KONFRONTASI
The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute 1963-1966

J.A.C. MACKIE
Research Director
Centre of Southeast Asian Studies
Monash University

Published for the Australian Institute of International Affairs

KUALA LUMPUR
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON NEW YORK MELBOURNE
1974

Oxford University Press, Ely House, London W. 1
GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
CAPE TOWN IBADAN NAIROBI DAR ES SALAAM LUSAKA ADDIS ABABA
DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI LAHORE DACCA
KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE JAKARTA HONG KONG TOKYO

Bangunan Loke Yew, Kuala Lumpur

Having as its object the scientific study of International questions, the Australian Institute of International Affairs, as such, does not express opinions or advocate policies. The views expressed in this book are therefore the author's own.

Printed in Malaysia by
CHARLES GRENIER SDN BHD KUALA LUMPUR,
and bound by
ART PRINTING WORKS, KUALA LUMPUR

VI
The Beginnings of Confrontation

The Brunei revolt of 8 December 1962 was a trivial, almost Gilbertian, little uprising, yet it provided the sparks which were in due course to be fanned into the flames of conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia. Although it was suppressed within a few days and did not in itself embroil the governments of the two countries to a serious extent, it revealed how dangerous for the proponents of Malaysia any further uprisings might be, particularly if they were likely to result in the internationalization of the Malaysia issue through the involvement of other countries or through appeals to the United Nations, which might mean delays and opportunities for the obstruction of Malaysia's formation.[1] As it happened, the Brunei revolt was not followed by any other anti-Malaysia uprisings, as was widely feared in early 1963. If anything, its net effect was to embarass and alarm some of the fence-sitters in Sarawak and Sabah towards the pro-Malaysian camp and to make it easier for the authorities to clamp down hard on the opponents of Malaysia under cover of the threat to national security, because of Indonesia's bellicose attitude. But since it also gave Indonesia a heaven-sent opportunity to claim that the revolt proved that Malaysia was a neo-colonialist strategem being imposed by British bayonets against the will of the people concerned (and also encouraged the Philippines government in its prosecution of the Sabah claim), its long-term consequences were far-reaching, for it brought these two nations together in an unlikely partnership in opposition to the Malaysia scheme.

Initially, Indonesia's opposition amounted to little more than a war of words. During the first half of 1963, however, it took on both diplomatic and military aspects as well, the first through the series of conferences at Manila between March and August directed towards finding a peaceful resolution of the contretemps, the second through various probing raids across the Sarawak border from April onwards and attempts to establish contact with subversive elements within Malaysia. But no one either in Djakarta or abroad could anticipate at this stage just how far Soekarno was prepared to go in his efforts to frustrate the formation of Malaysia, which seemed to be his objective — though even that was not entirely

clear. His statements and actions were, as always, ambiguous, for he was faced with pressing economic and political problems within Indonesia, so that he had to make concessions to the left in foreign policy even while he was turning towards the right in economic policy. He could not afford to go too far in antagonizing the British at a time when he was negotiating for very substantial loans from a consortium of Western donor countries of which she and the USA were the most prominent members, but nor could he afford to repudiate his opposition to Malaysia entirely. At the Manila Conferences of June-July he seemed to be inclining towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute within the framework of Maphilindo (to the dismay of the PKI), but even there he was careful to keep as many options open as he could until the last. It was the ambiguity and obscurity of his objectives that led to so many differing interpretations of Indonesia's policy towards Malaysia in the early stages of the conflict.

THE BRUNEI REVOLT

On racial, historical and geographical grounds it had seemed perfectly natural to include the tiny Brunei protectorate, with its predominantly Malay population, in the proposed federation of Malaysia. Yet Brunei was to prove in several respects the most awkward of the Borneo territories for Kuala Lumpur to deal with, despite its strongly Muslim and Malay character. The Sultan's courtiers had good reason to feel apprehensive about the prospect of democratization that incorporation in Malaysia was likely to bring, while the Party Ra'ayat, led by Sheikh A. M. Azahari, had other reasons for opposing the scheme.

