

Britain and South-East Asia

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1. the cost

When the Prime Minister said in a speech in London in December 1964 that Britain must play "a positive role east of Suez", he also revealed figures showing that a total of 50,000 men in uniform from this country were committed to the Asian theatre of operations.

By the end of 1965 this total had risen to 65,000, this representing an escalation in British military manpower of 30 per cent in a year. This raises questions of financial prudence and strategic wisdom, quite apart from any moral or diplomatic issues. The real cost of this massive military operation may never be precisely established because, as was noted by the Select Committee on Estimates in July 1964, the Treasury and the Defence Ministry have not provided the accounting procedures that would make this feasible. But the Prime Minister did not demur at the tentative figure put forward by the Labour MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, Robert Sheldon, when he asked in the House of Commons: "The directly attributable cost of our forces east of Suez is £320 millions a year. This includes overheads which, if added, would produce a figure of hardly less than £500 millions. Is my Rt. Hon. friend aware that in the present economic situation this high level of expenditure is totally unacceptable?" (*Hansard*, 1 June 1965). There followed an exchange with various MPs that was ended by a final statement from Mr Wilson. The surprising—and significant—thing was that the Prime Minister made no attempt to shoot down Mr Sheldon's estimate and, indeed, confirmed it. He said: "At the moment we have accumulated a total of roles, a total of commitments, a total of in-built costs adding up to the figures my hon. friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned, which are far beyond the reasonable economic capacity of the country".

And Mr Wilson went on to say that the purpose of the defence review would be to go into all these figures.

But any analysis which deals only in logistics cannot answer the vital question: what should be Britain's role in Asia in the second half of the twentieth

century? It should be, at the very least, disturbing to realise that our nearest neighbours in Western Europe—who may also be our sharpest commercial competitors in the export markets of Asia—have decided on a role that is clearly very different from our own. The fact that the richest nation on earth plans to have 300,000 armed men in Vietnam should not blind us to the possibility that we, as Europeans, still recovering economically from a great war, may have national interests that diverge from those of Washington.

If we look again at the figures available from Whitehall, we find that the Treasury described the British fighting man, in terms of the strain imposed on the economy and the balance of payments, as "probably the most highly capitalised part of the economy, in the sense of having most equipment per man, on a scale not unlike oil refineries or electric power stations".

increase

The Treasury reports that the cost of maintaining and equipping each serviceman came to £5,075 in 1964 and that this figure has been rising annually by 10.4 per cent for the past five years. Multiply this per capita cost by 65,000 and you get £329,875,000—a sum remarkably similar to that produced by Mr Sheldon's researches, although his total was obtained quite another way. And taking the Treasury's own "escalation factor" of 10.4 per cent it is reasonable to assume that if things continue as they are, Britain's military bill east of Suez will rise by another £33 millions during 1966. But that is the lowest possible estimate. It seems much more likely that the cost right now is running at a rate of something between £500 and £600 millions per annum—much of it a direct burden on our balance of payments and the strength of sterling.

In the circumstances it is reasonable to ask if Britain's taxpayers are getting value for money, and to direct this question not to the Defence Ministry but to

the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office and 10 Downing Street. For if the military budget of France east of Suez is zero, and West Germany's is zero, Switzerland zero, Sweden zero and all the rest zero, then we must convince ourselves that £600 millions is buying us something truly worthwhile. We do, after all, live in a coldly competitive world and it is not a law of immutable nature that Sandys' Folly should automatically become a responsibility of his successors.

If the Americans are prepared to expend limitless blood and treasure in Vietnam because of their "domino" theory, we might remind ourselves of three things:

1. They are very rich.
2. They are inexperienced in Asia.
3. They are arguing by metaphor.

300 years

Britain, with three centuries of skill in dealing with black people in the imperial era, has executed a brilliant devolution of power by granting liberty to 730 million Asians, Africans and West Indians in the space of 18 years. But the goodwill thus earned is now jeopardised by the presence of the white man in Asia, in uniform, killing Asians. Some of them are British, some are Americans, Australians or New Zealanders who have Britain's full diplomatic backing. It is understandable enough, perhaps, how we arrived at this position. But it is the purpose of this pamphlet to question it, and ask if there should not be urgent steps to change things.

The man who was elected first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Arnold Smith, who has served as a Canadian ambassador both in Africa and in the Soviet Union, has recently declared that "The division of humanity between the white and other races, which coincides too closely for comfort with the division between the affluent industrialised peoples and the poor underdeveloped peoples, is the most difficult and poten-

tially dangerous problem in the world".

It might be not only cheaper, but wiser, to recognise that President Ho Chi Minh may be a communist but that he has also been a Vietnam nationalist ever since he presented a petition for self-determination after the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

In South-East Asia, we are being placed in a false position. It appears to some Asians at least that white men in uniforms are trying to kill ideas by the use of expensive machines. This is not to suggest that Britain should abandon her Asian friends, or her responsibilities. But she must face the realities of the explosive force of nationalism in Asia today. It was G. K. Chesterton who once defined a patriot as a man who is not satisfied with the state of affairs in his country. This pamphlet is by patriots.

2. Vietnam's nationalist communism

Today Vietnam is at war. The country is divided. Foreign powers attempt to control the lives of the people. But nothing it seems ever really happens for the first time to Vietnam. In 111 BC the Red River Delta area of North Vietnam was annexed by China and there followed a thousand years of existence within the Chinese Empire. But the Vietnamese do not give up lightly, and in AD 939, in the last of the ten rebellions against the rule of China since AD 39 the country gained its independence while recognising the suzerainty of Peking. This Vietnamese state in time overthrew the kingdom of Champa in Southern Vietnam. After three centuries of missionary activities beginning in the seventeenth century, the French had by the 1890s gained control of all of Indo-China.

never accepted

French rule, however, was never accepted in Vietnam to the extent it was in Laos and Cambodia. Nationalist activity was widespread after the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905. In 1925 the Association of Revolutionary Vietnamese Youth was founded by Ho Chi Minh. The Vietminh had been founded in 1941 in China. They formally removed French sovereignty on 9 March 1945.

When World War II ended a political and military vacuum existed in Vietnam. The Japanese collapsed, but the French could not at once send in forces to re-establish their colonial rule. In the north, in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh quickly asserted his authority. The guerrilla fighters against the Japanese formed the precarious frame-work of a revolutionary government. In Southern Vietnam, the adherents of Ho Chi Minh were unable to prevail. The Japanese had armed the religious sects and these struggled for authority in the Mekong Estuary and frustrated the efforts of the Vietminh to take over in Saigon. Under the protective shield of British troops commanded by General Gracey, the French military forces were able to establish a precarious hold over the South. One of the great question marks over post-war Far East-

ern politics is what would have happened if Ho Chi Minh had been able from the beginning to gain effective hold over all Vietnam? Certainly, much of the misery of the last 20 years would have been avoided. The régime would have been a communist one, but many thousands of lives would have been saved. Politically, Vietnam's long term revolution would not have been likely to accept the domination of China. Vietnam might well have been the Yugoslavia of the Far East.

