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AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
DJAKARTA

*In reply quote No.*

DESPATCH NO. 5/1962

17th June 1962

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following comments and factual report on the visit paid to Indonesia by the Australian Minister for Defence, Mr. Athol Townley, between 4th and 10th June 1962.

2. From the point of view of Australian-Indonesian relations, the visit of the Australian Minister for Defence, following General Nasution's visit to Australia in April 1961, may well prove to be an important development in the history of relations between our two countries. The significance of the visit in my view lay primarily in its demonstration of the personal conviction of the Indonesian Minister for National Security, General Nasution, that good relations with Australia were important in the long term to Indonesian national requirements, and that any disagreements we may have over West New Guinea should not be allowed seriously to impair prospects for long-term co-operation. General Nasution made it clear that he viewed Australia as an ally and a friend which he would continue to cultivate in the belief that Indonesia and Australia needed one another if we were to face up to the threat which he saw would come to us from East Asia within a comparatively short number of years. General Nasution is a man of wide vision and strength of character, and his view of the world is developing in clarity and insight. He has looked around the South and South-East Asian area to see with whom Indonesia's interests lie and he has already chosen his friends. General Nasution is the second most influential individual in Indonesia, and he commands an instrument, the Army, which not only monopolises armed power, but which largely runs, directly and indirectly, the administration of the Central Government and the provinces.

3. Secondly, Mr. Townley's visit was important in the public demonstration it provided of the breadth and depth of Indonesian friendship towards Australia. Mr. Townley was welcomed with great warmth, not only by Ministers and high officials, but also, and spontaneously, by the villagers, students and junior officers and officials amongst whom he moved. Their reactions demonstrated that Indonesians have a fundamental feeling of friendship and respect to Australia which dates back to our participation in the war against Japan and our support for Indonesia in its early struggle for independence. It was refreshing and reassuring to have proof that the differences we have had in the past 12 years over the question of West New Guinea have not sufficed to efface these memories. A favourable image of Australia has remained and has been fostered by our assistance, especially to students under the Colombo Plan, and by the impact of Radio Australia.

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4. From a practical point of view the visit was an unqualified success. General Nasution had personally directed the arrangements and had instructed that Mr. Townley should be free to go wherever he wanted and see whatever he wanted. Technically the arrangements for accommodation, transport and hospitality were planned and carried out with scrupulous care although, as was inevitable, the crowded itinerary put a considerable physical strain on the participants. The success, as distinct from the importance, of the visit was ensured on the one hand by the genuine personal warmth of all the Indonesian hosts who looked after Mr. Townley, and on the other by his equally warm and generous hearted response. In conditions which were often physically exhausting Mr. Townley never failed to give and to provoke genuine reactions of friendship.

5. It would be wrong if an attempt were made to interpret the efforts of the Indonesians on this occasion to please and to impress their Australian guest as due simply to some tactical requirements of Indonesian foreign policy. Certainly it suited the Indonesian Government well enough to have an official visit from an Australian Minister at the time of their current difficulties with the Dutch, but to suggest that the isolation of the Dutch was the motive behind the Indonesian welcome would in my view not only overlook the basic considerations set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, but would also over-estimate the importance which the Indonesians attach to the influence of Australia on a West New Guinea settlement.

6. On the question of West New Guinea, no Indonesian queried the Australian Government attitude. There was an acceptance and understanding of the desire expressed by the Australian Government to see a peaceful settlement of this issue, and one which provided for an expression of choice by the people of the territory. General Nasution showed himself aware of the need not to embarrass Mr. Townley and the Australian Government by embarking on any public discussion of the West New Guinea issue which could be used in Australia as a pretext for attacks on the Government. However, these issues were not argued in detail by General Nasution or other of the Indonesian hosts. In Mr. Townley's talks, the Australian attitude was put that whatever experience the Indonesians might have had in the past with Dutch bad faith, the way to satisfactory negotiations over West New Guinea was open now that the Bunker proposals had been accepted as a basis by the Dutch, and in view of the fact that both the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United States were committed to see that a satisfactory solution was reached.

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7. The reactions in Djakarta to Mr. Townley's visit as judged by my experiences of the few days which have since elapsed have been striking. Numerous Indonesian Ministers, parliamentarians, senior Service officers and friends from academic and private life, both pro and anti-government, have all greeted me with the assumption that a better understanding has been established between Australia and Indonesia. This reaction may prove to be not only particularly strong, but particularly practical amongst the Armed Services. Following the dictates of both their hearts and their heads, Indonesian Service officers would much prefer interdependence with Australia in their defence arrangements. Certainly they would prefer that to dependence on the Soviet bloc, which has been growing, and even to their earlier dependence on the United States, which they regard as too powerful. We could expect then, and prepare our own reactions to, an increasing number of suggestions for practical co-operation between our armed forces and requests for training, servicing and logistic facilities in Australia and for a wider exchange of visits.

8. It will of course be difficult for Australia to capitalise profitably on this new goodwill until the West New Guinea issue is more certain of peaceful and prompt solution than it seems at present. In the event, however, that we can get this issue out of the way, we should prepare not only for co-operation with our powerful ally, the United States, but on our own behalf to formulate a more positive and forward looking policy towards our nearest neighbour. In this connection the coming visit of Sir Garfield Barwick is most opportune, and should serve as the occasion for isolating and defining what differences may lie between our countries in their foreign policy aims and, more important, defining the areas of interest which we have in common.

#### General Nasution

9. As was appropriate, the first call made by Mr. Townley was on the Minister for National Security, General Nasution, whose visit to Australia last year the Australian Minister was returning. After receiving Mr. Townley on his own, General Nasution introduced to him in turn the Minister for Navy, Admiral Martadinata, the Minister for State Police, General Soekarno, and the representative of the Minister for Air. General Nasution's final act of hospitality on 10th June was to have an informal lunch with all four Service Ministers, together with myself and General Suadi, the Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, who accompanied Mr. Townley throughout his tour.

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