Some countries seem to be burdened by the grandeurs or good fortune of their past, and unable to adjust to the demands of the present and future. Brunei basks in her former glories as one of the great Malay sultanates, and enjoys the lavish revenues derived from her oil fields during recent decades, which have transformed the sultanate from a condition of seedy decay and declining population in the 1930s to one of outward wealth today. But for all its good fortune, Brunei in 1962 revealed many of the classic symptoms of colonial unrest. Its leaders had shown little sign of capacity to adjust to the modern world, by contrast with neighbouring Sabah, although on a *per capita* basis Sabah's export earnings and public revenues were only about one-seventh of Brunei's.[2] Despite her expensive new mosque with its gold-leaf-covered dome, the impressive Shell Oil Company installations and a four-to-one ratio of government revenues over expenditure, Brunei's was a badly lop-sided economy. Her agriculture was backward and stagnant. Commerce was mostly in the hands of the Chinese. Not far from the mosque, the Malay ra'ayat still lived in their huts on piles over the famous *Kampung Ayer*, which had not changed greatly since Magellan's chronicler, Pigafetta, described it in 1521.

Although the oil industry provided the revenues that had made possible improved health services, one of the highest birth rates in the world (50 per 1,000) and, after 1954, expanding primary and secondary schooling for

Azahari implied — and if so, why? Why, for that matter, did Azahari abandon his advantageous political position just when he was so close to the threshhold of power in the Legislative Council? Did he really intend to set up a client state under Indonesian protection? Until Azahari's own story is more fully revealed we can only offer tentative answers to these questions.

INDONESIA'S RESPONSE: CONFRONTATION AS A WAR OF WORDS

The first Indonesian comments on Azahari's revolt do not give support to the theory that it was anticipated in Djakarta. President Soekarno made no public reference on it until the evening of 10 December — and then only a vague sentence at a diplomatic reception: 'the events in North Borneo could not be separated from the New Emerging Forces which are quickly altering the face of the earth'. The PKI did not immediately seize upon the revolt as an opportunity to generate all-out support for Azahari: its paper, *Harian Rakjat*, on the 10th simply quoted the capitalist news-agencies' reports on the revolt without making much of the issue. It accepted at face value Azahari's statements from Manila that the Sultan had raised the flag of the United States of Borneo and was opposing the entry of British troops to Brunei; but neither then nor on the days following did *Harian Rakjat* attempt to slant the news so as to exaggerate the extent or success of the revolt or to argue that it merited active Indonesian support. Its editorial view was that the revolt proved clearly that imperialism-colonialism was tottering and that the Malaysia idea was unpopular because it was neo-colonialist: hence it was natural for these New Emerging Forces to look to others for support. Stronger statements of support for the 'people's revolution' in Brunei were made by the Partindo leaders, although even their mouthpiece, *Bintang Timur*, which usually took a more adventurous line than *Harian Rakjat*, did not go beyond a vague statement of approval in its editorial columns.[27]

Further expressions of support for the rebels came quickly from the student's federation, PPMI, from the West Kalimantan students' association in Djakarta and from the Minister for Information, Roeslan Abdulgani, who called on the press to support 'colonial peoples fighting for their independence'. Many other organizations, mostly from the left wing, began to clamber on to the bandwagon in the days following. General Nasution commented non-committally that Indonesia had no territorial claim to North Borneo but was opposed to colonialism. In similar vein, the Foreign Affairs commission of Parliament announced that as an independence movement the Brunei revolt must receive the support of the Indonesian people.[28] On the whole, however, these early semi-official statements were little more than non-committal ranging shots prior to a verbal engagement that might or might not develop.

