

The UN on the Rack Anne Weill-Tuckerman

While the General Assembly has been frustrated by its financial crisis—which is really a deep-seated political dispute over the role of the United Nations and the meaning of its Charter—the organization as a whole is beset by pulls and strains which reflect changing attitudes of member states, from Indonesia, a child of the UN, to the United States, its principal founding father.

Indonesia's withdrawal from the UN seems final. The Secretary-General has had in his possession, since January 21, an official notification from the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, but he has not yet ordered the Indonesian flag taken down from the row of banners on First Avenue, or the Indonesian name plate removed from meeting halls and tables. This reluctance to accept the *fait accompli* of Indonesian withdrawal shows what anxiety the gesture has created in top Secretariat circles, which see in it a bad omen for the start of the "International Cooperation Year."

Officially, Indonesia has left the UN because Malaysia is now seated on the Security Council. Malaysia will hold this seat only until the end of 1965 and, conceivably, Indonesia could then return to the fold. However, its revolutionary attitude, proclaimed and demonstrated in words and deeds by President Sukarno, makes such a course doubtful. The election of Malaysia occurred, in fact, not in December, 1964, but on November 1, 1963, when a long series of inconclusive ballots in the General Assembly led to a splitting of the two-year term between Czechoslovakia and Malaysia, Czechoslovakia serving first. Indonesia's position today would be more logical if it had given notice at that time.

Moreover, Indonesia was always adept at demanding and obtaining what it wanted from the United Nations. The first colonial territory to win independence through the good offices of the organization, Indonesia began to wage soon afterwards a relentless campaign of intimidation and guerrilla warfare until, in

1962, the control of West New Guinea, the last parcel of territory of the Dutch East Indies, to which Jakarta had no valid ethnic or historical claim, was handed over to it.

One practical consequence of the Indonesian withdrawal may be that the "consultation" on self-determination for the ultra-primitive population of West Irian, which President Sukarno had pledged to hold by 1969, will fall by the wayside.

It seems clear in present circumstances that the Indonesian decision to resign its UN membership, far from being an expression of pique, represents a new and calculated stage of a revolutionary policy which aligns itself with the present strategy of China. The People's Republic, having been denied UN membership for fifteen years, seems to have adopted as a slogan "If you can't join 'em, lick 'em." There are indications that Peking, enjoying tremendous prestige from its first atomic explosion, has lost interest in participating in the UN in its present form.

The fact that Indonesia has broken not only with the political bodies of the UN but also with specialized agencies dedicated to economic and social assistance indicates in itself that President Sukarno has declared war on the San Francisco-made machinery for international cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Indeed, Dr Subandrio, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, says it himself in the letter handed to Secretary-General U Thant:

We have come to the conclusion that our decision may become the catalyst to reform and retool the United Nations in spirit and in deed, lest the present atmosphere of complacency shown by the neo-colonial powers may undermine the lofty principles of the United Nations and consequently the decline of the United Nations as an international body for collective security and harmonious cooperation may become irrevocable.

Communist China has denounced in similar terms the "opportunistic" motivation of the UN in "toeing the imperialist line"—a criticism directed not only at the United States but also, tacitly, at the Soviet Union, which Peking blames for having become, under the guise of coexist-

ence, a party to "deals with the imperialists." in and out of the UN.

It matters little whether Indonesia has done the bidding of Peking or whether President Sukarno sees a larger role for himself in the Chinese policy toward the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The fact is that Indonesia, the fifth most populous nation on earth, has become identified with revolutionary conquest, and espouses a Peking-made formula for the complete political emancipation of the underdeveloped countries, not through parliamentary pressure and economic advantages but through outright hostility and relentless struggle.

Sukarno's project for a new international organization, made up exclusively of former colonial territories and Socialist countries, the "NEFOS" (new emerging forces), as opposed to the old establishment, the "OLFOS," may never see the light, but one can expect that the Indonesian campaign to break or reform the UN will gain momentum, if not actual ground, at the second Bandung Conference, scheduled to open in Algiers this spring. Algeria, Albania, Mali, Cambodia and others are already echoing the line in the UN. The general response, however, is poor. As could be expected, the Soviet Union has opposed a plan aimed at robbing it of its self-proclaimed sponsorship of anti-colonial aspirations.

