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Biographical Note

Howard P. Jones was Ambassador to Indonesia (1958-1965). This interview focuses on Robert F. Kennedy's [RFK] involvement in Indonesia, different ideas about Indonesian policy in the early 1960s, and organizational changes under the Kennedy Administration, among other things.

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Howard Palfrey Jones
Howard Palfrey Jones

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Howard P. Jones – JFK #3
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Third Oral History Interview

with

HOWARD P. JONES

April 9, 1970
Boston, Massachusetts

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Let's begin this morning with Robert Kennedy's involvement in Indonesia. I know that you've gone into this in your book, in your manuscript. I understand that his initial involvement was with the releasing of Allen Pope.

JONES: Not really.

O'BRIEN: No, it wasn't? Oh, I'm sorry.

JONES: No, no, no. Not at all. His initial involvement with--or at least exposure to--Indonesia was before he took office. I talked with him about Indonesia and its problems when he was in the Senate.

O'BRIEN: I see.

JONES: Then, as we discussed earlier, in the fall, shortly after he John F. Kennedy had been elected, we in the embassy advised the State Department that

we thought it would be important for him either to visit Indonesia or to invite Sukarno to come to Washington. And so we passed that word on to him even before he took office. I was able also to report from Indonesia the extremely favorable reaction that Sukarno had to Kennedy and the speeches he'd been making during his campaign and the consequent fact that Sukarno had come to the conclusion that he and Kennedy had pretty much the same view of the world--perhaps I shouldn't say "the world," but the same view of the economic and social revolution that was sweeping Asia and Africa. And so I thought that it was important to begin communication between these two men.

Sukarno felt very strongly that international relations were based pretty much on personal relations, so that he was anxious to develop a rapport with the new President of the United States. Kennedy responded to this, and early in his administration, as you know, April of the first year, he invited Sukarno to an unofficial visit to the White House. So that's really where the Kennedy involvement with Sukarno began. Pope was not mentioned in the plans for the visit although President Kennedy did bring up the subject during the visit.

O'BRIEN: Well, how about the President's brother here, Robert Kennedy? When does Robert Kennedy become a major factor?

JONES: Robert Kennedy came into the picture when he first came to Indonesia in the attempt to settle the West New Guinea dispute, to aid in the settlement of the West New Guinea dispute. This dispute arose as a result of the disagreement between Holland and Indonesia over whether this territory was a part of the Netherlands or Indonesia. The issue involved interpretation of the agreement of transfer of sovereignty between Holland and Indonesia when the latter became a nation following a successful revolution against the colonial power. The Indonesians considered that the articles of transfer which said, "All the territory heretofore known as the Netherlands East Indies is hereby transferred to the new Republic of Indonesia," meant what they said. A subsidiary provision specified that the question of the disposition of West New Guinea or West Irian would be postponed to a conference to be held within a year after the signing of these articles. The Indonesians believed the question to be "how" the transfer of this territory, occupied by people who were still primitive, was to be

effected. The Dutch insisted the issue was "whether" it was to be transferred and they took the position it would not be transferred.

Well, I don't think we need to go into all the details of that dispute, except to say that this became the major national issue in Indonesia. It was the tail that wagged the dog of Indonesian policy for years. It was the issue on which Sukarno rode to power. And it finally reached the stage where war was threatened between Indonesia and Holland if something wasn't done and done pretty fast.

Our Embassy had been recommending that President Kennedy, or, alternatively, some high official of the administration, visit Indonesia, partly because we felt that it was important to continue to build these personal bridges between Indonesia and America, partly because we felt that someone who could bear a personal word from the President, if the President couldn't come, would be helpful. And Bobby Kennedy was the most logical person to fulfill this role, because not only was he a member of the Cabinet, but he was the brother of the President and could speak for the President in a way in which no other person

could speak. So we were delighted when the response came to the recommendation that it was time for a high-level visit to Indonesia, that Bobby Kennedy was the man who was picked.