The war of words began to intensify soon after the Tunku's 'accusations' against Indonesia, as the Indonesian press described them, in his statement

to the Malayan Parliament on 11 December. Actually the Tunku's references to Indonesian aid to the rebels were extremely brief and oblique. Although he accused the rebels of wanting to incorporate the Borneo territories into Indonesia, he did not implicate the Indonesian government as such, but only the PKI and 'other foreign parties', even in his revelation of the arms and training given to the TNKU at Malinau. It would seem that he was trying to avoid antagonizing Soekarno more than necessary.[29] But the cat was out of the bag and the Malayan press was far less inhibited than he — for Indonesian communism and the Soekarno government were often bracketed together as indistinguishable evils in Malaya. Later the Tunku certainly did make some ill-chosen statements which exacerbated feelings in Djakarta official circles, but by then the hue and cry had been going for some time. The question of who uttered the first insult in the quarrel is not in itself a very significant one, but in our attempt to identify the motivations of the main actors in the drama, we should not underestimate the importance of these mutual provocations and antagonisms in the early stages of the dispute.

The development of the anti-Malaysia campaign in the press during the following weeks deserves some attention for the light it throws on the style of Guided Democracy politics and because it blew up so quickly from a condition of almost total unconcern with the Malaysia idea. Stress was put on the anti-colonialist and revolutionary aspects of the Brunei revolt, the proof it gave to Soekarno's theory of the struggle against neo-colonialism by the New Emerging Forces (whose final victory was not doubted even after the revolt collapsed, because the shaky foundations of Malaysia had been revealed) and the evidence it provided that Tunku Abdul Rahman was a mere lackey of the British. The fact that he sent Malayan police to crush the Brunei 'freedom fighters' alongside the British troops, his reliance on British forces in the crisis and his hostility to Indonesia simply corroborated the worst suspicions about him there. Almost every step the Malaysians took was presented in an unfavourable light. Since most Indonesians had no other source of news and no better framework of interpretation than the doctrine of neo-colonialism, they had little reason to doubt what they read or heard.

The press now began to print a great deal on Malaysia, an extraordinary melange of straightforward news agency reports and weird distortions. Even newspapers which were out of sympathy with the government's general policy and ideology fell into line with the most thoroughly indoctrinated, almost as if it were the natural response.[30] One could easily cite innumerable examples of the half-truths, misleading twists of interpretation and often devious arguments used against Malaysia and its advocates, but to do so might give a misleading impression that a great effort of indoctrination had been necessary, or that the issue was a burning one in Indonesian breasts. Probably neither of these propositions was true. Indoctrination on this issue was barely needed because the groundwork had been well prepared; the neo-colonialist interpretation of the imperialists' behaviour was by now a natural one for most politically

aware Indonesians. To say that they felt strongly about Malaysia at that stage, however, is quite another matter. It is questionable whether many did so until much later in 1963, when the nation's prestige was at stake in the campaign to 'crush Malaysia'. This was not the case immediately after the Brunei revolt. It suited some Indonesians to build up a campaign against Malaysia in the hope of getting good seats on the band-wagon, while there were certain advantages for the President and those who shared his views that such a campaign should develop, although in a tentative, non-committal way. His own arguments and sentiments naturally inclined him towards Azahari's cause, but he gave the Brunei rebels little more than moral support in the early months. His strategy as it unfolded appears to have been one of exploiting any opportunities that might arise within Borneo or Singapore to forestall the creation of Malaysia rather than of commitment to prevent it. It was a combination of a war of nerves, a probing action to discover weaknesses that could be exploited, a series of ambiguous threats to the Tunku and signals of moral support and encouragement to dissident elements within Malaysia. There were certainly groups in Indonesia which were anxious to seize any opportunities to push the government into a commitment which it would be unable to disavow but reluctant to embrace unequivocally; yet they were never influential enough to exert a decisive influence on Soekarno's policy towards Malaysia until September 1963.