Indonesia may have deliberately chosen for its walkout a time when the UN is in the throes of a deep constitutional crisis. It is also the moment when the United States, its major founder and contributor, is subjecting the world organization to an "agonizing reappraisal." Whether or not a practical solution is found to the so-called financial crisis, the Johnson Administration is drawing some firm conclusions from the winds of change blowing over the East River.

The U.S. is entering, in relation to the UN, a realistic phase, succeeding the idealistic phase during which American interests were first served, then frustrated. As conceived in the Atlantic Charter and at San Francisco, the United Nations, peacetime successor of the "Grand Alliance," was based on the

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ideals of Western democracy, to which Stalin found it convenient to adhere while formidable Russian reconstruction was taking place. But the Yalta illusions of Roosevelt and Churchill soon evaporated, and the UN became for a number of years the world stage for the cold war. On that stage, the United States won votes and friends; it won, above all, UN endorsement to repel the Communists in Korea.

Then came the time of decolonization and the mass entry of new nations into the UN. Washington had promoted this development in the spirit of its anti-colonial tradition. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations made of the UN the keystone of a policy of friendship and assistance to the newly independent countries. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was doing the same, only using more propaganda and less money. This led to repeated bidding matches for the favors of the new African and Asian countries, and more often than not the USSR won the bid. The new nations, having given themselves the political label of "non-aligned," refused in 1961 to condemn the USSR for the 50-megaton nuclear device it exploded in violation of a two-year moratorium. Today, some of the same nations acclaim the Chinese bomb as the "peace bomb."

To forestall the obstacle of the Soviet veto in the Security Council, the United States fostered larger powers for the General Assembly. Then, with membership increasing by leaps and bounds, Washington found itself on the way to being pushed aside by its young protégés.

The great test came with the Congo, which shattered many American dreams. Having worked harder than anyone to end the Katanga secession—thus to prevent fragmentation of the Congo, with the Communists taking over in some parts—Washington then supported Tshombe as the new head of the unified Congo, only to be accused by Africans of neo-colonialism and imperialism. An African clamor, duly echoed in Moscow, greeted the recent Belgian-American air mission to rescue civilian hostages from the rebel area of Stanleyville. Rarely has the UN heard such words of hatred as were heaped upon the United States by African representatives in the Security Council last November.

The financial problem of the UN



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is the direct result of the huge Congo operation. When that country presented its recent new crisis, the United States lost much-needed support for its proposal to deprive the Soviet Union of its General Assembly vote for nonpayment of peace-keeping assessments. Whether by naïveté or miscalculation, Washington argued that the relevant statute, Article 19, should be applied "automatically," thus hoping to pressure the defaulters into surrender. They did not oblige, and the United States was faced with a showdown it had hoped to avoid. In the ensuing negotiations, which have postponed, paralyzed and discredited the Assembly, the Afro-Asian group has worked for a compromise that favors the Soviet position. (It also happens to be that of France.)

These developments, together with the improvement of direct Washington-Moscow relations, have hastened the United States shift of attitude about the UN. Secretary of State Dean Rusk had already set the reappraisal in motion in January, 1964, when he contrasted power with responsibility in the General Assembly, noting that a two-thirds majority could be constituted by members who pay a total of less than 5 per cent of the budget.

The Geneva Conference on Trade and Development brought a further warning to the United States with the emergence of a group of seventy-five "have-not" nations determined to outvote the "haves" in the formulation of economic policy.

Last November, Washington pledged its annual contribution to the programs for aid to developing countries as long as the fiscal situation of the organization remained unsettled. Then came a hint from American spokesmen that, in case Article 19 was not upheld in a confrontation, the United States would draw the necessary conclusions and review in the light of self-interest its future financial commitments to the United Nations.

This evolution parallels the basic attitude of the Johnson Administration, which gives priority to domestic affairs. The anti-poverty program begins at home. Disenchantment with the United Nations does not forecast a U.S. withdrawal, and the UN could again be a catalytic agent for political settlement in a serious crisis. But it is a devaluation of the organization, and it could mark the beginning of an American aloofness, which might be useful to the Administration should Communist China be admitted in the near future.