Even so, conflict was not inevitable when the French returned to Indo-China. On 6 March 1946, an agreement was signed at Hanoi between the French consul in Tonking, and Ho Chi Minh. The Vietnamese agreed not to oppose the return of the French army to the North and France recognised the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a "free state with its own government, parliament and finances". The following months however saw suspicion increasing between France, determined, in spite of declarations to the contrary, to reassert her complete control, and Ho Chi Minh resolved to build his own revolutionary régime. Following clashes in Haiphong, the French bombarded the city on 23 November 1946, causing heavy losses of life. On the night of 19 December, the Vietminh launched a general attack on the French garrison in Hanoi, and the long war between France and the Vietminh began.

Paris drafted hundreds of thousands of troops as the war broadened in scale. The French aim was to wear down the Vietminh. But in fact, the reverse happened. The final chapter of this tragedy saw France pouring troops into Dien Bien Phu. The object was to establish a firm French base in the midst of Vietminh territory. As the Vietminh bombarded the French troops from the surrounding hills, the fortress became a trap. The long attempt by France to regain Vietnam was over. The day Dien Bien Phu fell, the Geneva Conference began.

The Geneva Conference was attended by delegates of the United Kingdom and the

USSR (joint chairmen), France, the United States, the Chinese People's Republic, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam and delegates from the Vietminh forces. The Conference ended on 21 July 1954, after agreement had been concluded for the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Amongst the terms of the agreement was the provision that no military base under the control of a foreign state would be established in either zone. The agreement further said "the two parties shall ensure that the zones assigned, do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of further hostilities or to further an aggressive policy". In an accompanying declaration it was stated that "In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, General Elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission". The Americans and South Vietnamese neither signed nor adhered to the declaration. The International Commission consisted of Canada, Poland, and India as chairman.

But the elections provided for in the Geneva agreement never took place. In November 1954 General Lawton Collins arrived in Vietnam as the special envoy of President Eisenhower. Later, at the request of the South Vietnamese Premier, Dr Diem, Collins assumed full responsibility for the organisation and training of South Vietnamese armed forces.

war prospects

So almost from the moment that the Geneva Agreement was signed, the prospects of new war opened up. Neither Dr Diem nor the United States accepted the underlying concept of the Geneva Conference, namely that the Ho Chi Minh régime had come to stay. The Dulles cold war approach dominated Washington thinking. Fear of China and Russia made it impossible for the American Government to look at Hanoi as other than a dangerous Communist puppet.

At the same time, hopes of a successful and viable South Vietnam régime being established quickly faded. South Vietnam, following the Geneva Conference, rapidly moved under the personal control of the Diem family. On 26 October 1955, the Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed with Dr Diem as its President. No attempt was made to create a democratic society. Corruption was widespread and the secret police made sure that people expressing views contrary to the Diem régime were eliminated often in violent fashion from political life in South Vietnam. The Diem régime also represented an appalling waste of talent. Many young Vietnamese trained at American universities returned hoping to play their part in a democratic society. They quickly found however, that Diem wanted tight obedience, not youthful initiative. As President Diem became increasingly isolated and the financial and political abuses of his family mounted, it became only a question of time before he was overthrown. Dr Diem and his brother were murdered in November 1963 and since then, rapidly changing military juntas have dominated the country.

Ho's regime

North Vietnam has been governed by Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues with all the rigours of a communist régime. For centuries the North had relied on the South for much of its food. Supplies from the South used to amount to 300,000 tons of rice a year. Since partition, the Ho Chi Minh régime has made a desperate attempt at self-sufficiency, but with a population now increased to 14 million, the pressure on food supplies continues to be acute. More than 300,000 people have been moved from the Red River Delta into the mountainous regions of the north and west in an attempt to relieve the population pressure. Soviet bloc aid to North Vietnam has totalled £300,000,000. Russian anti-aircraft missiles defend Hanoi. Yet Ho Chi Minh and his leaders still retain their control of the armed forces. The North Vietnamese regular army of 200,000 men appear well-disciplined; and reports suggest that

many thousand of these forces have moved south along the Ho Chi Minh trail to join the Vietcong fighting for mastery below the seventeenth parallel.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Vietnamese crisis is that nobody has ever suggested that Ho Chi Minh has been maintained in power as a Russian or Chinese puppet. There is an atmosphere of grim austerity in North Vietnam. The government in Hanoi makes no attempt to curry favour. Yet because Ho Chi Minh is recognised as a nationalist as well as a communist, there is respect. Certainly, the corruption and chaos of the South are absent.

South Vietnam

If there is control and austerity in the North, no one can be sure about South Vietnam. Saigon today is a vast city without any clear government. But the millionaires in Saigon and the twin city of Cholon keep their money in Geneva and Hong Kong and few doubt that they will flee when the Americans leave. The Buddhists in South Vietnam remain an enigma. In general they adopt an attitude of edgy neutrality. It is reported that some Buddhist priests are in regular contact with the Vietcong. For the Catholic population, the murder of Dr Diem meant the death of their protector. Many of the hundreds of thousands who moved down from the North certainly dread the rule of Ho Chi Minh. Yet with no viable alternative in sight, the main mood in South Vietnam today is of massive disillusion.

In the countryside, it is not clear just where the true loyalties lie. What is certain is that the vast majority of the population of the Mekong Estuary are just weary of a war that has gone on for 22 years. They know no name in the cities now that Diem is dead, whom they can regard as a rival or alternative leader to Ho Chi Minh.

The Vietcong have been ruthless in their operations. Boys of 14 and 15 have been pressed into guerrilla war. The South

Vietnamese government, for its part, applies conscription. But the peasants in South Vietnam can hardly be expected to respond to appeals for loyalty from Saigon when the South Vietnamese army and the Americans after brief exercises of "pacification" in an area move on to leave the farmers to the Vietcong.

Militarily there is a stalemate in Vietnam. The South Vietnamese army has a target figure of 650,000. American military forces have been built up to a massive total. But the morale of the South Vietnamese forces is low, with desertion rates reported to be high. The Vietcong in the South, although stiffened by North Vietnam regulars, cannot be described as "remote control" puppets. It would seem that a large proportion of them are nationalists first and communists second. The United States forces have no intelligence system that can provide an effective basis for combatting Vietcong activities. On the Cambodian frontier, 7,000 miles of navigable waters provide an ideal operation area for the Vietcong. Their forces hide in the marshes. The few roads are mined or broken up by the guerrillas.

The US heavy bombing of targets in both North and South has revived the confidence of some of the civilian population in Saigon. But there is no evidence that it has stopped the movement southwards of mortars, rockets and small arms flowing from North Vietnam to the Vietcong.

It is clear that the United States is now committed to a major military involvement of a possible long duration. The US can hold massive bases and certain major cities such as Saigon. But any political alternative to the Vietcong in the rest of the country is not yet visible. At the same time, the Vietcong cannot challenge the Americans in the head-on clash. So they are denied entry into the vital third phase of their campaign, namely the open warfare, that carried the Vietminh to triumph over the French at Dien Bien Phu. The stalemate appears complete. Some way to get the parties from the battlefield to the conference-table has to be found.