Soekarno and Subandrio made several further statements during December which contributed further to the intensification of feelings within and between the two countries, although they still left considerable ambiguity about their ultimate intentions regarding Malaysia.[31] In fact their remarks might well have been disregarded as merely declaratory assertions of the New Emerging Forces doctrine had they not been coupled with personal attacks on the Tunku which began to appear deliberately provocative. Subandrio said in Singapore on 15 December that the Tunku's 'hostile statements' about Indonesia were endangering relations between the two countries; he accused him of a persistently unfriendly attitude and of putting all the blame for the revolt on Indonesia, despite the fact that the British forces commander had said there was no evidence of Indonesian participation. On his return to Djakarta, Subandrio added that Indonesia 'would accept the Tunku's challenge' if he continued his slanderous remarks. President Soekarno told a mass rally that Indonesians who did not support the Borneo rebels would be 'traitors to their own souls' — a remark which prompted a diplomatic Note from the British Foreign Office asking an assurance that Indonesia was not supporting the rebels.[32] Charges and counter-charges now became far less inhibited. The Indonesian Department of Information discerned a 'threat' to Indonesia in the 'cruel acts by British troops and Malayan police in efforts to defeat freedom fighters in north Kalimantan'. The first of the mass rallies on the issue was organized in Djakarta on 23 December by a newly-formed National Committee for Solidarity with North Kalimantan under the aegis of Chairul Saleh, with the burning

of imperialist effigies. Simultaneously the Tunku was telling an UMNO youth rally that 'Indonesia had committed a lot of treachery against us to crush Malaysia', asserting that very strong influence was exerted on the Indonesian government by the PKI, which was suspicious of the Malaysia idea because it would not then be able to expand its influence in Malaya and Singapore. Soekarno in turn attacked this 'false accusation' of Communist influence as 'Communist-phobia', claiming that Indonesia's attitude to Malaysia was 'a matter of principle' based on the 1955 Bandung Conference principles! Both propositions, needless to say, contained a grain of truth and a rather larger grain of fantasy.[33]

There was a brief lull in the recriminations during early January, when developments in West Irian were occupying the headlines in Indonesia — the final lowering of the Dutch flag there on 31 December, demands in West Irian for a shortening of the UNTEA administration period and negotiations with U Thant about an earlier transfer of West Irian to Indonesian control. Unfortunately the Tunku aroused another outburst of anger in Djakarta when he rashly embellished an attack on a pro-Indonesian organization in Singapore, with the statement; 'The Indonesians look upon us as enemies. But this hatred of Malaya did not originate from the Indonesian people. It originated from the Russians, of whom there are about a thousand in Indonesia.' Only a week after this Dr. Subandrio declared that Indonesia's patience was not inexhaustible and he proclaimed in a speech on 20 January, that 'We cannot but adopt a policy of confrontation against Malaya because at present they represent themselves as accomplices of the neo-colonialists and neo-imperialists pursuing a hostile policy towards Indonesia'.[34]

What 'confrontation' was to mean was not at all clear at that stage. Even Subandrio could not immediately throw any light on the consequences that might follow, when questioned shortly after his speech — except that it did not mean that Indonesia was contemplating war over the issue.[35] But the parallel with Indonesia's earlier confrontation of the Netherlands during the West Irian crisis was obvious, not only in the threat of armed force which had characterized the last stages of that struggle, but also in its conveniently imprecise connotations. After all, confrontation of the Netherlands had been proclaimed as early as June 1960, at the time of the *Karel Doorman* incident, before diplomatic relations with Holland were severed and long before any serious clashes developed. Confrontation, it was frequently asserted, had many aspects — diplomatic and economic, as well as military. The ambiguity was to be exploited to the full!

The purpose of proclaiming confrontation seems to have been as much a matter of internal politics as external. It gave a clear signal to the press and political leaders at home to mount the sort of 'revolutionary' campaign against the confronted which had become a familiar feature of the Indonesian political scene. It enabled Soekarno to test political reactions on the issue at stake both at home and abroad. It was also calculated to arouse uncertainty and alarm in the adversary and among

other powers as to Indonesia's real intentions, without irrevocably committing her in any formal way. There was something uniquely Soekarnoesque about this technique; it was a style he had developed with considerable success in dealing with superannuated imperialists and their stooges, a combination of threats, brinkmanship and play-acting, which could be modulated at will to a pitch of fierce hostility at one extreme or, at the other, of patient acquiescence while waiting for favourable opportunities to resume the long-term struggle, whatever its objectives may be. It served Soekarno's purposes in mobilizing the revolutionary energies of the Indonesian people while leaving him a maximum of latitude in determining just what goals these energies should be directed towards. Confrontation was in due course to be dignified with a formal definition, when President Macapagal of the Philippines had to be reassured that it did not have the aggressive connotations attributed to it by the Malaysians:

