally agreed that the people were too primitive to understand the working of a plebiscite but that they would abide by the traditional practice of tribal consultations.

The work was carried out by Fernando Ortiz-Sanz, a former Bolivian ambassador, working in the area as Secretary General Thant's special representative, with a team of United Nations assistants.

Even Foreign Minister Adam Malik of Indonesia conceded in the Assembly that there had been some criticism of the methods used.

When Western ideas are applied to “a complex and even controversial political exercise,” he said, it is easy to criticize, but “for West Irian in particular, known to be one of the most undeveloped areas in the world, one should have special consideration for special circumstances.”

Dr. Joseph M. A. H. Luns, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, told the Assembly that Mr. Ortiz-Sanz had carried out a difficult task in an exemplary manner but that there had been some doubts in the Dutch press and parliament about the consultation method used. He joined Mr. Malik in presenting the resolution of approval with the hope of a unanimous vote.

Maxime Zollner of Dahomey then produced the surprise of the day with a request that debate on the report be put off for a week or two to allow study of the 150-page document, which had been in the hands of delegates only since Monday.

Alexander I. Ohin of Togo, joining those who called for postponement, said the Assembly was not deciding a simple question of procedure but the whole future of a people.

The president of the Assembly, Miss Angie Brooks of Liberia, said that adjournment until Wednesday had been suggested as a compromise move, and that since she heard no objection “it is so decided.”