3. reconstructing a federation?

When Tunku Abdul Rahman publicly declared his support for a federation of Malaya, Singapore and the British Borneo colonies of Sarawak and Sabah, it seemed an ingenious solution to a variety of problems. For Malaya, it would reduce the possibility of a communist take-over in Singapore, while the non-Chinese peoples of Borneo would counterbalance—so it was argued—the numerical weight of Singapore Chinese, and so broadly preserve the existing racial balance found in Malaya. For Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's Chinese and socialist Prime Minister, it provided a larger and more stable unit within which his volatile island would be governed. For Sarawak and Sabah, it offered independence many years earlier than was otherwise conceivable. For Britain, it disposed of some awkward colonial legacies, and guaranteed the military base in Singapore.

Although this solution seemed tidy enough, it involved one major miscalculation, and the signatories later acted as if they were labouring under two misapprehensions. Taken together, these resulted in the break-up of the Malaysian federation in its original form.

The miscalculation concerned the supposed balancing role that the Borneo territories were to play on the side of the Malays vis-à-vis the Chinese. In Malaya, the Malays were narrowly in the majority over all other races combined—the Chinese being easily the second largest group. Singapore, however, contained five times as many Chinese as Malays. By visualising all the so-called indigenous peoples of Borneo as on the Malay side of the racial equation, the Malays foresaw a retention of their numerical superiority over the Chinese—though Malays as such no longer made up half the total population. Unfortunately, this theory took little account of the racial feelings of the peoples concerned. For many of the indigenous peoples in Borneo were traditionally hostile to Malays, and were concerned with establishing their own distinctness from them. Thus the Malays were soon to find that while they made up approximately 40 per cent of the

total population of Malaysia, the remaining 60 per cent had in common a feeling of being non-Malay. This feeling became a prime issue in the arguments about the nature of the new state.

The first of the two misapprehensions centred on the actual political position of Singapore inside Malaysia. Constitutionally, the picture was clear: Malaya had 104 seats in the Federal Parliament; Sarawak—with a population of about 800,000—had 24; and Sabah—with about 500,000 people—had 16. Singapore, however, with a population of $1\frac{3}{4}$ million, was given only 15 seats. But in exchange for this reduced representation at the centre, Singapore retained control of education, language and the use of 60 per cent of her own revenue. One implication of this apportionment of seats was clear. The three other states of Malaysia could never outvote the representatives of mainland Malaya, unless inroads could be made into traditional Malay and conservative Chinese support there. But was there a significant corollary to this constitutional position? Was Singapore regarded by the Malays as being less in the federation than the other states? And did this partial exclusion extend to participation in federal politics? Certainly, when Lee Kuan Yew did intervene, at an early stage, in federal elections on the Malayan mainland, bitter resentment was caused. That resentment led ultimately to Singapore's expulsion.

Malay v Chinese

The second misapprehension concerned the nature of the new state. Was it to be mainland Malaya writ large, or was it to be something quite new? In Malaya, political power was in the hands of the Malays; the Chinese held the economic power and were gradually acquiring citizenship and the vote. Malay leaders saw the symbols of Malay nationality—their language, their dress, some of their customs, their protected economic position—as equally paramount in the new and larger federation. Others, notably Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's Prime Minister,

held that since non-Malays were in the majority, Malaysian—i.e. multi-racial—considerations had to be uppermost. No one denied that Malay as the national language was desirable, or suggested that Malays should not have safeguards in the face of the economically more advanced Chinese; but these measures, according to Lee, were to ensure equality, not to guarantee the establishment of Malay hegemony. In taking this line, Lee Kuan Yew incurred frequent charges of Chinese chauvinism, and of racial hostility against the Malays, charges which he immediately returned.

It was not long before these disputes took concrete form in political action. Before the Singapore elections of September 1963, the electoral balance there between Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) and the communist Barisan Socialis was very delicate. In order to give Lee a free hand in fighting the Barisan, the ruling Alliance party on the mainland agreed not to send Federal ministers to campaign in these elections (although the Singapore Malay branch of the Alliance did contest three seats). Lee used this concession well, and won nearly two-thirds of the seats. In return for this abstention on the part of the Alliance, it is said that Lee Kuan Yew agreed that his party would not intervene in the Federal elections on the mainland which were due to be held in April 1964. He and his supporters deny that any such agreement was made or broken. The PAP did intervene; it stood in nine mainland Malayan constituencies. But it won only one of them.

Why did Lee intervene on the mainland? Perhaps because he saw the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA)—one of the constituent parties in the Alliance—as especially vulnerable to his attack. If so, then the PAP might replace them as the party of the mainland Chinese, and so achieve federal power. Perhaps because, as he claimed later, Lee Kuan Yew saw that the conservative leaders of the MCA held little appeal for radical Chinese youth, and feared that such a political vacuum would be exploited by communists. It is hard to believe though that

one of Lee's motives was not the sheer attraction of a bid for power.

intervention

Why in turn, did the mainland Alliance object to Lee's intervention in the 1964 elections? First, and most simply, because this bid showed that Lee's intention was to get power at federal level. Just as in the Malay states the Chinese had been given freedom of economic opportunity but little power in politics, so Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore had been offered the prospect of Singapore's becoming the New York of Malaysia. But Lee's reaction seems to have been that he would not remain the ruler of a small island, however wealthy. What was economic power without the political power that should flow from it? Secondly, Lee Kuan Yew's electoral appeal—socialist, multi-racial, anti-traditional—threatened all the assumptions of the Malay leaders about the pattern of the new federation. Thirdly, the Malayan Chinese Association, provider of most of the mainland Alliance's funds, realised the direct threat posed by the PAP to their own position. The MCA leaders demanded action from the Tunku, who for his own reasons as well, took Lee's apparently ineffective intervention very seriously.

In the months that followed, ideology took over. Was the old pattern of politics in mainland Malaya—a pattern based primarily on appeal to the separate racial communities—to be the pattern of Malaysia? Did the racial communities need to be reassured that government was non-racial by having their own parties? Or had the time come, as Lee Kuan Yew insisted, for parties to make their appeal to economic and non-communal solidarities, on the grounds that they were more relevant, and less easily exploitable by racialist appeals? In his vigorous advocacy of non-communalism, Lee appeared to the Malays to be nibbling at their traditional loyalties, and so trying to undermine the position of the Alliance. For example, Lee asked what was to be the significance of the introduction of Malay as the national lan-

guage in 1967. Was this to be by general acceptance, or was it to be a veiled instrument for implementing Malay hegemony? By asking this question he was accused of attacking Malay rights, which he had agreed to respect when Malaysia was constituted.

Sarawak's hopes

The final rupture between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore may have been precipitated when Lee called a Malaysian Solidarity Convention in the early summer of 1965, consisting of opposition leaders from every state of the Federation, including Sarawak and Sabah. This meant first that Lee Kuan Yew was the acknowledged head of an embryonic federal opposition; and secondly, that he had made his political appeal effective in the Borneo territories. But as both Sarawak and Sabah had voted solidly for the Alliance at the elections, what sort of appeal could Lee make? Why did his politics exercise any attraction in Borneo at all? The answer lies in the nature of the hopes generated in both Sarawak and Sabah when Malaysia was created, and the extent to which those hopes had or had not been fulfilled.

