

Jones Was Sukarno's Pal

U.S. Ambassador Left Imprint By Using Personal Diplomacy

By Warren Unna

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AFTER ALMOST seven years at his post, Howard Palfrey Jones is resigning as United States Ambassador to Indonesia.

He is leaving just as Indonesia has extended its "confrontation" against Malaysia to the whole United Nations by resigning from the world organization with contempt.

He is leaving with United States-Indonesian relations back in the same precarious state he found them when he went to President Sukarno's volatile archipelago in 1958.

But the years have definitely witnessed Jones's imprint. His critics look upon this imprint as that of a patsy for Sukarno. Those who praise him say he accomplished more than the possible in an impossible situation.

This divergence of opinion naturally raises the question of just what the role of a United States ambassador is in the last half of the 20th century? How does he represent his President in a country which may be spinning under entirely different laws of gravity?

At first look, Howard Jones would not seem to be the most likely candidate for such a study. The United States Ambassador with the longest tenure in a single country, Jones, a weary-looking, balding man of 66, is frail in build, soft in voice and his facial expression on the initial "How do you do?" seems almost angelically naive.

Jones has been a newspaper editor and owner, a journalism teacher, a National Municipal League executive, an also-ran on the Republican ticket for a New York State Assembly seat, a World War II Army colonel and later Government rehabilitator in Germany, a United States aid mission chief in Indonesia and, just before his ambassadorial post, a deputy assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern economic affairs.

A Time for 'Statesmen'

EARLY IN 1958, Jones was dispatched to Djakarta as ambassador by the late John Foster Dulles and told his job would require "a great effort of statesmanship."

This was an understatement. Jones arrived in Indonesia's capital just after

the United States was caught red-handed assisting an Indonesian Moslem-military rebellion against President Sukarno, who was considered too left-wing.

As Jones set foot on Indonesian soil, the young United States charge d'affaires was seeing Foreign Minister Subandrio with the extraordinary request for permission to land Marines on Indonesia's oil-rich island of Sumatra in order to "protect" American citizens there from the United States-assisted rebels.

A Foreign Ministry official who was present told me later that the charge d'affaires made his request with his feet up on the office table and while puffing a cigarette.

"Go back to your embassy and send Mr. Jones here," the angry Subandrio was quoted as saying. "I don't care that he has not yet been officially accredited. I won't deal with anyone else."

Jones knew from his term as United States aid director that Indonesia's was a peculiarly personal government. He immediately set about restoring President Sukarno's confidence in the Ameri-

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can Ambassador in the United States itself.

This personal relationship reached the point where Jones got instant entry to Sukarno while other nations' ambassadors waited weeks for an appointment with some lesser official.

On at least one occasion, Sukarno arrived unannounced at Jones's weekend cottage in the mountains outside Djakarta. Finding no entertainment, Sukarno ordered his entourage to raid the kitchen for pots and pans to use in forming an impromptu traditional gamelan orchestra. When the party was over in the early morning hours, the pots and pans were all beaten through.

Despite his frail appearance, Jones somehow has been able to keep up with Sukarno in the President's love for song and dance. And sometimes, when Sukarno commandeers the diplomatic corps to follow him on an out-of-town trip, this gamboling lasts several days.

'Mood Music'

A FEW YEARS ago, Jones aroused the fury of the Dutch by echoing the word "Merdeka!" (freedom) at a



Howard Palfrey Jones . . . He kept up with Sukarno.

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Sukarno held at the United Indonesian campaign to reclaim Dutch New Guinea, the present West Irian.

But the officials in Washington concerned with Indonesian affairs insist that Jones has furthered, not compromised, the position of United States Ambassador.

His reports are said to be classics of "mood music": they not only give Sukarno's answers and Jones's questions, but the expression of Sukarno's voice and face. Washington is aware that Jones is genuinely fond of Sukarno and Indonesia. But, because of the detail of his reports, Administration officials say they are able to make independent strategy judgments.

Jones is said to have grasped fully the double function of a United States Ambassador:

- To inspire the local leaders with enough confidence in himself to insure that they get the correct interpretation of United States policy.

- To have enough sympathetic understanding of a country to be able to give Washington the benefit of a correct first-hand interpretation of its activities.

Jones is said to have perceived immediately that United States-Indonesian relations were not operating in a vacuum. Indonesia has the largest Communist Party outside the Red bloc and Moscow, and now Peking, have been tireless in trying to claim this lush Southeast Asian archipelago.

He made it a habit to treat Sukarno with respect, to be utterly frank and never to threaten. But he also pointed out what might be called the "inevitable consequences" of rash behavior.

An example might be Jones's repeated reminders to Sukarno that if he pushed too far in his "confrontation" campaign against Malaysia and involved himself in a full-scale war with the Australian and New Zealand troops there, the United States, as an ally of those nations in the ANZUS pact, would have "certain obligations."

So far, Sukarno has been careful not to wage an all-out war against Malaysia. But this does not mean that Jones always is successful as a restraining influence.

For instance, Jones long has been convinced that if only Indonesia, a land rich in natural resources, were allowed to develop itself economically, governmental stability would follow.

For many years, Jones had the sympathetic help of Indonesia's nonpolitical, hard-working First Minister, Djuanda Kartawidjaja. An International

Monetary Fund stabilization program was already under way when Djuanda died a ically uninterested Sukarno immediately jettisoned all thoughts of economic improvement and proceeded to get debt-ridden Indonesia even further into debt with Soviet military aid for his campaign against Malaysia.

JONES, WHILE correctly giving Indonesian-American relations top priority, has not always been the best of housekeepers.

During two months I spent in Indonesia in 1959, it seemed to me that the United States Embassy officials and representatives of the Agency for International Development and the United States Information Agency under Jones had stepped right out of "The Ugly American."

But Jones's imprint was apparent in heading off an Indonesian-Dutch war over West Irian. He quickly perceived that neither the Indonesians nor the Dutch wanted war and persuaded Sukarno that the United States could provide a restraining hand.

He and the then United States Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy, were held in such affection by the Indonesians a few years ago that Sukarno even agreed to release aviator Allen L. Pope, the alleged CIA agent who had been condemned to death for strafing an aerial strip on Ambon Island during the 1958 Indonesian rebellion.

Jones's sense of personal relations in Indonesia even guided him to announce his resignation last November in such a way that President Sukarno would understand it was the overdue end of an Ambassador's tour and not an abrupt change in United States policy.

EVEN NOW, Jones is not taking up his new job as Chancellor of the University of Hawaii's Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange until his successor has been named.

Among those under consideration have been veteran Ambassador Jacob B. Beam, USIA Deputy Director Donald M. Wilson and Wilson Wyatt, the former Louisville mayor, National Housing Agency administrator and 1963 presidential trouble shooter in helping to settle Indonesia's nationalization threat over foreign oil company properties.

But the Johnson Administration is reconciled to the fact that it will be hard to find a man to continue the personal relationship that grew between Jones and Sukarno.

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