

In The Nation

The New President and the Old Sukarno

By ARTHUR KROCK

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13—The Administration is now wrestling with the inherited problem created by the habitual resort of President Sukarno of Indonesia to military aggression for the expansion or protection of his imperialistic designs in the Pacific. And in dealing with the latest of these activities—Sukarno's threat to "crush" the new, independent state of Malaysia—President Johnson is handicapped by the evil precedent created when this Government successfully put pressure on the Netherlands that compelled the Dutch to surrender West New Guinea to Indonesia's threat of taking it by force.

The Kennedy Administration, in cooperation with U.N. Secretary General Thant, assured this triumph of military aggression, in violation of the U.N. Charter, and defended it as necessary "to prevent war in the Pacific" and a "confrontation" of the Great Powers. The theory was that this would happen because the Soviet Union was supporting Sukarno's claim. On this highly debatable speculation, Sukarno's violation of the Charter was abetted in the following actions by, or on the initiative and under the leadership of the United States Government:

¶Official Washington and London continued to arm Sukarno in the period when he was constantly engaged in military invasion of Dutch New Guinea.

¶The United States denied refueling facilities to Netherlands aircraft carrying reinforcements and military supplies to their troops in West New Guinea, thereby closing this vital channel of defense from the Indonesian aggression.

¶The United Kingdom, perforce joined by Australia, notified The Hague it could expect no assistance of any kind in repelling invasion.

¶When the Netherlands asked Thant to send U.N. observers to the territory to establish the "presence" of the international organization, and to request Sukarno to join the Dutch in a cease-fire during the "negotiations" for a settlement, the Secretary General refused on the ground that, since Indonesia was not a party to the request, his assent would "imply I was taking sides in the controversy."

New Threats and New Moves

Now Sukarno is again making threats of "war in the Pacific," in another violation of the U.N. Charter, and the issue before President Johnson is whether to try to buy him off a second time, and at what price. Very soon the President will be required under the terms of the foreign aid authorization act to determine if continued foreign aid to Indonesia, now amounting to about \$55 millions, is "in the best interest of the United States." Thus far three efforts have been made to dissuade Sukarno from the military aggression against Malaysia that the United States made so profitable to him by assuring his virtual annexation of another territory (West New Guinea) to which Indonesia hasn't a scrap of historical or ethnic claim. One effort was this Government's cutoff of \$2.5 millions annually in military aid. The second was the abandonment of an international consortium, including the United States, for a stabilization loan to Indonesia. The third was a note, presumably of "warning," which Mr. Johnson sent to Sukarno by the hand of Ambassador Jones.

It has also been decided to send a United States mission, headed by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, to impress the error of his ways on the President of Indonesia. The missionary errand is to be made while Sukarno is on holiday in Japan, where he is expected soon. The reasoning of the advocates of this plan is that Robert Kennedy had a great personal success when he visited Indonesia some time ago, and is regarded by the Jakarta Government, its Washington Embassy and the people of the archipelago as their very special friend in Washington.

But the evil precedent of the West New Guinea episode would appear to make the task of disciplining Sukarno particularly difficult for the Attorney General. He was an important member of the Administration which strong-armed the Netherlands into surrendering the territory to Indonesia's military blackmail. And that Administration hailed the results "as the resolution of the West New Guinea dispute through peaceful negotiations," and took even better care of Indonesia in the foreign aid allocations.