

Malaysia The Art of Dispelling Anxiety

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The one place where Sukarno's speech (see above) was received with relief was in Malaysia. For the past two years, the Indonesian President has staged a "confrontation" that sought to bring down the federation by economic blockade and guerrilla infiltration. When Singapore seceded from Malaysia early this month (TIME, Aug. 20), Sukarno could have read it as an argument for the success of his hostile policy.

But Sukarno was noncommittal about Singapore's new status; he merely commented that Malaysia was "beginning to fall apart from the inside." British officials, who have been supporting Malaysia with 50,000 troops and a sizable fleet, thought it likely that Sukarno was waiting for a lead from Red China. They also noted that there have been no significant Indonesian attacks since Singapore's secession.

Defensive Proviso. Like many divorced couples, Malaysia and Singapore have been getting on better since the separation than before. Though now independent, Singapore honored its defense commitments by sending half of its two-battalion army to replace a Malaysian detachment in Borneo, thus demolishing whatever prospects Singapore may have had of reconciliation with Indonesia. Singapore's Defense Minister Goh Keng Swee declared: "Our defense is indivisible," and Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman clapped him on the back, saying, "We will do or die together." Ministers of the two states are holding a series of meetings on economic cooperation, as well as preparing to negotiate with Britain the rewriting of defense treaties. Singapore seems certain to retain the economically important British military bases, with the additional proviso that they will be used for defensive purposes only.

Shored Remains. Meanwhile the Tunku was busy shoring up what remains of the federation. Clad in bush jacket and white straw hat, he flew to Kuching, capital of Sarawak state, where politicians were a bit miffed that the Singapore secession had been arranged without consulting other Malaysian states. After some explaining, Abdul Rahman assured Chief Minister Stephen Kalong Ningkan and his Cabinet that they were vitally needed in the federation. Ningkan, well aware that Sarawak lacks the resources to support itself if independent, said Rahman's visit should "do a great deal to dispel whatever anxieties our people may feel." As the Tunku flew on to Sabah to give it a similar reassurance, his trip was given an oil-rich lining by reports that the tiny but well-heeled sultanate of Brunei, which had refused to join the federation in 1963, was now reconsidering its decision.

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