
The author of this very careful and thorough account of the Indonesian dispute at the United Nations was a member of the U.N. Secretariat staff in Indonesia during the negotiations. He thus has a first-hand knowledge of the events and personalities involved, and has improved it by interviews with many of the diplomats and statesmen in the Netherlands and Indonesian governments who were responsible for the decisions taken in the matter. He discusses with great fair-mindedness the background of the dispute, the proceedings at Lake Success and in Indonesia, the military measures taken by the Dutch, the national attitudes of the powers concerned, the juridical issues arising from the U.N. action, and the effectiveness of the U.N. machinery. Until the archives of the governments involved are open to inspection, it seems unlikely that a more complete account of these events will be written.

Dr. Taylor's style is perhaps a little heavy-handed and inclined to jargon, but the line of his narrative is clear and coherent. The most substantial criticism which might be made of his book is that, in choosing not to consider at any length the political development of the Indonesian nationalist movement either before or during the struggle for independence, or its economic basis, he has renounced the possibility of providing authoritative answers to some of the most interesting question about Indonesia as a sovereign State. And these are the questions by which the success or failure of the U.N. operation must be judged. In other words, Dr. Taylor is not much inclined to examine critically the view that the emergence of Indonesia to full sovereignty should be regarded as a happy ending for his story and an exemplification of the superiority of U.N. methods of settlement over those of conventional diplomacy. This was a reasonable enough assumption on the morrow of independence, but from the vantage-point of ten years later it seems to need rather more qualification than Dr. Taylor gives it. Of all the disputes which have come before the U.N., this was perhaps the one in which the actual mechanism of U.N. settlement contributed most to the final outcome, though even here the pressures of power-politics were very influential. Looking at it in retrospect, therefore, one inevitably expects not only an account of what happened, but a convincing judgment of the consequences. It is here that the book seems a little disappointing. Nevertheless it is a valuable study, not only for those interested in Indonesia, but for those interested in the processes of pacific settlement and the issue of domestic jurisdiction.

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