O'BRIEN: He has a rather abrasive kind of style, and there is some friction between him and Sukarno, as I understand.

JONES: Sukarno likes dynamic people, positive people. He said to me more than once, "I like people with flame in their eyes." So he and Bobby hit it off beautifully right from the start, I feel. This young man had a tremendous appeal to Sukarno, who saw in his Irish wit and warmth as well as in his positiveness the kind of young man he liked. So I would not use the term "abrasive" at all. Sometimes their discussions became very heated. I can't imagine any discussion in which Bobby Kennedy participated, on a subject about which he felt strongly, which wouldn't become heated. He was a very positive guy. But abrasive? His Irish wit kept him from being abrasive. There were one or two points where, as I say, the discussions became very, very heated, but then they both calmed down and their personal relations were cordial and friendly. Evidence of that was that Sukarno welcomed Bobby back two years later when he

returned to try to do something about the Malaysia dispute.

O'BRIEN: Well, on the--this is going back to the West Irian problem and the /Ellsworth/ Bunker negotiations and the Bunker mission. Was this fairly well coordinated with your embassy staff?

JONES: Well coordinated, yes. How do you mean that?

O'BRIEN: Well, as the negotiations developed.

JONES: There are two Bunker missions. First, the negotiations in Washington (actually, in Warrenton, Virginia, at a private estate) which resulted in the settlement of the West Irian dispute. Second, Bunker's trip to Indonesia in the spring of 1965 as President Johnson's emissary to try to get Sukarno to settle the Malaysia conflict. The first is your major interest since the U.S. mediation effort was during the Kennedy Administration. Yes, the coordination with the Embassy was on a day to day, sometimes hour to hour basis. As the talks in Washington between the Dutch and the Indonesians proceeded, messages were flying back and forth. As the U.S. Ambassador, I would have to see President Sukarno frequently in the effort to iron out sticky points. Our communications were so much faster than the Indonesian's. Also, we had assumed the role

of mediator. Ambassador Bunker did a superb job and was responsible for the formula finally adopted. But I'll never forget President Kennedy's wry comment at the end of April 12 the negotiations-- to the effect that the role of a mediator is not a happy one, but that the U.S. Government was prepared "to make everybody mad" if a solution could be reached.

I treat this in greater detail than we have time for here in my book. /Indonesia: The Possible Dream, published April, 1971, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York. Suffice it to say that we all, including President Kennedy, had high hopes for an improvement in U.S.-Indonesian relations as a result of the settlement. It had been a major victory for American diplomacy. We did not expect gratitude from the Indonesians--after all, it had taken a decade and all kinds of pressures to induce us to act-- but we did anticipate a friendlier relationship. With the threat of war out of the way, we thought the Indonesians would settle down to tackling their economic problems and this was an area where we could help them.

Bunker's second mission to which I referred was during the Johnson administration. He came to

Indonesia to attempt to influence Sukarno who was again behaving badly in his confrontation with Malaysia. But you are more interested in the Kennedy period. I had a high regard for Ambassador Bunker--indeed, there seemed a possibility he might succeed me as U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia but family obligations kept him from moving so far from home base.

O'BRIEN: Robert Komer has some involvement in the West Irian matter. Were you in contact with him very much?

JONES: Yes--we saw pretty much eye to eye on the Indonesian situation. Others, of course, were involved: James C., Jr Thompson and Michael V. Mike Forrestal. Those three were the men on the White House staff with whom I had most contact in that period. Komer contributed much in the total consideration of the problem in Washington.

O'BRIEN: You covered the meetings of Robert Kennedy with Sukarno, and some of the issues are discussed rather well in your manuscript.

JONES: I went over that pretty thoroughly. Really, no real need to go into it.

O'BRIEN: In terms of the British--I was thinking in terms of United States policy and British policy in the area. How closely do you work with the British in regard

to a number of things here, the Malaysian controversy when it arises, and also a little later with Maphilindo?