Sarawak's hopes were political and economic. Self-government and independence were to be accompanied by economic development on a scale which Sarawak by itself, or even under a benevolent colonial administration, could not afford. Singapore's trade and industry, Malaya's rubber and tin earnings, Malaya's experience in rural development—all pointed to plentiful development aid for Sarawak. In return, Tunku Abdul Rahman's Alliance Party (consisting of a dominant Malay party, with lesser Chinese and Indian parties) expected co-operation in the federal parliament. Sarawak, whose experience of organised politics dates back only to 1959, not only adopted Malaya's pattern of party organisation but assumed the same name—the Sarawak Alliance. The only sizeable party not to join the Alliance was the largely Chinese—though avowedly non-communal—and commu-

nist infiltrated Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP). In indirect elections on a universal adult suffrage in 1963, the Sarawak Alliance won a clear majority in the State, and added 20 out of Sarawak's 24 federal seats to the Malayan Alliance in Kuala Lumpur.

But discontent about the failure to realise rapid economic growth soon appeared. No doubt in relation to the time since federation—less than two years at the time—such grievances were unreasonable. The government could point to the problems involved in developing such a country as Sarawak: a mere 800,000 people living in an area as large as Singapore and Malaya combined; 300 miles of road for a country 500 miles long; few natural resources in a countryside still largely impenetrable jungle. Malaysian leaders could also claim that the full weight of development aid could only be felt after the first Malaysian Development Plan was begun in 1966. The opposition, however, and others in Sarawak, alleged that the discontent sprang not from unreasonable hopes, but from exaggerated promises made before federation in order to get agreement to it. They pointed out above all the failure to provide free primary education at federation, a broken promise raised and resented by members of all parties. In fact that single issue was held to be symptomatic of Kuala Lumpur's general lack of sensitivity to the feelings of people in Borneo, an insensitivity which extended to the replacement of British civil servants by Malaysians rather than by locals. Some fear that it may lead to an attempt to impose the national language (Malay) on Sarawak in 1967. Constitutionally Sarawak has the right to retain English as its official language until the State Assembly decides otherwise. But as education is a federal matter, it is felt that free primary education may only be granted if Malay becomes the medium of instruction.

Such grievances are nursed not only against the Federal government, but against the State government of Stephen Kalong Ningkan. He is accused of failing to stand up to the Federal govern-

ment and failing to express the feelings of Sarawak sufficiently strongly. The very docility of the state government, so acceptable to Kuala Lumpur, creates resentment against both. It could also damage both. The SUPP claims that the system of indirect elections—direct at local level, with local councillors acting as an electoral college—misrepresented their actual support on the ground. They assert that when direct elections do take place, and they must before 1969, their chance of forming part of the state government is considerable. This at present remote threat is sufficiently real to prevent the Malayan Alliance from regarding 20 Sarawak votes as automatically theirs.

hindered

But the SUPP is hindered by two things. Firstly, the restrictions placed on political activity as a result of Confrontation are so great that the SUPP, led by moderates, has voluntarily called a virtual political truce. Secondly, the Clandestine Communist Organisation (cco), consisting of Chinese farmers and traders west of Sibu in the Rejang delta and south of Kuching, has infiltrated the SUPP heavily at local level. This threat to security from disaffected Chinese farmers has grown greater. At first it could be kept in check by Special Branch surveillance; then it called for the rounding up of several thousand Chinese, their interrogation in detention centres, and their resettlement in communities where—as in the Malayan Emergency—they were less isolated and vulnerable to pressure from communist or Indonesian agents. So whatever the political character of the SUPP leadership, they clearly have a problem of organisation and discipline on their hands, the more so since the cco made a point of infiltrating the SUPP's campaign directed to the native peoples of Sarawak. As far as these—chiefly Ibans, Dayaks and Melanaus—are concerned, neither the SUPP nor the cco appears to have impinged seriously on their awareness or their allegiance. But then who has? It can be argued that the transistor radio, local headmen, friendly

British and well-meaning Malay troops have all turned the natives' attention towards the new Federation. But the arm of the government is not long. Often British troops are regarded as actually being the government. There are cases of tribes blaming Confrontation on to federation. There is a disturbing feeling that the natives are a political *tabula rasa*, and while no one claims that they are anything but anti-Indonesian, it is apparent that their allegiance has not yet been obtained by the new Malaysia.

determination

This will probably only occur when a Sarawak government appears to state Sarawak's claims strongly enough—perhaps in new constitutional relationship to the centre—and when the federal government's expressed determination to develop Sarawak in the first Malaysian Plan begins to take effect. No one disputes that the 300 million Malay dollars allotted for that purpose is anything but generous or adequate. But while the Chief Minister personally announces Minor Rural Works—footpaths, footbridges—totalling a few thousand Malayan dollars, and so long as Confrontation stretches the available resources, the advantages of the Federation are not immediately obvious.

These advantages must seem even less apparent now that Singapore has left Malaysia. It was one thing to be in a federation ruled by Malays, but which nevertheless had at least one strong non-Malay leader—Lee Kuan Yew. It was one thing under those conditions to play down local sentiment in the interest of the larger unit. It must seem quite another now when the interests of one part of the Federation—mainland Malaya—have prevailed so powerfully. It would seem inevitable that Sarawak's demands for proper attention to its local needs will be voiced with increasing vigour, if there is the right leader to do so.

In Sabah there was until recently a leader capable of playing such a role. He was the Federal Minister for Sabah Affairs,

Donald Stephens. Since Stephens was largely responsible for bringing Sabah into Federation, he was an obvious choice for the post of first Chief Minister. But this appointment took place in the context of a more complicated political deal. Since Stephens had the most important post, and since his party—UPKO, the party of the native Kadazans—was only as strong as the party of the indigenous Muslim peoples (USNO), USNO was given the post of Head of State.

The Chinese party in the Sabah Alliance (SANAP) took the job of Deputy Chief Minister, but the subordinate position of SANAP and of its appointee, Peter Lo, was never in dispute. What was in dispute was the relationship between Tun Mustapha, the Head of State, and Donald Stephens. Tun Mustapha claimed that he should have been involved in political decisions, and that Stephens was exceeding his powers. Stephens replied that Tun Mustapha was only a figurehead anyway. By the summer of 1964 Sabah was in the middle of a full scale political crisis, which was solved by promoting Stephens upstairs into the largely nominal job of Federal Minister for Sabah Affairs, and by putting the representative of the smallest party—Peter Lo—into the most important job, that of Chief Minister. Stephens' reaction was simple. As a member of the Federal government he gave it his loyalty and support. But within Sabah itself he could be more demanding. He claimed that the power struggle between UPKO and USNO could only be settled by the holding of elections, which were due in early 1966. Either the Alliance of the three parties could contest these elections as a single party rather than as a coalition of three; in which case Stephens was confident that he could dominate such a unified party. Alternatively, the three parties could compete in the election amicably, sharing out the senior posts afterwards strictly according to electoral results. Failing agreement on this, the three parties would fight the election on a "winner takes all" basis.

