

Reactions of the Big Powers to the Formation of Malaysia

Ken Kiyono

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Preface

This paper is a supplement part to the previous paper which the writer wrote in the Research and Annual Report.* In this paper, he would like to analyze the reactions to the formation of Malaysia of the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China from their respective angles.

The U.S. policy is discussed from the viewpoints of non-involvement and involvement. The Soviet policy is examined from the standpoints of solid opposition and a change of attitude. The Chinese policy is investigated from the point of view of identification of hers with that of Indonesia.

The United Kingdom and Japan are omitted in this paper, because the former had been closely related with the formation of Malaysia and its aftermath and the latter should be taken up some other time as a separate.

* See K. Kiyono, "Formation of Malaysia and its Impact on the International Relations of Southeast Asia in 1963", Research and Annual Report, XV, 1973 pp. 85-104. (Published by the Research Institute of Southeast Asia, University of Nagasaki)

The United States of America :

Non-involvement to Stark Reality of Involvement

Before the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963, The United States of America had comparatively little interest in the Federation of Malaya, independent since 1957 and Singapore, still a colony of the United Kingdom. Even though this area was open to American capital investment, yet little investment was made during this period,¹⁾ partly because Malaya had been under the so-called emergency until 1960 and partly because this region had been regarded as the British firmly-established sphere of influence.

Even under the Kennedy Administration, U. S. relations with Malaya and Singapore remained passive due to her preoccupation with Vietnam. This attitude was well illustrated in the report by the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations concerning the formation of Malaysia and its complications. It stated:

Regardless of what may develop, it would seem to be desirable for the United States to make every effort to continue to maintain the position of noninvolved cordiality which has characterized our relations with Malaya since that nation achieved independence in 1957...²⁾

Moreover, this kind of diplomatic passiveness led to indifference to economic conditions in this area. By the early 1960s, the United States of America, due to her conscious effort to hoard up strategic materials such as tin and rubber, was in a position to influence world prices for these commodities which were and are still main exports in this region. In 1961, without taking into any consideration its effect on producing countries of rubber, she started on throwing her stockpile of rubber on the international market. She

was charged with "economic aggression" in foreign newspapers. Furthermore, in 1962 she met Malayan vehement protest when she started to sell her stockpile of tin abroad.³⁾ Naturally these blunders on her side strained more than necessarily her economic and political relations with Malaya and Singapore.

The Peace Corps, however, initiated in 1961 under the Kennedy Administration, seemed to have paved the way for restoring better relations between the two countries. As a matter of fact, Malaya was one of the first countries which had responded to President John F. Kennedy's "offer of volunteers".⁴⁾ This program was so successful that the number of volunteers had been increased year after year. It is said that by 1966, more than a thousand workers had done service to Malaysia.⁵⁾ In this way, in mid-1965, the Malaysian Government reciprocated the service of Peace Corps workers with a policy of accepting U. S. college degrees "for public service recruitment and professional registration".⁶⁾

In this period, the United States, except for the policy of Peace Corps, seemed to have not a definite and positive policy towards Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Singapore. Although, throughout 1962, the Kennedy Administration showed a welcoming gesture toward the Malaysian plan as an "act of decolonization and regional stabilization",⁷⁾ President Kennedy took a wait-and-see attitude in the face of confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia in 1963.⁸⁾

It was President Lyndon Johnson that took a very serious view of the dispute and initiated diplomatic activities in search of a peaceful solution. In January 1964, he made an appeal to President Ahmed Sukarno for concessions on Malaysia and pointed out that the dispute would be an impediment to the improvement of relations

between the Republic of Indonesia and the United States of America.⁹⁾ At the same time, was Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent to Southeast Asia as a mediator of the dispute. Kennedy succeeded in persuading the disputants to agree to come to a conference table. The conference was supposed to be called by the Thai Government in the first week of February in 1964, but it was not realized due to the violation of the cease-fire agreement.¹⁰⁾

Through Kennedy's mission, nonetheless, the United States came to grasp what the core of the dispute was. It seems to the writer that from this time on, there appeared to be a major shift in the American policy towards Indonesia up to this time. That is to say, the United States began to sympathize with Malaysia in its dispute with Indonesia.