JONES: The British, of course, are and have been for a century and a half our closest allies. We have disagreed with them on many things from time to time, but basically our ties are very deep and very close. Consequently, even when we had differences with them, we consulted with them regularly. And our differences were relatively minor in the stream of world issues. In Indonesia most of the European ambassadors were close working colleagues. The Japanese ambassadors who were there during the period were not only close friends, but we were working very closely with the Japanese. But we had special relationships with the British, the Australians and the Canadians due to the long period of association and deep and lasting friendship between our countries.

O'BRIEN: Were you aware of any pressures brought to bear on the Dutch or the Australians in the West Irian controversy, let's say, from Prime Minister Harold Macmillan?

JONES: No. Macmillan obviously was in touch with events but so far as I am aware he never was actively

involved, although there may have been some Presidential-level discussions of which I am not aware.

O'BRIEN: In regard to the problems of the area--I'm thinking in terms of things that are going on in places like Borneo and Malaysia--how heavily does the United States depend on the British for intelligence as to what's going on in these areas, or did we have our own sources?

JONES: We had our own sources but they were limited compared to the British. At the time of the U.N. ascertainment of the opinion in Borneo regarding joining Malaysia, for example, surely we had advice from the British as to what was happening--our relations were very close--but we didn't depend on this. We made our own independent investigations. One could assume that in basic analysis of the situation, we were constantly in communication with the British, exchanging views and having their input as well as ours. But having said this, no American Embassy that I know of ever depended on the British or anybody else for their analysis and conclusions. Certainly in all the situations that I ever had anything to do with, whether it was Germany, Belgium, China, or Indonesia, we had our own independent sources.

Also, it was our custom to compare notes with all diplomats to obtain the information that is the stock in trade of an ambassador--the British, the Canadians, the Australians, the Japanese, the Italians, the French, the Germans, et cetera, et cetera, including representatives of the communist bloc. I think you'll find that our diplomatic reach today around the world, and certainly at that period in Southeast Asia, was as wide as that of any nation represented in the area.

O'BRIEN: Well, you had a number of people on the Far East desk when you were there as ambassador. I was thinking of Walter Robertson. I'm sure Robertson was there when you first . . .

JONES: Walter Robertson was Assistant Secretary.

O'BRIEN: And then James G. Parsons and Walter P. McConaughy and W. Averell Harriman and Roger, Jr. Hilsman. Starting at the beginning, do you have any strong differences or any strong affiliations or agreements with any of these men? Which one, do you think, was the most effective?

JONES: If I had to pick one, I'd pick Harriman. If two, I'd select Robertson and Harriman. Quite different men representing quite different points of view. All the men you mentioned were effective diplomats

but Robertson and Harriman had stature and political clout in their own right.

Harriman had world stature when he came into the Assistant Secretaryship which, incidentally, was a big thing for a man of Harriman's prestige to do, to accept the Assistant Secretaryship when he had been spoken of as not only a possible candidate for the Presidency, but certainly for the Secretary of Stateship. He'd been Governor of New York. He'd been the European head of the Marshall Plan and so on. This was a man of international renown. He had not only a closer relationship with the Secretary of State, but he had ready access to the White House. So that in terms of the difficulties we were having in Indonesia, he gave us answers that we hadn't been able to get up to that time. I don't want to quote Harriman's views--you can get them from him himself,--but I feel I can say that he and I generally looked on the Southeast Asian situation and the Indonesian situation from the same general point of view. Harriman was a tower of strength in Washington to Embassy Djakarta during a very difficult period.

You mentioned Walter Robertson. Again, Robertson in his own right as Assistant Secretary to John Foster Dulles also had great personal strength.

He was close to Dulles and also to Dwight D. Eisenhower. He wasn't the world figure that Harriman was, but he had the same kind of capacity to bring his views to the attention of people in power, and he was a very forceful figure who was able to impress those views. And one could say that during the period he was Assistant Secretary he was calling the shots on Asian policy pretty much.

