

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. SECRET

See Secretary's comments on his copy of this paper

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SUBJECT

INDONESIAN/MALAYSIAN DISPUTE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

FOR THE MINISTER

Objectives

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
18 DEC 1963

The longer term objectives of Australian policy in South East Asia require not only the retention there of British defence positions but also the maintenance, so far as we are able, of peaceful relations between Australia and an Indonesia which is non-communist. Our immediate objective in the current Indonesian/Malaysian dispute is to ensure that the Federation of Malaysia is given the opportunity to consolidate itself and develop peacefully.

2. While external threats are providing some cohesive force within the Federation, the difficulties of maintaining law and order in Sabah and Sarawak are being added to by armed incursions from across the Indonesian border and Indonesian encouragement and training of insurrectionists. The removal of this external threat and interference can be satisfactorily accomplished only by persuading the Indonesian Government that Malaysia has to be accepted. Such persuasion may ultimately have to take the form of the threat or the use of force against the aggressor. In the meantime it is taking the form of pressure on the Indonesian Government from the United States, Australia and such parties other than Britain and Malaysia who still retain contacts and influence in Djakarta. It may assist in persuading Indonesia to accept Malaysia if world opinion can be mobilised against the present aggressive attitudes of the Indonesian Government, and this can be done most effectively through the United Nations.

3. The possibility of United Nations intervention in the Indonesian/Malaysian dispute may therefore be looked on from a positive and a negative point of view. Positively, United Nations intervention could help if the Indonesian Government could be brought to the point of deciding that Malaysia has to be accepted, which they might do so long as United Nations intervention was accompanied by some face-saving formula. Negatively, United Nations intervention could make it more difficult for Indonesia to pursue its policy of threats and of armed infiltration and training.

4. In the event that the Australian Government were to decide to send Australian armed forces to eastern Malaysia, it is desirable that, at the time of such a decision being made public, action should be in train to have the Malaysian Government refer the Borneo situation to the United Nations. It might be preferable for referral by the Malaysians and action by the Australians to take place at the same time, so as to forestall the possible development of moves in the United Nations in favour of freezing an existing situation, that is before our forces were in position. The important consideration

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is that, at the time when Australians are likely to be involved in action in eastern Malaysia against either identifiable Indonesian infiltrators or against bodies of local armed insurrectionists, supported by Indonesian arms, training and encouragement, the United Nations should be seized of the situation.

Factors against involvement of United Nations

5. Involvement might put in question the whole subject of the acceptability of Malaysia. (This was the argument used a few months ago against the Malaysians taking a case to the United Nations. However Malaysia has been accepted by the United Nations General Assembly which has elected it to the Security Council in 1965).
6. A fresh United Nations interest in the northern Borneo territories might further upset the local populations there and make them doubt the stability and purpose of Malaysia. (This is something on which the Malaysians themselves could best pass judgment.)
7. The present "confrontation" by Indonesia suits Malaysia well enough by stimulating a sense of national unity against external aggression. (It may well turn out that in a prolonged period of confrontation, the larger and stronger of the antagonists will be the gainer.)
8. United Nations intervention would be likely to result in some international criticism of the presence of foreign troops, British, Australian or New Zealand, in a former colonial territory and in calls for the withdrawal of such troops. (However we can hardly expect that opinion e.g. in Indonesia and elsewhere, would simply ignore our action.)

Factors favouring involvement of United Nations

9. There is some public and political opinion in Australia which would require that the United Nations be involved before Australian forces were used for fighting in North Borneo.
10. World public opinion would expect that movements of foreign forces to assist other Governments should be made within the context of, or at least with reference to, United Nations obligations.
11. There would be advantage in mobilizing United Nations opinion which at present is favourable enough towards Malaysia, as a deterrent against Indonesian aggression.
12. On the assumption that time is not necessarily on our side, there is a need for a positive approach to a settlement on terms, inter alia, under which Indonesia would accept Malaysia.
13. We need to avoid the danger that Australian forces will be condemned by a substantial number of the United Nations for taking part in the armed suppression of groups of indigenous people of North Borneo whether or not the insurrectionists are shown to be supported by Indonesia.

Timing of Reference to United Nations

14. So far as Australia is concerned, the timing of a Malaysian appeal to the United Nations should be not later than a positive response by the Australian Government to a Malaysian request for assistance in North Borneo. A Malaysian reference to the United Nations might however be made earlier in the event that they and Britain believed that there was a clear case to present of Indonesian involvement and participation in armed insurrections in Malaysian territory.

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15. The unpublished British White Paper on "Indonesia and the British Borneo Territories" would be valid as earlier evidence of Indonesian aggressive words and actions prior to the attainment by northern Borneo territories of independence and their federation with Malaysia. The Malaysian Government's case against Indonesia however would have to be documented separately and present evidence of Indonesian current involvement in armed insurrection in northern Borneo, the training and equipment in Indonesian territory of insurrectionists from northern Borneo and Indonesian public threats against Malaysia.

16. The chairmanship of the Security Council for the coming few months is as follows : December 1963 American, January 1964 Bolivian, February Brazilian, March Chinese, and in April Czechoslovakian. Until March 1964 therefore the chairmanship of the Security Council would be satisfactory enough from the point of view of a Malaysian complaint.

