

Tears on the plane

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At that precise moment on 15 August 1962 the Catholic mission pilot of Associated Mission Aviation (AMA) and I were up in the sky, above the area between the headwaters of the Derewo and Rouffaer rivers. The director of home affairs doubling as vice governor, H. Veldkamp, had sent the Cessna plane belonging to the mission to pick me up in Nabire. On the radio on the aircraft we heard the news of the signing of the New York Agreement. It meant that the Netherlands had to hand over the governance of West Papua to the Republic of Indonesia. The pilot and I looked at one another without saying a word. Tears were running down our cheeks. Only God knew the future of our people and land of Papua. 'Nobody knows the troubles I've seen, nobody knows my sorrow...'

My life in 1962 was very eventful. To start with, I and my administrator colleagues, Filemon Jufuway, Arnold Mampioer, Abraham Onim and Bernard Joku had been getting ready since May to leave for the Netherlands in August for advanced education in administration. But then because of the negotiations over the West Papua dispute, we had to await their development. So, after graduating from OSIBA I went on vacation to the kampung and stayed with my parents in Napan. Other friends had already received their letters of confirmation on the posts to which they would be assigned. Amos was placed in Kaimana and Luther in Serui. During my vacation, the negotiations on the West Papua dispute were nearly concluded.

In the two or three years leading up to that year, the Dutch government had not once asked Papuans or involved us in the discussions of our land with Indonesia. Papuans were like pet animals being sold in a market. Ultimately, the fate of our small nation was again being determined by foreigners. These foreign nations, which were supposedly

civilized, were evidently forcing us back to the age of our ancestors and to their age of crusades.

The Cessna landed at the foot of Mount Cycloop, in the Sentani airfield. A driver from the Dienst van Binnenlandse Zaken (DBZ, Department of Home Affairs) in Dok II met me with a car. On my way out of the airport, I was surprised to see so many Dutch families there. School friends from Mulo and HBS Dok V came over to hug me and cried. They had to leave now to go to the Netherlands – a foreign country. They had all been born and raised in Papua. Here and there the sounds of Dutch and Papuan families weeping were audible. Many of the people I knew had already left during those final weeks of my vacation. When I arrived at the Hollandia Haven harbour, it too was crowded, with people who were departing by ship. The cruise ship, SS de Grote Beer docked at the harbour was also fully packed. Meanwhile, in the yard of the port, people were crying.

We arrived at the DBZ office in Dok II into an atmosphere that was brimming with tension because of that morning's decisions. Upon entering the office of Director Veldkamp, he asked me to take a seat, then conveyed the decisions of the cabinet, Secretary of State Th.H. Bot, Minister E.H. Toxopeus, and Governor P.J. Platteel in The Hague, including the decision to cancel our education programme in the Netherlands. Because all the Dutch HPBs and residents were returning home, all of the Papuan administrators would be needed here. And the DBZ was placing me in the office of the resident of Hollandia, although I would remain in contact with the DBZ. That night I had to telephone the secretary of state in The Hague. I also learned in brief about the other government measures related to the transfer of the Dutch government to the UN, the role of the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA), and other matters in Hollandia. After that, the DBZ driver drove me to the resident's office at the Army Post Office (APO), where Resident Woelders, HPB Danno Saiffoeddin and the head of immigration, Trouerbach were waiting for me. The location of the APO, as the place had been called since World War II, was on the bank of the Nefatte river.

In our talk the resident explained that I would be taking over all the military police and immigration work of Trouerbach. All the immigration-related work, including issuing passports, exit and entry visas throughout Papua, checking passports at the airport and harbour.