O'BRIEN: Is there any of the Assistant Secretaries that you have any difficulties with?

JONES: No. No, they were all very good friends of mine, and they were all perceptive in their understanding of the Southeast Asian situation. McConaughy and I, and Jeff Parsons and I, had served together. Hilsman and Harriman were very close, and the three of us generally shared the same point of view with regard to Southeast Asian and Indonesian problems. I was extremely fortunate in all the men who were Assistant Secretary during the period I was in Djakarta. Some of them had less political clout than others but they were all good men.

O'BRIEN: How about your relations with the Secretary, three Secretaries: Dulles, Christian A. Herter and Dean Rusk.

JONES: My relations were satisfactory with all of them.

O'BRIEN: Do you have any difficulties with Dulles, for example?

JONES: No, I did not always agree with him--or his successors. It must be remembered that a Secretary of State must give balanced consideration to our interests in various parts of the world. Sometimes that balanced consideration did not result in the answers we wanted from Djakarta, but that's a secretary's job, and an ambassador has to understand that. At least I consoled myself with that thought on occasion! I was originally appointed by President Eisenhower. Thus I went out to Indonesia as an ambassador under Dulles, and was operating within the framework of policy and program at that time. In altering the emphasis of U.S. policy toward Indonesia, I had to convince him I was right. Had I been unsuccessful, I would have had problems. Each of the three secretaries of state you mentioned differed in his general approach to American foreign policy but these differences as reflected in Indonesia were differences of degree or of interpretation of a particular situation.

For example, one of Dulles' great contributions as he saw it was the collective security arrangements which he felt was the base of American policy and

security in Asia. Well, people could differ with him as to the effectiveness of those arrangements. One could argue, in setting up SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization], for example, that this was really a Western-backed arrangement which didn't have as much representation from Asia as might have been desired.

Furthermore, such representation as it had from Asia lacked military power at that time, the time of the formation of SEATO, the best Asian armies outside of Communist China were Korea and Taiwan, and yet neither of them was represented in the SEATO pattern. Furthermore, none of the neutral countries were represented in SEATO. It was a pretty narrow pattern, and this was, of course, the era when there was a feeling that neutralism was immoral. [Laughter]

Of course, on some of those matters I would have disagreed, but those questions didn't arise during my tenure as Ambassador in Indonesia. Everyone was interested in salvaging this tremendously important country, preventing it from becoming a communist satellite and preserving its own independence of action. So perhaps this will make it clearer. The considerations of all three Secretaries of State, with respect to the framework within which I was operating and our objectives in Indonesia, varied not at all.

There was no difference of view on a Republican, Democratic, or whatnot, partisan basis as to what were our major goals and objectives with respect to Indonesia. There sometimes were differences as to how those should be implemented, but again these were not partisan differences. This was the reason I was able to serve under three administrations, each one of which had a somewhat different emphasis in terms of foreign policy, without having any policy differences with them.

O'BRIEN: You had this special access to the White House, and I know in some cases that's resented by the Department and by people in the Department. Was there any occasion in the Kennedy years in which the issue arose about this special access to the White House, either with the Secretary or with the Department?

JONES: No. No, definitely not. Actually, there was no instance in which I had relationships or contacts with the White House which were outside the framework of normal channels. I never contacted the White House without the Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary knowing what I was doing. I didn't play politics in that sense, ever. Perhaps because I was a disciplined Foreign Service officer and believed deeply in the career system, I stayed

in channels, working with and through the State Department. Some ambassadors, particularly political appointees who have had a long history of direct relations with the President may by-pass the State Department and contact the White House direct. This was not my style. Every contact I had with the White House, whether from Indonesia or when I was in Washington and went over to the White House, these were all contacts of which the State Department was aware and endorsed and usually arranged.