In suggesting such a plan, Stephens was serving notice that he wanted political

power in Sabah. He resented the close ties between USNO and the Malay part of the mainland Alliance. He blamed the Federal government for its part in resolving the Sabah crisis in favour of USNO. He criticised USNO and the new Chief Minister for ruling Sabah in a way that was too deferential to the Federal government. Stephens in short was standing up for Sabah's rights within the federation, and those rights he said, had to be respected if Sabah was to remain contented. Unlike Sarawak, Sabah has no fears over either education or the imposition of an alien language, for Malay has always been a *lingua franca*. But local fears of federal domination spring from the issue of the replacement of British civil servants by Malaysians rather than by Sabahans. Furthermore Sabah's acute labour shortage means that a large influx of outside labour might swamp the native peoples. Although 30,000 Indonesians already work on plantations in the south, although Filipino labour seeps in unofficially in the east, and although half Sabah's rubber stood untapped in 1964 because of the labour shortage, Sabahan feeling for their separate identity within the Federation makes them liable to disregard the clear call of economic need. It was over such issues that Stephens felt he could regain power in Sabah.

opposition

When the Malaysian Solidarity Convention met in the summer of 1965, the situation throughout the Federation was not one that the Federal government could afford to ignore. There was sufficient opposition to the Alliance parties in both Sabah and Sarawak for Lee Kuan Yew's establishment as leader of a substantial federal opposition to be possible. He appeared to be campaigning against the Alliance in every section of the Federation. Rebuffed in elections on the mainland he had found allies elsewhere. The political threat to Malay dominance was now real, and the demands from Malay and Chinese leaders for action against Lee could not be ignored. Some wanted more drastic action than others;

the attractions of acting against Lee personally and thus capturing Singapore must have seemed strong. But the fact that Lee was not arrested and that Singapore was released from its links instead is probably the only cheering part of the collapse of the original federation.

no threat

For the mainland Alliance party, Singapore's expulsion has undoubtedly settled one short-term question. There is now no political threat to the maintenance of Alliance power. The Tunku read the riot act in Borneo, and Donald Stephens first resigned as Federal Minister for Sabah Affairs in protest against Singapore's departure, and shortly afterwards retired from politics altogether.

But many uncomfortable questions have been raised. Since the Borneo territories were introduced as a counter balance to Singapore, what are they now counter balancing? While it may have been worth while incurring confrontation for the sake of the original Federation, is it worth doing so for the rump? How should Malaysia react to Singapore's external policies, particularly towards Indonesia? And what are the feelings of the Alliance leaders as they see a resurgence of communist activity in Singapore's trade unions and university? The feelings of Lee Kuan Yew and his ministers can be imagined. At all costs the internal security position in Singapore must not deteriorate. To prevent this the British military base could serve a purpose, besides providing a substantial amount of foreign exchange for the rather hard pressed Singapore economy. If the employment situation did deteriorate then the political situation would be much harder to hold. But in their efforts to improve their economic prospects, the Singapore leaders have to overcome the pinpricks of an incipient trade war with the Federation, and to make a tricky political decision over resuming the barter trade with Indonesia in some shape or form. Perhaps the restoration of the original Federation of Malaysia, which all Singapore's leaders insist is their long

term aim, may come about sooner than is generally expected, especially if some wider settlement of the now very irrelevant Confrontation policy follows in the wake of Indonesia's internal changes. In the long term both Tunku Abdul Rahman and Lee Kuan Yew may see that their original instinct in merging was the correct one.

4. Indonesia

The relevance of Indonesia was never more convincingly illustrated than on 30 September 1965 when a coup not only immediately overturned the internal balance of power, but changed the pattern of Southeast Asia, undermined the Peking-Djakarta axis and exploded the myth of Afro-Asian unity.

Among the newly independent countries (Indonesia won her independence only in 1949) none has been so nation-conscious as Indonesia. The strength of Sukarno has rested primarily on the fact that he has been a unifying force, giving for the first time a sense of nationhood to different peoples in many islands which under colonial rule were kept separate and were unevenly developed. This explosive nationalism was already among Indonesian leaders when Japan still occupied the country. "We will establish an Indonesian national state," Sukarno told a group of Indonesian leaders brought together by the Japanese in June 1945 to form a constitution for an independent Indonesia. "This is what we must all aim at," he said, "the setting up of our National State upon the unity of one Indonesian land from the tip of Sumatra right to Irian". He entered a *caveat* to which time has increasingly given point; "But, undoubtedly there is a danger involved in this principle of nationalism. The danger is that men will possibly sharpen nationalism until it becomes chauvinism, and think of 'Indonesia ueber Alles'. . . . We must proceed towards the unity of the world. . . . We have not only to establish the state of Indonesia Merdeka, but we also have to proceed towards the family of nations".

nationalism

Throughout the life of this young Republic nationalism has overshadowed all other political emotions; even the communist movement which grew rapidly in the past ten years had to tailor its doctrine to give the semblance of an Indonesian identity. Indonesians did not win independence until after defeating two military actions by the Dutch ex-rulers. They had to wait until 1963 before West Irian

part of the Netherlands East Indies as much as Java or Sumatra, was recognised as within Indonesian jurisdiction. This period of uncompleted independence embittered Sukarno, whose impassioned oratory made West Irian into a nationwide campaign and an international issue. Political activities were dissipated, nationalism was reinforced, and especially in the last stages of the campaign, the country's economy was noticeably weakened.

development

Economic development was slow and uneven. Indeed, had Indonesia not had such natural riches, the country would have been virtually bankrupt. Yet one ideal has been achieved—a national identity. When all criticism, and a lot of it is justified, is made of President Sukarno, his fiercest enemy cannot deny that he has made Indonesia conscious of being one nation. This new unit has thrust itself into councils of the United Nations; it seeks the support of the Muslim world and is unquestionably one of the big five among the Afro-Asian-Latin-American nations.

Indonesia first adopted western parliamentary democracy, with a multiplicity of political parties as in Holland. Some of them merely reflected the personal views and interests of a small group of people; the most important political leaders of this period—Hatta, Sjahrir and Natsir, were all western-educated, with views similar to those of the Fabian Society; they were evolutionary, not revolutionary. With considerable success they carried out schemes of post-war rehabilitation, restored and extended communications and built up a non-party civil service. Most notably, they extended health services, education in every field, but especially secondary schools, and universities. Such organisations as Unesco, Unicef, the British Council, Usis, and later the Colombo Plan facilitated rapid growth among people desperately anxious to learn. This was a liberal period; the press was free; the judiciary and an expanding civil service

were to a considerable degree free from political pressure.