In March, the United States declared that further allocation of economic aid to Indonesia would depend upon the settlement of the existing dispute with Malaysia¹¹⁾ and in April, she sent Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to President Sukarno as a peace mission.¹²⁾ To this answered President Sukarno with a threat that any foreign property of antagonistic countries would be nationalized or confiscated.¹³⁾ Thus, the U. S. relations with Indonesia grew worse and worse. On the other hand, the U. S. relations with Malaysia became heightened with the visit of Premier Tunku Abdul Rahman to Washington in July.¹⁴⁾

In August and September 1964, Indonesian troops landed on the Malaysian Peninsula by air and sea. The Malaysian Government brought the matter to the United Nations Security Council where U. S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson sided with Malaysia and condemned Indonesia for its confrontation policy of force.¹⁵⁾ In this way, the United States remained sympathetic towards Malaysia until August

1966 when the dispute was finally settled in Bangkok.

Such was the U. S. reaction to the formation of Malaysia. She started with the policy of non-involvement and found herself involved deeply in the dispute in reality.

- 1) Peter Boyce, Malaysia and Singapore in International Diplomacy : Documents and Commentaries, (Sydney : Sydney University Press, 1968), p. 155. Professor Boyce maintains that the reasons of lack of American investment was due to American ignorance of the area and due to anti-American feeling existed in Singapore.
- 2) Ibid., p. 159. Originally Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88th Congress, 1st Session, Viet Nam and Southeast Asia, Report of Senators Mike Mansfield, J. Caleb Beggs, Claiborne Pell, Benjamin A. Smith. (Washington : U. S. Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 17.
- 3) Ibid., p. 155.
- 4) James W. Gould, The United States and Malaysia, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 277.
- 5) Ibid., p. 228.
- 6) Boyce, op. cit., p. 158.
- 7) Ibid., p. 156.
- 8) Ibid. The New York Times took the pro-Malaysian attitude unlike the Kennedy Administration.
- 9) Ibid., p. 157.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) Ibid. Originally New York Times, 26 March 1964, p. 2.
- 12) Richard Allen, Malaysia : Prospect and Retrospect, The Impact and Aftermath of Colonial Rule, (London and others : Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 291.
- 13) Boyce, op. cit., pp. 166-167. Originally Extract from "Reach to the Stars", President Sukarno's Independence Day Speech for 1965.

Translation by Commercial Advisory Foundation in Indonesia.

- 14) Ibid., pp. 162-163. Originally White House Press Release, 23 July 1964, reproduced in Department of State Bulletin, Vol. LI, No. 1311, 10 August 1964, p. 193.
- 15) Ibid., pp. 164-166. Originally Speech of United States delegate to the United Nations Security Council, Official Records, 1145th Meeting, 10 September 1964, Doc. S/PV 1145.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: From Solid Opposition to a Change of Attitude

The Soviet Union's reaction to the formation of Malaysia, the writer maintains, should be analyzed in perspective of the leadership struggle within the Communist bloc for the so-called emerging nations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China. The actual rivalry of these countries dates back to the year of 1956 when Joseph Stalin was denounced by Nikita Krushchev, First Secretary of Central Committee of Soviet Communist Party. Since then, the chasm seems to have become steeper and deeper.

Especially concerning the national liberation movement, Peking made a serious accusation that Moscow had little interest in it.¹⁾ In order to disprove this accusation, the Soviet Union came to be involved, more than she would have liked to, in the Malaysian dispute with a stronger attitude.²⁾

Throughout 1963, there were not a few papers in the Soviet Union criticizing the formation of Malaysia as the British scheme to oppose the national liberation movement in this area.³⁾ Some of them also predicted that "no smooth road" would be "for Malaysia" and the Malaysian plan had intensified "Anglo-American rivalry for

domination in Southeast Asia", which was proved by the Philippines' claim to Sabah (North Borneo) and her proposal for a greater confederation.⁴⁾ Moreover, another writer condemned Malaysia as "another offspring of British colonialism" and pointed out that even Krushchev had declared in the third world convention of journalists: "Malaysia, which was set up by the British Imperialists, is only a new form for the old colonialist policy."⁵⁾ In this way the Soviet Union appeared to be deadly against Malaysia as a case of neocolonialism from the beginning.

In comparison with this, she had constantly regarded Indonesia as an example of national liberation. She, therefore, kept supporting Indonesia in its dispute over the West Irian with the Netherlands along this line.⁶⁾ In January 1961, the Soviet Union made a military agreement with Indonesia and carried it out. When President Sukarno threatened to arms in the end of year, she made clear her continual support for Indonesia in February 1962. Moreover, in the summer of the year, she sent Anastas Mikoyan, Deputy Premier to Indonesia where he reiterated the Soviet Union would support Indonesian claim.⁷⁾ In this way, she consistently supported Indonesia until the settlement of the dispute in August 1962.

