

Sukarno on a Rampage

President Sukarno of Indonesia is again breathing fire about West New Guinea, which he says his country will "liberate" by force in the near future. It would be foolish of Indonesia to try.

As American, Australian—and, for that matter, Japanese—troops discovered in the second World War, New Guinea is tough terrain in which to wage a military campaign. The Dutch are unlikely to sit back quietly if the Indonesians invade the island. The Australians, who supported the recent Dutch proposal in the General Assembly to turn over to the United Nations the process of making West New Guinea independent by self-determination, are also unlikely to do nothing. They possess the eastern half of the island.

Under any consideration, a military campaign is not the way to settle this issue. West New Guinea used to be a part of the Dutch East Indies, but this was an administrative convenience, not a natural development based on race or history. Perhaps some day West Papua, as it will be called, will voluntarily opt to join Indonesia. The way to win the Papuans over is to give them an incentive to become Indonesian. To force them to do so by a military campaign would be a perfect example of neo-colonialism.

These problems ought to be handled in the light of present-day conditions and the accepted principles of international procedure. The Dutch may have been wrong in clinging to West New Guinea as long as they did; but, even if this be granted, two wrongs do not make a right. Of all people, President Sukarno should recognize that self-determination is a better principle than military conquest.