This period of constitutional democracy following approximately western patterns did not satisfy the more nationalist elements in Indonesian political life, including the President who wanted Indonesia-nisation. The success of the PNI (Nationalist Party) in the 1954 elections strengthened his position. He became more actively political, while the position of Hatta and, more striking, that of Sjahrir, was weakened. Extremes won, within the PNI itself, as well as within the Masjumi which was soon supplanted by the Nahdataul Ulama. The PKI (Communist Party) began to live down the unpopularity it had earned for itself in the Madiun rebellion of 1948. Expressed in numbers, the PNI topped the poll in 1955, gaining 57 seats; the PKI jumped from 17 to 39 seats; the Nahdatul Ulama from 8 to 45; the Socialists dropped from 14 to 5. Sukarno's star was now in the ascendant; the success of the Bandung Conference in 1955 added to its lustre.

guided democracy

Sukarno had consistently stood for an Indonesian pattern of society for the rule of the combined forces of nationalism, religion and communism. Parliamentary democracy was breaking down; challenge came from the army, from groups outside Java which resisted the Javacentrism so characteristic of earlier Dutch colonial days. A younger generation which was revolutionary in outlook saw the rapid advance towards an industrially viable and an increasingly prosperous society in China. Sukarno himself was impressed on his first visits to China and the Soviet Union in 1956. On his return he explained, "I do not want to become a dictator. I am really a democrat. What I would like to see in this Indonesia of ours is guided democracy—democracy with leadership, but still democracy".

There was no one to challenge Sukarno in February 1957 when his idea of "guided democracy" was accepted, and a National Council formed in which all

parties, the communists included, could co-operate. This national front idea was enthusiastically supported by the PNI and the PKI. The army did not function as a political party, but its acquiescence was essential. Its position was formally established a year later when a serious rebellion, helped and armed from outside, threatened the country's independence. The causes of the rebellion were varied; personal rivalries always so near the surface in Indonesian politics; growing dissatisfaction with Sukarno and the disproportionate emphasis placed on Java in economic as well as in political spheres of interest. The CIA demonstrably played a part, calculating that Sukarno would be overthrown. But the opposite happened; Sukarno's position was strengthened by the reinforcement of national unity. Equally important and with far-reaching effects, the army emerged as a decisive force and General Nasution a widely known and impressive leader.

The year 1958 effectively ended the short experiment of trying to integrate western civilian and parliamentary rule within the Indonesian pattern of society. In 1959 Sukarno, whose political leadership was unchallenged, abolished the 1950 constitution and returned to the presidential cabinet of 1945. Parliament was dissolved by presidential decree. Only ten political parties were allowed. They did not include the moderate religious party, the Masjumi, nor the Indonesian Socialist Party, both of which had lost a great deal of prestige by their equivocal policy during the 1958 rebellion. Henceforth, functional groups, the armed forces and the three main parties, the PNI, the NU and the PKI, were the expression of guided democracy.

NASAKOM

But power remained concentrated in the hands of Sukarno, who held the country together in a uniquely Indonesian pattern based on the formula NASAKOM; *Nas* (Nationalism), *A* (Agama, or religion), *Kom* (communism). It was, in effect, the same formula Sukarno adopted in 1927 when he first appeared on the political

scene and was one of the founders of the Nationalist Party. It suited the PNI. It gave expression to Islam and therefore satisfied the Nahdatul Ulama (an extreme Muslim party) and it provided a platform on which the PKI could build a mass party. Sukarno did not equate communism with the PKI, but under the able leadership of D. N. Aidit, the PKI ostensibly supported Sukarno, and by active organisation outmanoeuvred the PNI in its appeal to nationalism. The main challenge to the PKI came from the army, whose Commander-in-Chief, General Nasution acquired considerable political influence after his successful handling of the rebellion. The PKI increasingly provided an outlet for political activities. The army provided discipline. Sukarno, bewitching the masses with unending slogans, played the PKI off against the Army, Aidit against Nasution. Both men also needed Sukarno.

foreign policy

This internal struggle for power was obscured by a foreign policy to which all groups could subscribe. At first the emphasis was on non-alignment. The Bandung Conference in 1955 gave much prestige to Indonesia among African and Asian countries who were represented. The growing influence of China and American strategy in Asia, notably over Vietnam, have overtaken the non-alignment idea.

Sukarno characteristically formulated an idea which seemed to him to fit more aptly into the world picture. He saw the world divided, not between the rich and the poor, communist and non-communist, white and non-white races, but between the new emerging forces and the old established forces. In his Independence Day speech on 17 August 1963 he explained, "The New Emerging Forces are composed of the Asian nations, the African nations, the Latin American nations, the nations of the socialist (communist) forces, the progressive groups in the capitalist countries . . . at least 2,000 million people on the earth!" The appeal of this slogan may prove to have an

appeal to politically interested peoples in under-developed countries for whom cold war and ideological struggle within the communist world have little immediate significance. Neither Peking nor Moscow found it difficult to weave the idea into their propaganda patterns. It fitted into Indonesia's confrontation policy carried recklessly to the point of withdrawal from the United Nations. It was skilfully manipulated by Peking, with which Indonesia was on extremely close terms until the recent coup. It provided an Indonesian twist to the largest and best-organised communist party outside communist countries.

neo-colonialism

Neo-colonialism provides an economic diversion in an economy which would have made any less naturally wealthy country bankrupt many years ago. The Indonesians also combine resilience of character with vast resources many of them not only underdeveloped, but unexplored. In the first years of independence, the economy was primarily in Dutch and Chinese hands. After 1957, a policy of Indonesianisation resulted in the taking over of the Dutch estates and restrictions on Chinese traders. But foreign aid continued; by the end of 1962, American non-military aid amounted to us \$223,000,000 and advance us \$400,000,000 in loans over a 12-year period. The only country with financial resources which provided large-scale financial aid to Indonesian economy in 1964 was the United States. This help was forfeited when Sukarno launched his confrontation policy against Malaysia.

The story does not end there. Although fighting a guerrilla war with Britain, Indonesian relations with Holland started a new chapter in November 1963 with a trade agreement, which was followed throughout 1964 by increasing trade as well as cultural contacts and the exchange of many missions in both these fields. One result was that during the first nine months of 1964 Dutch imports from Indonesia amounted to 236,000,000 Guilders, i.e. 63 per cent about the level

of the same period in 1963. Dutch exports amounted to 31,000,000 Guilders, i.e. 41 per cent above the level of the same period in 1963. This is Indonesia's most important contact with the West, but gradually, where there are no colonial problems involved (she sees Singapore as a British colonial involvement) relations with Western powers are built on a new basis. This applies particularly to West Germany.