> It is not a policy of aggression, much less a policy of territorial expansion. Its main purpose is to oppose the neo-colonialist policy of an outside power which... is bent on wrecking Maphilindo. This divide and rule policy, backed by preponderant military force, can only be checked by a firm defensive policy of confrontation, lest the national independence and security of the countries of this region succumb to foreign domination.[36]

There are ambiguities and question-begging assumptions in plenty here, but however vague or misleading Soekarno's language of 'revolutionary diplomacy' may have seemed to foreign critics, it articulated ideas which were both familiar and persuasive within the Indonesian (or at least the Javanese) *Weltanschaung*.

Other Indonesian actions within a few days of the Subandrio announcement had the effect, whether intended or not, of underlining its most sinister implications. General Yani, while on a visit to Pontianak, near the exposed southern border of Sarawak, drew headlines with a statement that the Army was only awaiting orders to assist the rebels in North Kalimantan. Antara added that two divisions of volunteers were ready to do likewise.[37] (No such order was issued, of course, although border raids by alleged 'volunteers' were quietly begun several months later.) These early sabre-rattlings could perhaps be disregarded as formalistic utterances of no serious significance, for Subandrio repeated on several occasions that there was not going to be war over Brunei. But what importance was to be attached to confrontation? How far were the Indonesian authorities planning to go on this issue? Were they hoping to provoke Malaya into severing diplomatic relations? That was almost the only interpretation that could be given for several further developments which brought relations between the two countries to a nadir in early February. Ganis Harsono, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman, issued to the press an extraordinarily abusive written attack on the Tunku just after the arrests of *Barisan Sosialis* leaders in Singapore. In addition to predictable attacks on Malaya as a police state, he described

the Tunku as 'around the bend', and gave a long, almost comical list of his insults and hostile actions towards Indonesia, which proved, said Harsono, that the Tunku had become an object of ridicule in South-East Asia.[38]

Using more temperate language, Soekarno added his own endorsement to confrontation on 13 February in a strangely lack-lustre speech to the National Front; he charged the imperialists with attempting to encircle Indonesia and frustrate her revolution in order to protect their stake in the rubber, tin and oil of Malaysia, but beyond expressing sympathy for the struggle of the people of North Kalimantan, he gave no hint as to the form confrontation would take.[39] Subandrio, only a day after he had talked to Lee Kuan Yew about the matter in Singapore, spoke cryptically to an audience of foreign correspondents of the likelihood of armed conflict if Malayan hostility to Indonesia spread to Borneo, so that Indonesia found herself sharing a common land frontier with a hostile neighbour — a remark which may simply have meant that he was casting round for yet another argument to defend a policy which had not been carefully worked out.

At the diplomatic level, confrontation found its most immediate expression at that stage in two rather grotesque episodes, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference at Moshi in Tanganyika, and an Afro-Asian Journalists' Conference in Djakarta shortly after. Both provided an opportunity to begin the isolation of the 'neo-colonialist' Malaysians-to-be from the A-A bloc. Malayan representatives were bluntly excluded from the Djakarta conference by the simple device of not sending an invitation, so it was not a very famous victory. Moshi had its moments of drama, or perhaps farce, as the Indonesian delegation laboured, first and successfully, to debar representatives from Singapore-Malaya and then unsuccessfully to have a resolution passed condemning Malaysia as neo-colonialist. The latter was too much for the host government, which was reluctant to offend both Britain and Malaya just for the sake of Afro-Asian solidarity. The compromise adopted was an expression of support for 'the just struggle of the people of North Kalimantan against colonialism'. The Malayan delegation mocked at the fact that Brunei was represented by an Indonesian.[40] (Azahari did not turn up, though when he left Manila at the end of January he was reported to be proceeding there. Actually he went to Indonesia instead.) But the whole affair had a Ruritanian quality and was notable mainly for its demonstration of the disproportionate amount of energy put into scoring ritualistic points at such gatherings.

