

## C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Canberra, 5th February, 1963.

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Decision No. 632  
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Without Memorandum - Indonesia - Quadripartite Talks.

The Minister for External Affairs informed the Cabinet that the British High Commission on 15th January suggested that Australia join in talks with the British and American Governments in Washington at Ambassadorial level, to discuss the British assessment of Indonesia's expansionist intentions, its current Borneo activities and a common policy on Indonesia. More recently it had been proposed that New Zealand join the talks.

2. It was agreed that Australia should be represented at the talks and that the Australian representative should indicate :-

- (i) that Australia supports the British action already taken in respect of her rights and duties in the Borneo territories;
- (ii) that Australia accepts Malaysia as the best available solution to the internal problems of the territories and to maintaining the Malaysia countries as a Western aligned group;
- (iii) that Australia should, while accepting Malaysia as the best available solution, also seek to avoid the prospect of the new Federation having to be supported indefinitely by the West, not only against Communist Chinese influence but also against the hostility of immediate neighbours, notably Indonesia and the Philippines;

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- (iv) that so far from the hostility, the acquiescence of Indonesia and the Philippines in the formation of the new Federation should therefore be actively sought, including by recognizing that those countries genuinely see security problems in the area arising from their long term fear of the threat from China;
- (v) that at the same time Australia must make clear its disapproval of Indonesia's campaign of subversion, infiltration, and expansion.

3. The footing on which the Cabinet gave its approval to the course indicated in paragraph 2 was that the quadripartite talks are to be without commitment to the Government and that reference back to Cabinet would be required if questions of commitment arose. In any question of commitment, the Australian attitude would be influenced by the extent to which and the firmness with which the United States and Britain were themselves prepared to accept commitments.

4. In relation to Portuguese Timor, the Cabinet accepted the view that in the current state of world opinion, no practicable alternative to eventual Indonesian sovereignty over Portuguese Timor presented itself. It would not be acceptable to Australia or the West for Indonesia to proceed against Portuguese Timor with arms, and this must be brought home to Indonesia. But otherwise the course which it seemed best to follow is for Australia to bring such quiet pressure as it can upon Portugal to cede peacefully and in addition to explore ways by which the international community might bring pressure on Portugal.

5. In the course of discussion about East New Guinea, it was confirmed that this being Australian territory, action to defend it militarily, if necessary, would be taken by Australia, and that the assistance of Allies in this context would be looked for.

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6. The Cabinet noted that, following a request by the British Government, the two ships of the R.A.N. in the area had been made available for use if required for patrol purposes in the Borneo area. It also noted that a deterioration of the situation in the Borneo territories could lead to an appeal to Australia for other military assistance. It was made clear that although Australia supports the British action taken, it still regards the primary responsibility for action as being a responsibility of the British Government.

7. The Cabinet felt, in relation to the Malaysia Federation proposals, that Australia had not been kept well informed by Britain. It should therefore be put at the talks that if Australia is to take part in arrangements which might ultimately have military obligations, we must be given the fullest information and the full thinking of all of the parties.

8. Also in the course of discussion, there was reference to proposals by the United States Administration to the effect that Australia should take more defence and diplomatic initiative in South-East Asia, thus sharing responsibility more, rather than, as at present, limiting itself to the support of leads of the United States or Britain. While noting these proposals, the Cabinet indicated that although it did not rule out some action of the kind, it would by no means wish to take initiatives which might lead to the point where Australia came to be seen by Indonesia or other countries as a standing adversary. The objective in relations with Indonesia must be to achieve the greatest available degree of mutual understanding. Therefore, while Australia must observe the course of policy referred to in paragraph 2 above, it should at the same time persevere in seeking to improve relations wherever and in whatever ways possible.

CIRCULATION:

Sir Garfield Barwick  
 Mr. Townley  
 Sir Arthur Tange  
 Mr. Hicks  
 Sir Roland Wilson  
 Prime Minister's (Mr. Griffith)

Certified correct.

*E. J. Bennett*

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