

Birth Pains
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The suspects never slept in the same house on successive nights. Many had their photos in an "Arrest on Sight" mug file at police headquarters. To avoid detection on Singapore's teeming streets, they spent much of their time in late-night movie houses. But last week the dragnet was out. Sweeping through the island state, government security police rounded up 115 pro-Communist subversives and labor agitators opposed to Singapore's inclusion, with Malaya and Britain's Borneo dependencies of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo, in a proposed Malaysian Federation of 10 million people.

As Malaysia's birth date draws nearer, Indonesia's President Sukarno is doing all he can to prevent it. His government continually blusters about intervening militarily in British Borneo. Authorities in Singapore feared that local Communists might try to sabotage British bases on the island in order to hamper British retaliation in Borneo. Sukarno is also making muscles against Malaya, which would be the dominant state in the new federation. Djakarta has excluded Malayan fishermen from their traditional fishing grounds off the coast of Sumatra. An Indonesian gunboat recently sank a fully laden rubber barge inside Malayan territorial waters.

Indonesia knows that a pro-Western, anti-Communist federation would put a serious crimp in Sukarno's ambition to absorb oil-rich Brunei and its two neighbors. He also is anxious as usual for an issue to deflect mounting public criticism over Indonesia's growing economic crisis. Fearing that Sukarno is itching to start something, Malaya's Prime Minister Tunku (Prince) Abdul Rahman appealed to London for reinforcements. The British obligingly put 2,000 crack troops on a 72-hour alert to reinforce its Southeast Asia forces, because of "the possibility of outside interference."

The Philippines are also covetous of North Borneo. At a meeting in London, the Philippines maintained that in 1878 the Filipino Sultan of Sulu had only "leased" North Borneo to the British and that the land actually still belonged to the Filipino government. Behind the claim is the fear that Malaysia would not be able to prevent leftists in the federation and in Indonesia from making North Borneo a Communist enclave hard by the Philippines' outer islands. The British government, which is ardently behind Malaya's plans for Malaysia, stiffly rejected the Philippine claim, gave notice that it would push for the final creation of the new nation by Aug. 31.

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