It is easy to exaggerate the intensity of the fears and hostility aroused by this early war of words, which seemed at the time to be little more than shadow-boxing — a threat to *future* relations between the two neighbours, perhaps, but hardly a source of imminent conflict then and there. Much of the feeling aroused was a sense of outrage at the apparent hypocrisy of the other's charges — Malayans and Britons being irked that Indonesians from the mire of their economic and political chaos should presume to criticize an orderly, well-run state; Indonesians irritated that their motives

and ideology seemed to be so wilfully misunderstood and distorted. Malayans were also angered by a series of incidents in the narrow Malacca Straits where Indonesian gunboats had pursued Malayan fishermen into Malayan territorial waters.[41] This sort of friction posed a worrying problem for the Kuala Lumpur authorities, for there were divergent interpretations of what constituted 'territorial waters' and the Malayan navy could not possibly protect over 2,000 fishing vessels in the Malacca Straits, even though its patrols were intensified and its defence expenditure increased. The incidents also seemed to be part of a deliberate policy of provoking a quarrel with Malaya.

For the Malayan government the most disturbing effect of confrontation in early 1963 was that it suddenly found itself faced for the first time with difficult problems of coming to terms with a bleak and unfriendly neighbourhood. It had been accustomed to the opposition of the Communists, of course, but now Indonesia was setting out to isolate her from the Afro-Asian family of nations. Moreover, President Macapagal had announced the Philippines' opposition to Malaysia on 29 January (partly on the ground that it was unacceptable to Indonesia), thus compounding the Tunku's annoyance with his earlier claim to part of Sabah in the name of the heirs to the Sultan of Sulu.[42] The only reassuring diplomatic development for Malaysia was President Kennedy's first open statement of support (still a carefully qualified one, designed to avoid offence to Indonesia) on 15 February.[43] Internally, however, the prospects of bringing Malaysia into being were looking brighter in February; the Lansdowne Committee negotiations were almost complete, talks with Brunei and Singapore were going well, the Brunei rebels had nearly all been rounded up, and even the arrests of *Barisan* leaders and Ahmad Boestaman had caused remarkably few repercussions. Only Sarawak was still a serious question mark.

The creation of Malaysia seemed assured, provided that Indonesia did not go too far to forestall it. But how to dissuade her? Calls for international action, either through the UN (as the PMIP wanted) or a summit meeting of the heads of state (proposed by Vice-President Pelaez of the Philippines on his way back from London) had a seductive appeal to some Malays, particularly on the opposition side. U Thant was, in fact, keeping a quiet eye on the Malaysia-Indonesia dispute through one of his deputies, Narasimhan, who stopped briefly in Malaya and Singapore for talks on the matter when he visited Indonesia in mid-February to discuss the West Irian arrangements. But there were perils in allowing the fate of Malaysia to be internationalized in any way, for it opened up limitless prospects of delays and complications, as well as the admission that Indonesia and the Philippines might have some *locus standi* in the matter. Yet the Tunku had to take some slight risks of this sort if Indonesia's attacks were to be diminished. By responding favourably to Pelaez's suggestion of a Summit meeting he opened the way for the important diplomatic initiatives at the Manila ECAFE conference in March, from which developed the various Manila conferences between April and August.

