

## CHINA'S ROLE IN INDONESIA'S "CRUSH MALAYSIA" CAMPAIGN

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### Abstrak

Makalah ini berargumentasi, berlawanan dengan pendapat yang umum diterima, Republik Rakyat Cina (RRC) turut serta dalam Konfrontasi Indonesia untuk mengganyang Malaysia dengan setengah hati. Malahan, berlawanan dengan propagandanya yang sangat menggebu, RRC pada dasarnya merupakan pihak yang berpartisipasi dalam konfrontasi dengan secara pasif. Gejala ini disebabkan oleh fakta bahwa pada waktu konfrontasi berlangsung Partai Komunis Malaya yang didukung Cina tengah menerapkan kebijakan yang lebih lunak terhadap pemerintah Malaysia. Tambahan lagi, RRC mungkin sekali lebih peduli terhadap nasib golongan etnik Cina di Malaysia daripada mendukung partai komunis lokal.

### Abstract

This paper argues that contrary to the traditionally accepted opinion, the People's Republic of China (PRC) participated in the Indonesian campaign to crush Malaysia half-heartedly. In fact, despite its strong propaganda broadcast in supporting Indonesia, the PRC was actually a passive participant in the campaign. This is due to the fact that at that time the Chinese supported Malayan Communist Party, which was pursuing a more conciliatory policy toward the Malaysian government. Furthermore, China was probably more concerned with the well-being of ethnic Chinese Malaysia than supporting the local communist party.

*Keywords: Sino-Indonesian relations, Sino-Malaysian relations, Indonesia politics and diplomacy, Chinese politics and diplomacy, Malaysian politics and diplomacy.*

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### 1. Introduction

Although the idea of uniting all former British colonies in the Malay Peninsula, North Borneo and Singapore was not new<sup>1</sup>, it was Tunku A. Rahman who first publicly announced the proposal for the establishment of the federation of Malaysia on May 27, 1961. In addition to the proposal, there was also a concept for a smaller merger between Malaya and Singapore. This idea, however, was not too popular among UMNO leaders. The inclusion of the tiny island, whose population is mostly Chinese, would certainly threaten the ethnic balance in Malaya, which was favorable to the Malays.

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<sup>1</sup> Most Information in this section, unless specified, originated from Milne and Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, (Singapore: Times Books International, 1980), Chapter 4.

In the meantime, however, there were two separate developments, which pushed further the formation of Malaysia. Within the UMNO leadership emerged a belief, which came up initially in 1956 and became more established by 1960, that the indigenous people of Borneo should be considered Malays. Therefore, the inclusion of former British colonies into a federation, even if Singapore were included, would not jeopardize the ethnic balance of the new state. In the meantime, political development in Singapore in the early 1960s contributed to the hastiness of the Malaysian formation. The government of the People's Action Party (PAP) under Lee Kuan Yew, although it tended to be left-learning, was losing the elections to the more radical faction of the party which later established its own organization, the *Barisan Sosialis* (Socialist Front), which was communist-oriented. In fact, since 1948 when elections were introduced, the political radicalism, while the British planned to give the colony

independence in 1963. The Malay leaders, being anti-Communists, were very concerned about a possible independent and communist-dominated Singapore, which would be used as a base to help their Malayan comrades (Andaya, 1982: 270–71). The possibility of Singapore becoming the “Southeast Asian Cuba” was in the minds of the anti-Communist Tunku and the British government.

The formation of Malaysia, which included all British colonies in Southeast Asia with the exception of Brunei, therefore, was an escape clause from the threat of ethnic imbalance and communism. In addition, the Tunku Abdulrahman expected economic benefit from Singapore inclusion. China’s accusation that the new state was a Western-created bastion against communism in the area was, therefore, not baseless.

## 2. Methodology

This study relies mostly on information and official statements found in the Chinese media. During the period covered by this study the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was still a closed society in which everything, including all forms of mass media (newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasts) were placed under the very tight control of the government. Some scholars, like Domes (1983: 69–83) remind us about possible “misinformation” in China’s statements. We, therefore should be careful in using those official statements. Fingar (1980) on the contrary, suggests that this consciousness should be specifically applied to such domestic policies as agriculture, economy, education and culture, and other similar matters. Unlike domestic policies, which might be distorted in the process of their creation and implementation, foreign policy is carried out under the close management of professional bureaucrats. Liao and Whiting’s study Fingar (1980) on *Renmin Ribao* (*People’s Daily*) during the Sino-Indian border crisis of 1962 proves the reliability of the newspaper as a measurement of Chinese authoritative reactions to particular events. Dillon (1977:457) describe *Peking Review* as “an accurate and reliable indicator of official Chinese foreign policy perceptions.” Furthermore Tretiak’s (1971) close reading on news reports and analysis of *Peking Review* during the closing years of the Cultural Revolution indicates its reliability in predicting changes in certain areas of foreign policy. We may assume, therefore, that foreign policy statements, which are found in the Chinese media, are in accordance with the intended policy.

