

Triplets Reunited

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Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines are "triplets who became separated at birth, who were placed under the care of different foster parents but who have now come of age and are trying to rediscover their common origin and shape their common destiny." This description of the three Malay states was offered last year by Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal. In Manila last week, the top ministers of the three nations made plans to bring the triplets together again. The event suggested that, at least for the time being, cantankerous Indonesia is getting to be a more responsible citizen in the Southeast Asia neighborhood.

The new grouping would loosely join Indonesia and the Philippines to Tunku Abdul Rahman's Federation of Malaysia (Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei) to be established Aug. 31. The Philippines claim a part of North Borneo as its own but agreed amicably to postpone settlement of the issue. Indonesia's President Sukarno, who had condemned the Malaysia Federation as an imperialist plot, apparently realized that since he can't stop it, he might as well try to join it.

Most surprising item in the Manila agreement was a pledge of mutual defense against "subversion in any form or manifestation." This pledge is aimed not only at Communism but also against the sizable Chinese minorities who dominate the industry and trade of Southeast Asia. Still, any anti-Communist step is remarkable for Indonesia. Having made this political move more favorable to the West, some observers expect that Sukarno will soon make a move to placate Red China. Next step: a July summit conference at Manila between Sukarno, Abdul Rahman and Macapagal to set up a permanent consultative group to be known as Maphilindo.

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