Pelaez put forward his suggestion for a conference of South-East Asian

countries in an effort to promote closer regional cooperation; he had earlier shown considerable enthusiasm for ASA (Association of South-East Asian States) although at that moment the prospects of obtaining further progress on ASA seemed very gloomy.[44] An ASA conference at ministerial level had been postponed several times since mid-1962 because of the Tunku's reluctance to proceed while the Philippines' claim to Sabah was hanging over his head; Macapagal's speech of 29 January particularly angered him. Yet Pelaez was keen to keep ASA alive and, if possible, to conjure up some content for the earlier Macapagal concept of a Greater South-East Asian Confederation; hence his proposal to bring the Indonesian President to the conference table with the ASA leaders. Soekarno's initial reaction was non-commital, but the Tunku welcomed the proposal if only because it could 'help Malaya to learn the reasons for Indonesian hostility'. He could not afford to allow the formation of Malaysia to be delayed by any such conference, of course, but something might be achieved if Indonesia could be mollified or if the Philippines could be induced to abate its opposition. At the end of February the Malayan Ambassador to the Philippines let it be known that he was hoping to arrange an ASA meeting in late March and that he was sure the Tunku would attend it. Shortly afterwards, it was also announced that Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister, would lead Malaya's delegation to the ECAFE conference which Subandrio was also to attend, earlier in March, presumably with the object of exploring the possibilities of further negotiations. Formally, the Tunku was not yet committed to anything more than the limited ASA talks with the Philippines, but wider prospects were being opened. Verbal attacks on Indonesia were muted in Malaya in the hope of creating a better atmosphere for talks. And Australia now began to play an active part as a broker in the dispute.[45] Mr. T. K. Critchley, High Commissioner to Malaya, paid an unofficial visit to Djakarta to talk to the President and other Indonesian leaders with whom he had established cordial relations when he was Australia's representative on the Good Offices Committee fifteen years earlier: he then flew home to Canberra where Australia's relations with both Malaya and Indonesia were undergoing an extensive review. Sir Garfield Barwick, Minister for External Affairs, decided to attend the Manila ECAFE conference, partly to try to bring about a peaceful resolution of the dispute that had arisen, partly in order to underline Australia's interest in participating in such regional deliberations. His intervention was not altogether welcome to the British, who took a jaundiced view of the tripartite talks which developed out of the Manila discussions, but Barwick believed that if the Indonesians were genuinely afraid that Malaysia constituted a threat to her security, as they claimed to be, it was worth taking pains to dispel their apprehensions.

The talks held in Manila during the ECAFE conference opened a new and more cordial phase in Indonesian-Malayan relations, as the three governments concerned made plans for the series of Manila conferences which later resulted in the vision splendid of Maphilindo. Outwardly, the March meeting achieved little more than a formula for exploratory talks

between officials, as a first step in this direction. But even this degree of progress was quite an accomplishment. Neither the Malayan nor Indonesian government was yet prepared to modify publicly its earlier intransigent attitude to the other. Tun Razak announced before he left Malaya that he did not intend to see Subandrio unless the latter took the initiative in approaching him, and it appears that he did not do so, at least in public. Both of them showed considerable cordiality to their Filipino hosts, though sparing little for each other. Macapagal's official proposal for *pourparlers* between the three nations on 11 March was a tentative, gingerly statement, not at all in character with his grandiloquent proposal of a Confederation of South-East Asian States the previous year, although Macapagal was later to be credited with the bold initiative behind the Manila talks and Maphilindo.[46] His suggestion was not even greeted with immediate and warm approval by the Malayan or Indonesian authorities. The former withheld comment until Subandrio agreed to the talks. Subandrio took two days to do so — and then only with the qualification that before his government would accept Malaysia two conditions must be fulfilled: relations between Malaya and Indonesia must be 'clarified' and Malaya must prove that the proposed Malaysia Federation would not be used to subvert Indonesia.[47]