Malaysia provided the main target for Indonesia's campaign against neo-colonialism. Indonesians can scarcely fear Malaysia as such, but use contradictory arguments such as that Malaysia is part of Anglo-American encirclement of South-east Asia, a strategical shield for Australia and New Zealand, a safeguard against the assumed expansion of a hostile China. While there is a strong case to be made for some regional grouping in South-east Asia—and Indonesia was responsible for the Maphilindo idea—the sequence of events in the formation of Malaysia was used by Sukarno to justify his confrontation policy. At the same time Confrontation coincided with the needs of internal struggle; it gave a theoretical reason for modern well-equipped armed forces; it strengthened the PKI; it underlined Sukarno's neo-colonialist propaganda themes; it has been vigorously used by Peking and Moscow to prove that imperialism remains an active enemy of newly independent nations; it encouraged ideas of a Greater Indonesia. It is a fantastic drain on Indonesia's economy making her more and more dependent on China and the Soviet Union, both of which countries project their aid as being in the cause of self-reliance.

unpopular

The "crush Malaysia" campaign developed its own momentum, but in the absence of any military success, it became less and less popular except among the PKI members who saw it in political, rather than military terms. For the same reason, only China and Pakistan gave it propaganda support. Until 30 September

coup, Indonesia's confrontation policy was pushing the country into China's strategic orbit and isolating her, even among Afro-Asian nations. Britain's exclusively military approach towards Indonesia only served to confirm communist propaganda. Yet it was clear that as long as this area of the world was conceived primarily in strategic terms, no real stability could be achieved.

the coup

The 30 September coup transformed the situation overnight, both in internal and external affairs. Firstly it has affected the position of President Sukarno. The supremacy of the "Supreme Leader of the Revolution" was dramatically challenged; his attitude towards the coup, organised by the head of the Presidential Guard, remains unclear. His silence during the days following the coup, his failure to attend the funeral of six murdered generals and his unwillingness to criticise the Air Force and Naval leaders or the PKI—all these incidents have cut down the size of Sukarno so drastically that it is unlikely he can regain his position. Secondly, the role of the Army has become the major factor in Indonesia. General Nasution may still find Sukarno's diminished appeal valuable in maintaining the country's unity, but the General's influence was demonstrated when Sukarno had to drop Pranoto as Chief of Staff and appoint his own nominee, Suharto. Again, Sukarno has opposed a ruthless purge of the armed forces and the civil administration, but on 25 October Nasution broadcast an appeal urging officers to ensure the elimination of PKI members and those who had supported the September coup. Sukarno had to suspend Air Force officers, members of the National Front, Members of Parliament and several members of the Supreme Advisory Council, while his right hand Minister Subandrio was relieved of his post as head of Internal Security and Intelligence. Sukarno, though a spectator, still remains the leader, with sufficient authority to call together all the provincial governors and

leaders of the armed forces throughout the country. He still adheres to his NASAKOM policy but maintains that the *Kom* does not stand for the PKI, that communism must be accepted as a political fact of life in internal as in external affairs. He has not yet agreed to ban the PKI. Thirdly, there is the role of the PKI. The degree to which it was involved in the coup remains unclear. The assumption was widespread that it had trained military, as well as political cadres, ready to attempt a final showdown with the Army, its one serious rival. But this challenge was generally considered unlikely as long as Sukarno was the Supreme Leader of the Revolution and life-President. Thus, it would seem unlikely that the coup of 30 September—now called GESTAPU, an abbreviation of *Gerakan September tiga pulu*—was directly planned by the PKI. It had the support of some PKI groups, and editorial support, the following day, in the PKI newspaper.

Had it proved successful, the PKI was undoubtedly in the strongest position to exploit it. When the coup proved abortive, and the Army moved in to suppress it, thousands of PKI members rushed to dissociate themselves from the party. Further, the fanatical behaviour of women members of the PKI in torturing to death six top generals, cast a new light on the methods which might be adopted by communists in their struggle for power.

army

At the same time, the anti-PKI campaign organised by the Army might easily cause concern and General Nasution has already been warned by PKI members in Central and East Java that if he goes too far they will be driven to support Aidit, though they had nothing to do with the coup and were opposed to such action. Also President Sukarno has not yet decided whether the PKI should be banned.

Neither the Army nor the PKI is prepared for civil war. The communists are not ready. Nasution realises its dangers.

There remains the importance of extreme religious groups whose fanaticism can easily be underestimated. One of the most unfortunate aspects of President Sukarno's attitude to political problems was his appeal to hatred; "crush India"; "crush Malaysia"; "crush China"; "crush Britain"—all these rallying cries followed his initial "crush Holland" and encourage violence. There is the danger today that religious groups, led by extremists of the Nahdatul Ulama, and brought up on such slogans, will endanger Indonesia's stability. In this atmosphere, the anti-Chinese feeling, latent in Indonesian political and economic life, has once again found expression. This is a traditional feeling, independent of who is in power in China. Events in 1959 culminating in widespread anti-Chinese riots illustrate its dangers. Relations with the People's Republic of China are already strained.

The 30 September coup has changed Indonesia's role in the Afro-Asian world from that of an aggressive leader against neo-colonialism to being a passive spectator. An Indonesian pro-Peking policy, with which Subandrio was so closely associated, is no longer a determinant in Asian affairs. The confrontation of Malaysia is not likely to be a priority, either politically or militarily. This would seem to be a moment when Britain must rethink her attitude towards Indonesia. Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, may have had this in mind when, in Tokyo, on 21 October, he offered the hand of friendship to any Indonesian government which wants to end the confrontation with Malaysia and "live on proper terms" with its neighbours. Any such government, he said, "will find that we are very willing to be on friendly terms with them". Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, responded to this gesture and, at the beginning of December, he said that his country would not refuse a chance to discuss with Britain the confrontation of Malaysia.

5. towards a settlement

We must beware of "South-east Asia": it is a western term without meaning for the countries of the area. The area has no unity. Any stable and permanent settlement must be based on the religious, ethnic and cultural affinities that are meaningful. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines is one such area; Thailand, Laos and Cambodia—plus Burma—makes a Buddhist zone; Vietnam is the odd man out which explains a good deal. Much confusion has followed French rule straddling a cultural divide between Vietnam on the one hand, Laos and Cambodia on the other.

aspirations

The aim must be to use popular aspirations and nationalist impulses to support a settlement. It is a mistake to think these countries will bow down to China thinking they have no choice but to do so once western power is removed. They were not under Chinese domination as small, tribute-paying countries in the past and they need not be now. Nor is there any evidence of China seeking to impose such domination. The idea that the overseas Chinese should be used to further revolution was soon dropped by Peking—if, indeed, it was ever entertained. Of late, China's concern has been to keep these governments in line in support of an Afro-Asian policy for an anti-imperialist front to isolate the United States, and to dismiss the Russians. China has been more concerned to keep their international allegiance than to subvert them internally—Pakistan is a good example of this policy.

Thus the basic Chinese attitude to the area still seems to be defensive, ready to coexist with neutralists, seeking above all the withdrawal of American power which it fears. Chinese support for revolution—as in Vietnam—is in accordance with their current world policy. But they would much prefer to see such revolutions happening in Latin America or Africa than near their borders. It cannot be too often reiterated that events in Vietnam have proceeded in accordance with the internal necessities of Vietnam

ever since the Vietminh was formed under Ho Chi Minh's leadership in 1941. At no time has China been the leader or the dictator of events there.