O'BRIEN: I'm curious about one particular thing. As I understand it, when Bobby Kennedy came out shortly after the assassination, he talked to Sukarno. He went back to Washington and apparently had some differences with Lyndon Johnson with regard to Indonesia. Did you ever get in on that, or did he ever talk to you about it after? Or did you see him again after that?

JONES: Yes, I saw him again. I visited him at his home and his office. But I don't believe I have any knowledge that would bear on that point. You're speaking of his second trip to Indonesia when he became involved in the Malaysia dispute?

O'BRIEN: Yes.

JONES: He made some real progress at that time. I don't know of any basic differences between the two men.

on the approach. One might assume--and this is merely an assumption--that the fact that the White House took no action and there was no follow-up on Bobby Kennedy's furious, whirlwind trip through Southeast Asia, his agreement with Sukarno on a cease-fire, and his trip to London, et cetera. . . . That there was no follow up on this tremendously significant effort the United States had made must have been very unsatisfactory, to say the least, to Bobby Kennedy.

O'BRIEN: Did he ever express any of that dissatisfaction?

JONES: To me? No.

O'BRIEN: Yes.

JONES: No. The next time I saw him was in Washington. This was a social occasion--my wife and I were invited to his home in Virginia for dinner. We reminisced about his visits to Indonesia but we had no substantive discussions that I recall.

O'BRIEN: As far as your recommendations on Indonesian policy, do you have any opposition to that, or is there a counterpolicy, either in the Department or, well, in your embassy, or even in the White House, that surfaces in the time that you're there from, well, let's say, '58 to '65, throughout the period that you're . . .

JONES: Well, yes, of course. There were very great differences

in the United States Government and at times within the Embassy on the subject.

O'BRIEN: Who are some of the people that might be associated with a counterview on Indonesia?

JONES: The differences ranged around the point as to whether we should recognize a fact of life that Sukarno in that period was the charismatic leader of his country who literally was the idol of the masses; and recognizing this as a fact of life, we should do our best to influence the direction in which he was going. This was one view, and this was mine. The other view was that we could not cooperate with him, and that ranged to the extremes that we should attempt to bring him down. The view that I espoused was the one which prevailed.

My own strong conviction was that to play for the future. Our aid programs were not designed to shore up Sukarno; they were designed to educate the oncoming generation of Indonesians. We had taken, as I think I mentioned last time we talked, the position that the technical assistance program should assume the responsibility for the technical education of the oncoming generation of Indonesians and that this was the major focus of our effort there in terms of aid.

There was a difference of view on that policy

only when Sukarno, as some people put it, began to kick us in the teeth; and then there was vigorous disagreement and attacks from Congress and the press. I don't think I could put my finger on any one or two or three people in the Department or in the government who led the opposition. I have given extensive quotes in my book as to the congressional opposition, which centered in a number of the Congressmen who felt that we were aiding a man who was: (a) not worth helping and, (b) was actually opposing our objectives.

In Congress there was Senator Wayne Morse and Congressman William S. Broomfield of Michigan and a number of the people on the House Foreign Affairs Committee who expressed themselves strongly. Some of the magazines and the press in the United States were fed up with Sukarno--not unjustifiably. One of the problems an ambassador faces and that any administration faces in a case like this is that you cannot answer these criticisms publicly. The only thing you can do is, as I did when I came back to Washington, meet with the Foreign Relations Committee and explain what you're trying to do. But this has to be on a classified basis. You just have to sit there and take it.

Suppose I came out and said publicly, "Look here. We're not backing Sukarno. We're putting our money on

the younger generation--we're trying to get a new generation that will be interested in an independent Indonesia standing on its own feet and not subservient to the communists. Sukarno won't be there forever." I wouldn't have lasted a week in Indonesia. This is the kind of problem an ambassador constantly faces, and he just has to, you know, grin and bear it. In a case where you're working with a government, particularly one with a very strong leader with whose objectives you're not in sympathy, the overall policy of the government is well known and can be stated, and I would state it repeatedly--as for its implementation, it's a little like an iceberg, much of it below the surface.