Why was it so difficult to bring Indonesia and Malaysia together at the conference table, despite the apparent willingness of each to negotiate? One major reason was the purely tactical problem of defining what was to be on the agenda. The Tunku was willing to hold talks if they offered a means to 'learn the reasons for Indonesian hostility' and he was anxious to calm Indonesian apprehensions about threats to their security resulting from the Malaysia scheme; but there were tight limits to the concessions he was prepared to yield, since he could not afford to delay Malaysia's creation or admit that it depended upon Indonesia's approval. But for Indonesia's leaders there was no advantage in high-level negotiations if the Malaysia scheme was to be excluded from the agenda or if one of the preconditions was abandonment of confrontation. Part of the difficulty for the Malayan government and the would-be mediators, moreover, was to discover just what Soekarno's real aims were in espousing confrontation. If he did not really want to heal the breach that had developed, negotiations would not solve anything and were simply an unnecessary risk from the Kuala Lumpur point of view. But two other interpretations were constantly advanced by Indonesian officials to induce the Malayans to offer concessions of some sort. Confrontation could not easily be repudiated without some face-saving gesture by the Tunku, they argued, for Soekarno was now too firmly committed to it by virtue of the New Emerging Forces doctrine and by popular support in Indonesia for North Kalimantan's 'freedom fighters'. On another level, many Indonesians attributed their opposition to Malaysia to the security aspect. They expressed concern that, instead of bringing an early end to British military bases, the creation of Malaysia was to involve an extension of the existing Anglo-Malayan defence agreement. Macapagal's confederation proposal

provided a convenient framework for further discussions of this problem. Hence it suited all concerned to treat the security aspect as the central problem at Manila, as if it were the essential stumbling-block which could soon be cleared away by negotiations and assurances about mutual non-aggression.[48]

The path to the Summit, as it turned out, was by no means the quick and easy series of steps envisaged in the Macapagal proposal. There were delays and pinpricks on both sides. Only a few days after he had accepted Subandrio's two conditions for further talks, the Tunku made a surprise statement that a Summit meeting would not be necessary; a ministerial conference would suffice, since the purpose of any talks would simply be to explain the reasons for Malaysia, not to bargain on the timing or terms on which it would be formed. Although Razak 'clarified' this next day to mean simply that a favourable climate had to be created for a Summit, the Indonesians accused Malaya of being 'not serious' in their approach. However, on 29 March the Malayan government announced that it was ready for talks in Manila at the officials' level on 5 April.[49] Hostile statements against Indonesia were avoided during this period, although the Malayan press was still tending to take the view that a Summit conference was not necessary. But doubts and delays still remained on the Indonesian side.

Macapagal had proposed an officials' conference to prepare the agenda for a Foreign Minister's meeting which would precede the Summit conference. But it was doubtful for some time how the Malaysia question would be included, if at all. Speculation in Manila about some form of 'self-determination process ... and interim UN administration for the Borneo territories' (along the lines of the West Irian formula) indicated to the Malayans what sort of pressure might be put upon them.[50] In the communique issued after an ASA conference on 4 April, referring to the forthcoming talks between the 'three countries of Malay origin', nothing was said about the Malaysia issue although the Tunku commented later that nothing would necessarily be ruled out. The officials' conference had to be postponed when the Indonesian delegate refused to leave Djakarta in protest at a speech by the Tunku which was deemed unfriendly. When it did meet on 15 April, it took over a week to draw up a provisional agenda which, without making any reference to Malaysia, simply listed the broadest generalities such as defence against Communism, the Philippines' proposed Confederation, economic cooperation, an Asian common market and cultural questions.[51] No precise date for the Foreign Ministers' conference was set, but it was expected to be held in mid-May. Even this modicum of agreement was not easily reached and there are indications that Indonesia was still distinctly luke-warm about the series of talks going ahead at all. On 12 April occurred the first major border incursion in Sarawak, at Tebedu, which could easily have led to a breakdown of negotiations if Kuala Lumpur had reacted adversely to it; General Yani made no real attempt to deny Indonesian involvement in the raid, but the Tunku avoided any exacerbating comment on it. On 20 April, in a speech

during President Liu Shao-chi's visit to Bali, Soekarno again spoke strongly of Indonesia's determination to prevent Malaysia. And it was at Indonesia's request that the Foreign Ministers' meeting was further postponed from mid-May until early June. For some weeks it was far from certain whether it would ever be held. Then, quite unexpectedly, came a thaw in relations between the two countries on 25 May, when Soekarno invited the Tunku at very short notice to join him in Tokyo for unofficial talks, which led to an agreement to press on with the Foreign Ministers' conference in early June, with the prospect of a Summit meeting to follow if all went well. The reasons for this volte-face are to be found in the domestic politics of both parties, to which we must now give some attention.