However, when Indonesia began its policy of confrontation against Malaysia, the Soviet Union was ironically placed on the thorns of a dilemma of her own contradictory policies. She emphasized her support of the national liberation movement on the one hand and denied "a policy of sanctioning of the export of revolution" on the other.⁸⁾

As far as the West Irian dispute was concerned, it was a conflict between Indonesia, a new state and the Netherlands, an old colonial power. In this sense, the Soviet Union seemed to have no doubt

or fear about her conviction that she was supporting Indonesia in its national liberation. The Indonesian policy of confrontation, however, was a conflict between two new states, namely Indonesia and Malaysia. This recognition of the difference of these two disputes caused the Soviet Union to take a different attitude towards Indonesia from her hitherto maintained one lest she should be blamed for sanctioning the export of revolution.

According to Professor N. Derkach, this change of Soviet attitude was reflected in (1) her Governmental announcement of support in each case, (2) her mass media treatment, (3) her regarding Malaysia as a new and emerging state, and (4) her irresolute support for Indonesia in Malaysian issue.⁹⁾

The writer firmly believes that this very change of Soviet attitude put Indonesia in the welcoming arms of the People's Republic of China in the leadership struggle for the emerging nations, which, in turn, encouraged greatly the already powerful Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The upshot of the PKI's activities was the coup of September 30-October 1, 1965 through which Peking lost her influence in this region.

Such was the Soviet Union's reaction. She reacted deadly against the formation of Malaysia at first and her strong verbal opposition culminated in the speech by Mr. P. D. Morosov, Soviet delegate in the United Nations Security Council in September 1964.¹⁰⁾ Her policy toward Malaysia, however, changed subtly as Indonesia began her policy of confrontation. After the coup in Indonesia, Soviet relations with Malaysia were much improved. Throughout 1964 the Soviet Union had been anxious to have her diplomatic representative in Malaysia, however, it was not until a few years later that she could exchange her diplomatic mission in Malaysia.¹¹⁾

Nevertheless, it is very significant that the Soviet Union succeeded in it because China had to wait until 1974 in order to open her diplomatic relations with Malaysia. In this sense, the Soviet Union overcame China in their diplomatic duel in this area.

- 1) Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-1961*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 254-255.
- 2) Nadia Derkach, "The Soviet Policy towards Indonesia in the West Irian and the Malaysian Dispute", Asian Survey, V, No.11, November 1965, p. 566.
- 3) Boyce, op. cit., p. 251.
- 4) M. Nikitin, "No Smooth Road for Malaysia", International Affairs, (Moscow), May 1963, pp. 74-75.
- 5) T. Mikhailova, "Malaysia", International Affairs, (Moscow), June 1964, p. 112.
- 6) Derkach, op. cit., pp. 567-568
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Boyce, op. cit., p. 249.
- 9) Derkach, op. cit., pp. 568-571.
- 10) Boyce, op. cit., pp. 251-255. Originally (Speech of Official Records, 1145th Meeting, 10 September, Doc. S/PV 1145. Russia delegate to the United Nations Security Council.)
- 11) Boyce, op. cit., p. 250.

The People's Republic of China:

Identification of her Policy with that of Indonesia

Throughout Southeast Asia, every country has the Oversea Chinese as a more or less important component of its population. It is, therefore, said that the People's Republic of China as well as the Republic of China has used the ethnic Chinese as a means of influencing the country in which they have resided to her advan-

tage and as a source of remittance at the same time. In this sense, she has greater advantages in exerting influence upon countries in this region than the Soviet Union does.

In her opposition to her formation of Malaysia with "the largest Chinese minority of any country in the world",¹⁾ did the People's Republic of China use these advantages? During the emergency of 1948-1960, she had tried to use them and failed in convincing the Malayan people that the rebellion, which had been fought by the Malayan Communist Party against the colonialist and its puppets, was essentially for the sake of the Federation of Malaya. From the inception, Communists in Malaya and Singapore were drawn almost exclusively from the ethnic Chinese. Thus, no matter how they had tried to identify themselves with the Malayan people, they could not wipe out "stigma of being Chinese".²⁾

In this period, communalism tended very much to be associated with Communism and Communism inclined closely to be connected with the Chinese and the People's Republic of China. Peking, which had apparently learned a lesson from her past experience, wanted to play down its communal interest in Malaya and Singapore and hesitated very much to use the ethnic Chinese in the Malaysian question.³⁾