While this has begun to be an acceptable opinion in Washington, it was not in Mr Dulles' day when the "domino theory" was the basic assumption on which policy was founded; and unfortunately the containment of China in this sense still underlies American policy in Vietnam. According to this theory the advent of communists to power all over Vietnam—following on the success of communism in China—would lead to communist success in Cambodia and Laos, then in Thailand, then in Malaysia and so on; even India would find its flanks turned.

contiguity

Did this idea arise in President Eisenhower's mind on the assumption that communism in China had been a result of contiguity with Russia, and communism in Vietnam had been due to contiguity with China—like some tidal waters flowing through dykes successively breached? The assumption of course is wrong about the causes of communism in China and wrong about the causes of communism in Vietnam. Chinese communism was hampered rather than promoted by Stalin during its crucial struggle for power. Vietnamese communism always kept China, the hereditary enemy, at arm's length and was primarily nurtured on indigenous Vietnamese nationalist, anti-colonialist emotion. Indeed, the nonsense of the domino theory could not have been more exposed than in Indonesia where the native growth of communist strength—until its arrest by recent events—was far greater and far more potentially dangerous than a communist gain resulting from an American withdrawal in Vietnam.

Among many barriers to the growth of communist power in South-east Asia two may be mentioned. The first is nationalism which—as we have just seen in Indonesia—reacts against too insistent a

communist force, especially when that force seems to be linked with China. The second—paradoxical because of its weakness—is the tolerant, casual, unexact Buddhist culture common to Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma; a culture that does not take kindly to discipline, that relishes myth and magic, that is unlikely to produce in sufficient number the hard, dedicated types of human being on which communist success depends. In this sense it is utterly unlike Vietnam which is so close in its culture and political thinking to China. It is true that Vietnamese communist activity is still strong in Laos and was attempted in Cambodia, but far from supporting the domino theory this fact only illustrates the much more potent inheritance of history. There was a long period of rivalry between Thailand and Vietnam in past centuries, when these expanding powers were competing for domination over Cambodia and Laos. Vietnamese influence was furthered under French rule by the immigration of Vietnamese into Cambodia and Laos which suited French convenience. Hence the belief of the Vietnamese that they were the natural leaders of nationalist opposition to French rule in all three territories, and the continuing belief in this revolutionary role held by Ho Chi Minh. This will mean that a vital part of any settlement in Vietnam should include an agreed Vietnamese withdrawal from Laos and from any influence in Cambodia, with an undertaking not to interfere in those countries.

In considering a settlement, certain points about Vietnam must be emphasised. There was no agreement in Geneva in 1954 to set up a separate state in South Vietnam except as a temporary measure. To install an anti-communist like Ngo Dinh Diem—which the Americans did—was bound to lead to eventual trouble. His refusal to consider elections or to engage in any kind of dialogue with the North was in itself certain to arouse reaction among sympathisers of the Viet-minh in the South.

The full-scale commitment of American troops offers an improvement in the military situation but could lead to even

greater eventual deterioration in the political situation. The Vietcong, who may have to retreat and go more slowly, will now find it easier to treat the war as an anti-foreign one. On the other hand, their attempts in early 1965 to win a speedy military victory have obviously failed and, in the process, conscription and taxation of the population in the rural areas they control, have reduced their appeal.

A turn of the tide for the Americans does not mean that the Vietcong can be obliterated as a revolutionary movement, nor could any alternative movement or government hoping to have any popular appeal be brought into being under the wing of the Americans. The aim therefore must still be a negotiated end to the war.

blocked

Hitherto, negotiations have been blocked because each side—North Vietnam and the Americans—have proposed terms unacceptable to the other. While Hanoi will have to give up its demand for a total American withdrawal as a preliminary to negotiations, there are certain principles for a settlement that the Americans must be willing to accept. These are: the admission of the Vietcong as a negotiating element; the establishment of a coalition government in the South that is friendly to the North and that envisages reunification by agreement; an American withdrawal which guarantees that American military power will not be used to interfere with the steps to such an agreement.

If American policy still thinks in terms of the domino theory and a permanently guaranteed non-communist South Vietnam, it will only be sowing the seeds of more trouble in the future. The most valuable asset the Americans need to bargain for is time—both for their own disengagement and the survival for as long as possible of a separate government in the South. But this separate survival should not be an end in itself. The eventual re-unification of Vietnam is one

of the conditions of stability in the area and might well contribute significantly to it.

The expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia has called in question the concept on which the Federation was based. For the moment Indonesia is continuing its confrontation though we may see some change when a settled government finally emerges in that country. Sabah and Sarawak are now likely to demand much more autonomy in the federation—something comparable to what Singapore enjoyed. Nevertheless for these two Borneo states, there is no alternative more attractive than remaining in the Federation. And for Singapore too the long-term aim must be to restore the original idea.

flexible

The truth is that racial antagonism—comprising religion, linguistic and cultural factors—can arise in Malaya as it has in the wider federation. There are limits to what British policy can do to soften the abrasive aspects of nation building—witness recent events in India and Pakistan. This means that British policy may have to be much more flexible than it has been. It must certainly aim at withdrawing its forces from the area if any possibility of doing so arises. Singapore's emergence as a separate state within the Afro-Asian fold may well offer fresh opportunity for manoeuvre. The Indonesians should at worst tire of a confrontation policy that never had any tangible aims.

Indonesian policies have all been put into question by the coup of 30 September 1965 and the subsequent conflict in the upper ranks of government. At what point in the spectrum from left to right the Indonesian government will eventually come to rest is still hard to tell, but there is no doubt that the chances of reaching a settlement with Indonesia over the confrontation of Malaysia are better than they were. After two years the advantages of the policy to Indonesia are shown to be negligible; even

such little support as Indonesia had in the Afro-Asian world is now likely to ebb away.

In the approach to a settlement the proposed "Maphilindo" confederation of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia should not be rejected merely because it was President Sukarno's idea. The Philippines, after centuries of severance from Asian ties, has lately been easing itself towards some kind of affiliation. The area has ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural affinities just as has the Buddhist group already mentioned.

Some initiative from Britain will nevertheless be necessary if only because Britain is so deeply committed at the moment to the defence of Malaysia. A more subtle awareness of the political possibilities in the area will also have to be shown by the Malaysian government; it is not enough to define Indonesian confrontation simply as a facet of communist enterprise against which Malaysia stands out as a western champion.

Finally, the broad lines of British policy in the area are now open to reappraisal. The eviction of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation, coupled with the new turn of events in Indonesia more than ever demands a redefinition of Britain's "East of Suez" policy. Just what does Britain's "presence" in South-East Asia seek to achieve and how can that presence be made most effective—if presence in any military sense is required at all?

Overlaying these questions there is a larger but no less urgent question: is it justifiable that a country which recognised China in 1950 and has differed at all times with the Americans over their China policy, should nevertheless, without reference to this difference accept a subordinate role in South-East Asia in the containment of China? Can we go on "containing" China while we ourselves admit that China's rights are denied to her? Can we evolve a sensible policy, attuned to the realities of South-East Asia, if it is seen as part of a prolongation of the cold war in the Far East?

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Index

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fabian society the authors

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This pamphlet is the result of the work of a group of Fabians with special knowledge of South-East Asia. The views expressed have received general agreement, although no individual member of the group necessarily accepts all the conclusions of the pamphlet.

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