O'BRIEN: Is there any point in your tenure as ambassador there, and particularly during the Kennedy years, at which Sukarno just simply becomes impossible to really communicate with or deal with?

JONES: Yes, toward the latter part of my service there. Not while Kennedy was President.

O'BRIEN: This is in the Johnson period?

JONES: Yes. The break in communication began in 1964; by the spring of 1965 Sukarno was extremely difficult to deal with. He was taking arbitrary positions on matters which at an earlier time I could have discussed with him and had a reasonable dialogue. But by this

time he had an emotional set and an emotional bias to the point where. . . . Well, considering this is on a classified basis, I would say that he was finding it difficult to distinguish between fantasy and reality. This did not affect our personal relations, which continued friendly right straight through, but I found it more and more difficult to have a reasonable, rational exchange of views with him. His emotions took over more and more as 1965 progressed.

For example, he had become convinced by the spring of 1965 that not only was the CIA /Central Intelligence Agency/ trying to bring him down, but that /William E./ Bill Palmer, a business man, the representative of the American motion picture industry in Indonesia, was one of the key men, if not the head of the CIA. A few months earlier I had convinced him there was nothing to this, I had adopted the unorthodox procedure, which I think shocked Washington a little, of introducing Sukarno to the real head of CIA in Indonesia. Indeed, we all, including wives had dinner together. I am sure this was never done before and probably never done again. /Laughter/ It was a social affair, on a confidential basis and the result of the evening seemed to be that Sukarno was convinced the CIA was not working to topple him.

O'BRIEN: This is the head. When you say the head, do you mean the head of the country?

JONES: Yes, the CIA station chief in Indonesia. Sukarno and he established a rapport that evening and until that man was transferred, we had no more trouble.

As soon as he was transferred and another man came in, Sukarno, spurred by the PKI, again became suspicious. The Communists mounted a campaign against Bill Palmer and I had to advise him to leave the country, although he had no connection with the CIA. I had any number of exchanges with Sukarno on this subject in which he said, "You just don't know what the CIA's doing. I do."

I found it impossible to get through this great fog of suspicion that began to build up in Sukarno's mind. It was based on communist propaganda and probably forgeries of documents and this sort of thing, plus his own increasing psychopathic fear. I am not blaming Sukarno, simply stating facts. After seven assassination attempts on you, you probably be a little suspicious of people too.

O'BRIEN: In terms of other people in the Indonesian Government that you have contact with and so on during the Kennedy Administration, who might some of these people be during the Kennedy years outside of Sukarno?

JONES: You mean . . .

O'BRIEN: In terms of other leaders in government and the army.

JONES: In Washington?

O'BRIEN: No, Indonesians, members of the Indonesian Government.

JONES: I had contact with all of them. Ordinarily, I saw the Foreign Minister several times a week. This was Subandrio who is still in confinement. I saw most of the members of the Cabinet frequently. Also the top military officers. I maintained contact with the heads of all the political parties, the key newspapermen, the key educational people. All the people who had anything to do with either the formation of public opinion or the power centers in the government I was in contact with continuously-- this is the job of an Ambassador.

O'BRIEN: How about the PKI? I mean did you find that. . . .

JONES: The leadership of the Communist Party was the sole exception. The PKI [Partai Komunis Indonesia] in Indonesia were so suspicious of us that it was very difficult to communicate with them. I used to meet [D. N.] Aidit, the head of the PKI, and [Mohammed] Lukman and some of his key people such as Njoto and Njono, at official receptions and Sukarno's speeches. They shied away from serious discussions. I repeatedly urged Aidit to let us sit down and have an informal discussion about things.

For example, I said to Aidit one time, "Look, if I were in a communist country, I would be seeing top leaders of the Communist Party and talking with them about their objectives, et cetera. I don't see why you and I can't sit down and talk. You can ask me about our objectives, and I'd like to ask you about yours, where you're heading."