Form of Reference

17. The Malaysian Government might either :-

(a) simply notify the Security Council that in relation to Article 51 concerning the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, and to Chapter 8 of the United Nations Charter concerning Regional Arrangements for defence, it had sought and obtained military assistance to secure international peace and security in the northern Borneo area from the United Kingdom, and, in the event that at that time Australia and New Zealand had been asked and had agreed to send forces, from Australia and New Zealand also;

or

(b) more formally present to the Security Council a complaint against Indonesia calling a meeting of the Security Council.

United Nations Action

18. In the event that, acting on the first course of action, some member of the Security Council sought a meeting of the Council or, acting on the second course of action, the President of the Council called a meeting as he would be bound to do, some estimate can be attempted as to the type of Security Council action which could be sought and which might be expected.

19. Membership of the Security Council in 1964 will be : China, France, U.S.S.R., U.K. and U.S.A. as permanent members, and Brazil, Bolivia, Morocco, Norway, Ivory Coast and Czechoslovakia as elected members. Seven votes would be required to place a subject such as "Indonesian aggression against Malaysia" or the "Indonesian/Malaysian dispute over northern Borneo" on the agenda and these might be expected from China, France, U.K., U.S.A., Brazil, Bolivia and Norway with the possible addition of the Ivory Coast. The Malaysian and Indonesian representatives would be invited to present the complaint and counter-argument respectively. Statements supporting the Malaysian position, or at least not antagonistic to it, could be expected from the 7 or 8 members listed above, while the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia could be expected to support the Indonesian position and to call for, inter alia, the removal of all foreign troops and the dismantling of foreign bases in the Malaysia area.

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20. The Western Powers could aim at securing endorsement by 7 to 8 votes of a proposal which :

- (i) established, and despatched to the area, a U.N. Observation Group whose functions would be, principally, to observe and report on the border area and other relevant aspects of the complaint, on past and current border incidents, and to keep the Security Council progressively informed. (The Observation Group, comprising civilian and military members, could number up to two or three hundred c.f. U.N. Observation Group in Lebanon 1958);
- (ii) called on the Secretary-General (or on a special Good Offices Mission) to examine the bases of the dispute and to submit a report and recommendations to the Security Council.

21. The Soviet Union would probably veto such a resolution after having attempted to introduce amendments, aimed, inter alia, at the withdrawal of all foreign troops and bases. It is, however, conceivable that they would abstain if the Indonesians saw in the action proposed some possibility of a way out acceptable to themselves (e.g. opening up of a new ascertainment process, or a strengthening of their influence in the area, or face-saving withdrawal etc.)

22. If the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution, the matter could then be referred to the General Assembly on an affirmative vote of 7 under the "uniting for peace" procedure. Such an affirmative vote could probably be obtained.

23. If a resolution were moderate and constructive, i.e. if it were aimed not simply for an observance of the international borders but for some United Nations effort to resolve Indonesian/Malaysian differences, it is just possible to contemplate its acceptance by a majority, especially if Indonesia saw in ~~it~~ some new United Nations initiative a way out of its own difficulties.

24. On the other hand, it is also possible that Indonesia, supported by the communist bloc and a number of the more extreme Afro-Asians, would endeavour to give the United Nations discussions a violently anti-colonialist twist to the ^{dis}advantage of the Malaysians, British and ourselves. This possibility however would be heightened if the initiative for United Nations involvement came from the Indonesian and not the Malaysian side.

25. All in all, and even if an impasse were reached in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the balance of advantage for opening up such consideration in the United Nations would, having regard to international and domestic opinion (U.K., Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia) probably lie with Malaysia and her friends, having regard to the circumstances, and in particular to the fact that an ascertainment of the wishes of the people of northern Borneo has already been carried out by the Secretary-General's own Mission.

Questions for Decision

26. It is a matter for decision whether we should let the British Government know that, without at this stage pre-judging our attitude to a Malaysian request for armed assistance in eastern Malaysia, we would prefer that, if we were to decide to provide such assistance, it would be in the context of a situation in northern Borneo which had caused the Malaysian Government to refer the matter to the United Nations.

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27. We should not give the impression to the British that, if they agree to press the Malaysians to take a case to the United Nations, Australian forces would necessarily be sent to eastern Malaysia; nor, on the other hand, that we would regard reference to the United Nations as itself obviating any need for Australian armed assistance.

28. The position we should try to establish is that Australian forces should not become involved in eastern Malaysia until and unless it can be shown not simply that it would be helpful to the Malaysians and British to have them there, but that the situation is so serious as to warrant a United Nations involvement as well.

Consultation with United States and New Zealand

29. At this stage we should explore with our ANZUS partners their thinking about the desirability, timing, form and likely course of United Nations involvement in the Malaysian/Indonesian dispute. The analysis set out earlier in this paper might be used as a basis for preliminary discussions. The Australian Government should not take any firm decision for the provision of forces to eastern Malaysia without the United States having had the opportunity to comment on the possible consequences of such action in relation to our mutual commitments under ANZUS and to our commitments as members of the United Nations.

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