Moreover, in contrast with the Soviet Union's reaction to the formation of Malaysia, China reacted more slowly to it, partly because she had been absorbed with the border dispute and negotiation with India in 1962 and early 1963 and partly because she had expected rather benefit than loss from the new order at first.⁴⁾

Even though, as early as June 1962, one of Chinese weekly magazines mentioned that the Malaysian plan had been worked out under the Anglo-American auspices despite opposition of various

groups in Malaya, Singapore, and three Bornean territories, yet nothing further came out along this line.⁵⁾ In this early stage, however, the Philippines' claim to Sabah (North Borneo) in 1962 brought about differences of opinion between Moscow and Peking concerning what this claim meant. The former regarded it as a sign of intensification of rivalry between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.⁶⁾ The latter, however, considered it as "a front for U. S. intervention in Borneo" emphasizing the collusion of these two countries.⁷⁾

Furthermore, China opposed Malaysia indirectly through the support for Indonesian policy of crushing Malaysia. Chinese policy towards Malaysia had evolved from her mere support for the Brunei People's struggle for independence to complete identification of her policy with Indonesia policy against Malaysia.

Through 1963 and 1964, Chinese relations with Indonesia had been made much closer by mutual visits of their leaders to respective countries. In January 1963, Indonesian Foreign Minister Raden Subandrio visited China. Premier Chou En-lai stated in his welcoming speech that China, like Indonesia, supported the Brunei People's just struggle for independence. In April of the same year, Chairman Liu Shao-chi visited Indonesia. In his public speech, he made mention of the Malaysian question frequently lauding Indonesia for her opposing "the neo-colonist scheme of Malaysia" and her supporting the Brunei People's struggle.⁸⁾

In August 1964, Vice Premier Marshal Ch'en Yi stated at the reception of the Indonesian National Day's celebration:

The Chinese people resolutely support the people of North Kalimantan in their struggle for national independence and resolutely support the Indonesian people in their just struggle against

Malaysia...the product of neo-colonialism.⁹⁾

In this way, the Chinese policy towards Malaysia became identical with that of Indonesia.

Moreover, when Indonesia seceded from the United Nations in January 1965, Peking welcomed Indonesian withdrawal. In April, Premier Chou En-lai and Vice Premier Marshal Ch'en Yi visited Indonesia in order to participate in the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference.¹⁰⁾ This kind of very close cooperation of these countries was kept until the coup of September 30-October 1, 1965.

- 1) Boyce, op. cit., p. 145.
- 2) Mary F. Somers Heidhues, "Peking and the Overseas Chinese: The Malaysia Dispute", Asian Survey, VI, No. 5, May 1966, p. 283.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Ibid., p. 282.
- 5) Ibid., p. 276.
- 6) Nikitin, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
- 7) Heidhues, op. cit., p. 279.
- 8) Ibid., p. 279. In 1963, Aidit, Lukman and Njoto, three top leaders of the PKI visited Peking. Peking accorded the warm welcome to them. Apparently, Chinese leaders and the three visitors must have exchanged opinions concerning the Malaysian question. The PKI was the foremost opposer in Indonesian political factions. President Sukarno had been completely under the influence of the PKI in his policy towards Malaysia.
- 9) Boyce, op. cit., pp. 147-148. Originally NCNA English, Peking, 17 August 1964. Survey of China Mainland Press, August 1964, No. 3283.
- 10) Heidhues, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

Conclusion

It is of opinion of the writer that, in order fully to understand international relations in Southeast Asia, one should analyze how the big powers reacted to the formation of Malaysia which had introduced the new and true relations to the independent nations in this region for the first time.

Each power reacted to it from the viewpoint of protection of its interest. Thus, the United States of America thought non-involvement in the Malaysian dispute necessary at first in order to carry out her goals in Vietnam. At the same time, she thought the dispute should be solved by the United Kingdom which had been the sole holder of the sphere of influence in this region and the co-sponsor of the formation of Malaysia. However, later she found herself deeper and deeper involved in the dispute due to the demands of reality. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had a stronger opposition to it in the leadership struggle with the People's Republic of China for the emerging nations. She changed her attitude towards Malaysia as Indonesia began to pursue the policy of confrontation. In this way she overcame China in their diplomatic duel at this period. The People's Republic of China, reminded of her past and bitter experience of the emergency, hesitated to use the overseas Chinese to her advantage in influencing Malaysia and identified her policy with that of Indonesia which had been deadly against Malaysia. In the end, she failed in her policy when the coup took place in Indonesia on September 30-October 1. Because of this failure, China had to wait for opening her diplomatic relations with Malaysia until 1974.