Well, he was never willing to do this. I don't know whether he was afraid that what he said would be used against him, whether he was fearful that I was trying to trap him or what, but he would never see me. Occasionally he would see members of my staff, but even that was quite rare. The people he was willing to see were American scholars who were coming to Indonesia on research programs and who were people whom he regarded as objective, to those people he would sit down and talk at some length. But our attempts to communicate with the communists were not very fruitful. It was a strange business. One was always fencing with them.

Now, this wasn't as true of the representatives of the Soviet Union or the Eastern European communist nations. I could communicate with the Soviet ambassador. Even though he parroted the party line, this was useful. But these Indonesian communists had their defenses up, and they were so convinced that every move we made was

toward curbing their power and curtailing their influence and that we were real enemies, that they were very wary of us.

O'BRIEN: Did Secretary Rusk or the Kennedy Administration institute any organizational changes that you thought were significant in the operation of your embassy or in your relations with Washington?

JONES: Well, the major one, of course, was initiated . . .

JONES: /Interruption/ Well, I guess we'll have to. . . . Maybe three or four minutes more and then I'll have to go.

O'BRIEN: Fine. Well, we were talking about the organizational changes.

JONES: The major organizational change was the move by President Kennedy to insure that the ambassador was boss in the country where he was serving. This was of great significance. President Eisenhower had started that. He had issued an instruction which specified the ambassador was the top man and all representatives of other agencies in the U.S. Government would report to the ambassador. This was primarily as a result of the conflicts that had developed between ambassadors and the heads of the Marshall Plan or AID /Agency for International Development/ missions. There's a long history to that that I could go into, but we don't have time.

President Kennedy faced right up to this issue in terms of the CIA problems and the relationships between the intelligence agencies and the ambassador. He issued a letter of specific instructions. This was most helpful in enabling an ambassador to take full charge of U.S. affairs in a country.

I held a staff meeting every morning at 8 o'clock at which not only were all the heads of Embassy departments and attaches present, but also the CIA station chief, the chief of the economic aid mission, the head of the USIS and so on. These people were reporting directly to the Ambassador. This was a tremendously significant step in terms of unifying the American effort in the country. We had no problems of conflicting activities after that.

O'BRIEN: Does that change in the Johnson years?

JONES: No, that didn't change. No.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever. . .

JONES: At least it didn't change in Indonesia. I can't speak for other areas.

O'BRIEN: Were you ever aware of anyone going outside of that?

JONES: Never.

O'BRIEN: Just one last question. I was wondering on the . . .

JONES: I might add that the country team concept developed as a natural consequence of unity of the U.S. effort.

By the end of the Kennedy Administration, country teams were standard operating procedure.

O'BRIEN: Well, just one last question, and this is in regard to the oil settlements in Tokyo. There's a number of things. I looked at your particular chapter. There are a number of things we could go into. Did you ever feel that the oil companies put any undue pressure on you to represent them, or from Washington as well?

JONES: No, I can say "no" without qualification. We were in constant contact with the oil company representatives as major U.S. business interests in Indonesia. The same was true of the rubber companies and other American firms doing business in Indonesia. I think we were able to perform an important role in communicating with them and with the Indonesians on matters of mutual concern and to aid in clarification of the issues. Obviously, the oil companies had their own interests to look out for.

The Embassy didn't participate in the negotiations, as I think I made clear. Nevertheless, we were vitally interested in insuring that some kind of agreement was reached. It was in Indonesia's interest and in the interest of the whole Western position in Indonesia to keep the oil flowing. Most Indonesian foundries cooked with kerosene from the oil wells.

It is true that the oil companies came to Washington

when they were desperate. They were about to pull out of Indonesia. And you can consider that as pressure if you want, but this was a fact of life.

