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By PHILIP SHABECOFF Special to The New York Times

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JAKARTA, Indonesia, July 5 — The people of West Irian have started to exercise what is described as their "act of free choice" to decide whether they wish to be part of Indonesia.

This complex process, some of whose participants are neolithic tribesmen, will continue until Aug. 4, shortly after President Nixon's scheduled visit to Jakarta.

More than 1,000 delegates from all parts of West Irian—the Indonesian name for western New Guinea — will take part in consultative assemblies to represent its 750,000 inhabitants. Some of the delegates will be transported hundreds of miles through some of the most forbidding jungle in the world to participate.

### 'Going Through the Motions'

However, Jakarta's diplomatic community insists and members of the Indonesian Government frankly admit in private that the entire process is a meaningless formality.

"We are going through the motions of the act of free choice because of our obligation under the New York agreement of 1962," a member of the Indonesian Parliament declared. He was referring to the accord reached at the United Nations for the transfer of the former Dutch territory to Indonesian rule.

"But West Irian is Indonesian and must remain Indonesian," he added. "We cannot accept any alternative."

The 1962 agreement ended hostilities on West Irian — adjacent to Australian-administered territories in eastern New Guinea—between the young Indonesian republic and the Netherlands, the colonial mas-



United Nations  
Ambassador Fernando Ortíz-Sanz, U.N. representative, whose suggestion on voting was rejected by Indonesia.

ter of the East Indies until World War II.

Under the agreement, the Dutch agreed to turn over to Indonesia the administration of the territory, which has an area of about 150,000 square miles, provided Jakarta grant self-determination, to the Papuan, Melanesian and Negrito Irianese population. The Indonesians were charged with responsibility for allowing the act of free choice, with the United Nations to "advise, assist and participate in arrangements."

### Suggestion Is Rejected

Ambassador Fernando Ortíz-Sanz of Bolivia, special representative of Secretary General Thant, noted in an interview today that he had suggested to the Indonesian Gov-

ernment that it conduct the act of free choice on a "one-man, one-vote" basis in the developed coastal areas of West Irian, supplemented by a "collective consultation" in the jungle and mountain areas.

The Indonesian Government did not accept this suggestion. It would not be practical, Jakarta decided, because of geographic considerations and because of the "primitive" state of many of the West Irianese.

Instead, the Indonesians are using the process of musjawarah—consultation—to produce a consensus.

There is opposition among the Irianese to becoming formally an Indonesian province, but the extent of the opposition is impossible to determine, given the physical and cultural conditions of West Irian.

Open revolt against the Indo-



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nesian regime still continues in the form of the Free Papuan Movement. In late April and early May insurgents, consisting mainly of the local police, rose against the Jakarta admin-

istration in the Wissel Lakes region.

But the Free Papuan Movement is described as small, disorganized, splintered and poorly armed. Most of its members reportedly have no better weapons than bows and arrows. And Jakarta, which has 6,000 to 7,000 troops in West Irian, has had little trouble in suppressing the dissidents.

### Indonesian Gives Reason

Discussing why Indonesia, which has crushing economic problems, wants primitive, undeveloped West Irian as a province, a young newspaperman said:

"West Irian is a part of our independence struggle. We fought the Dutch for all of the Indies. Our young men died in the jungles of West Irian. That

it must be ours is the one thing all Indonesians agree on."

The United Nations, the Netherlands, Australia and the United States, which helped establish the 1962 agreement, have tacitly yielded responsibility for West Irian to Indonesia.

"Political responsibility for the act of free choice is Indonesia's," Ambassador Ortíz-Sanz said. "But the world has a moral responsibility to the Irianese people."

"It is the duty of the United Nations, the industrialized countries and everybody else to consider with seriousness, generosity and urgency that something must be done to give the wonderful Irianese people at least the essential benefits of our so-called civilized world. It is a shame for all of us that these people have been forgotten."