The oil companies had reached the point where Indonesia was making demands which would affect, they thought, their position in the Middle East, and elsewhere, and they were really just about to pull out. I'm confident that this was no bluff. Harriman cooked up the plan of having a meeting in Tokyo at which there would be a U.S. Government presence, not in order to in any way dictate a settlement, but to provide a neutral ground on which the negotiations could proceed after having broken down in Djakarta.

O'BRIEN: Well, thank you, Ambassador Jones, for another interesting and informative interview.

JONES: Well, I'm sorry it's so rushed. Thank you for your patience.

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HOWARD PALFREY JONES
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April 26, 1972

Professor Frederick P. Bunnell
Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601

Dear Fred:

It was good to see you and Alice and I am only sorry that we did not have time to sit down and discuss some of the questions which you obviously still had in mind.

One point which we did discuss briefly I might elaborate on a little, although I am sure you are fully conversant with not only my own point of view, but the facts. Nevertheless, some comments may be useful.

U.S. policy in the period of which you are writing has frequently been described as based upon "wishful thinking," particularly with respect to our ability to influence Sukarno. Critics who took this point of view argued that a tough policy would bring Sukarno into line. I argued that a highly emotional and sensitive nationalistic Asian leader like Sukarno would react violently to a hardline policy-- that a course of action based upon threats or withdrawal of aid would only result in Sukarno's moving in a direction repugnant to the American interest.

And so it proved to be. The Indonesian President's "To Hell with your aid" speech was the first dramatic example of this as American policy moved toward a "Do this or else" posture.

What Ass't Secretary Hilsman described as "the carrot and the stick" approach to Sukarno had a chance to work as long as the stick was known to be present but not obviously shaken. American policy, designed to strengthen the nations of Southeast Asia and enable them to stand on their own feet, could only succeed if Indonesia remained

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free of the Communist bloc. To ensure the independence of Indonesia involved establishing an identity of interest between the U.S. and Indonesia which, at this point in time, meant working with Sukarno in the attainment of any of his goals which we decreed to be consistent with our interests. A just and prosperous society was one such objective. Through the years, we did our utmost to steer Sukarno in this direction. For reasons spelled out elsewhere in my book, we did not succeed. But we did succeed in the thing that mattered most--giving enough Indonesians exposure to a free society through education and training in the United States so that the Indonesian elite knew what they wanted and moved toward it when the chance came. American policy in Indonesia was designed to retain an American presence in Indonesia and help the people of Indonesia achieve the goals of their own revolution. It was a policy which required patience, forbearance and persistence to implement.

Sukarno was forever getting in the way and throwing a shadow across the path. I was optimistic longer than most that Sukarno would finally come around to see where his own best interest and the interest of his country lay. Even in the watershed year of 1964, I did not give up hope.

At this time, some of our most knowledgeable people in the Embassy, among them our expert Sovietologist, Robert Martin, had concluded that the pattern of Sukarno's actions was such as to indicate he was leading Indonesia with Communism and that he himself must be regarded as a crypto communist.

Although I was quite aware that this might be the result of the course upon which he was embarking, spurred by not only the PKI leadership but the Eminent Grise of Indonesia, Subandrio, I could not see Sukarno ever willingly subordinating himself by becoming a captive of the Communist party. By the end of 1964, however, I had reached the conclusion that most of the Indonesian elite had reached--in the interest of Indonesia, Sukarno must go.

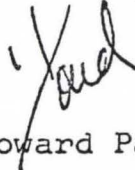
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Typical of the attitude of many former supporters of Sukarno was a comment made to me in January 1965. "I love that man," this Indonesian leader said, "but the time has come when we have to choose between our country and Sukarno."

If this is of use to you, fine, if not just toss it in file #13.

Mary Lou joins in affectionate regards to you both,

Sincerely,



Howard Palfrey Jones

Mr. Jones would like researchers to know that much of what is discussed in these interviews is covered in greater detail in his book, Indonesia: The Possible Dream, (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanich; N.Y.; April, 1971).