## 3. Analysis and Data Interpretations

### 3.1. Indonesian Confrontation and China’s Support

The information of Malaysia was opposed by two of its neighbors: Indonesia and the Philippines. The external and internal politics of Indonesia under Sukarno after 1959 were leaning toward leftist radicalism. The Philippines opposition was based on a claim that North Borneo had historical been an area governed by the Sultan of Sulu, a region which now belongs to the Philippines.

When the Malaysia concept was announced in mid-1961 Indonesia was still busy with diplomatic and armed efforts to liberate West Irian (West New Guinea or now Irian Jaya) from Dutch hands. Thus, Sukarno and other Indonesia leaders seemed not to harbor any abjection to the Malaysian formation. Marvin Ott notes that the initial negative reaction came from the PKI. He based his finding on a resolution adopted by the party in its Third Plenum of the Central Committee which condemned the Malaysian Plan as a “colonial intrigue” unacceptable to the local people, created by British colonialist to maintain their interest in the area. But after the West Irian conflict was resolved in favor of Indonesia in September 1961, even non-communist parties and leaders of Indonesia started to voice opposition to the plan (Ott, 1971). By the end of 1963, the war of words escalated into an armed conflict involving Great Britain, which, obliged by its defense agreement with Malaysia, sent its soldiers to fight the Indonesian military intrusion.

Indonesia’s confrontation came into the open when a military rebellion occurred in Brunei on December 8, 1962, a British-protected sultanate in North Borneo. The leader of the uprising, A.M. Azahari, was a pro-Indonesia nationalist who believed that the inclusion of the tiny kingdom into Malaysia would hinder his nationalist goals and his personal ambition. The rebellion was easily suppressed by the British Army. Ott observes that although the rebellion was brief, it nonetheless, among other consequences, became the justification for Indonesian opposition to the Federation of Malaysia (Ott, 1971). Indeed, Indonesia’s argument for confrontation was based on a belief that the Federation of Malaysia was formed without local consent, especially in North Borneo. Indonesian leaders throughout the confrontation period always repeated this theme.

There are so many interpretations to the background of Indonesia’s “crush Malaysia” campaign. Malaysian leaders usually referred to it as an expression of jealousy on the Indonesian part because of Malaysia’s successes in economic development. They also viewed

it as a manifestation of Indonesian and Chinese communist success in embracing Sukarno (Khaw, 1972: 219–20). Again; the Tunku and his supporters saw Chinese hands behind Sukarno and Indonesia's back. Gordon (1963) regarded the confrontation as an exhibition of Indonesia's expansionist ideology.

In reality there was no simple explanation behind the Indonesian action. Hindley (1964: 904–13) enumerates several factors. Indonesian leadership under Sukarno had several grievances against Malaysia. They strongly believed that the Moslem rebels who threatened Indonesia's existence in 1948-1962 were financed and aided by the West from Malaya. Malayan territories were also used to give support and asylum to leaders of provincial military rebellion in the late 1950s. They furthermore believed that the existence of Malaysia, still controlled by the British, would remain a base for subversive against Indonesia. Added to this was the failure of Malaysian leaders and the British to consult Jakarta when they planned the formation of the federation. Sukarno's dream to make his country have a dominant status in the region was also a contributing factor. Ott (1971) added the antagonistic personalities between Sukarno and Tunku, and Malaysian displeasure over Sukarno's pro-Beijing politics. Current argument is offered by Subritzky (2000: 1–31). He argues that Sukarno who was strongly committed to eliminate remnants of Western colonialism in Asia. Originally it was the Dutch who was the target of his campaign, but when the conflict over Irian Jaya was settled in favor of the Indonesian claim, Sukarno turned his focus on the British, and by the beginning of 1963 he directed his attention to the British plan in Malaysia. And direct opposition to it. Her alleged that the Malaysian plan was a stepping-stone for Western imperialism to continue controlling Southeast Asia. Indonesia's experience of facing Malaya, which supported the PRRI/Permesta dissidents who were longing for separate states, exacerbated Sukarno's suspicion. In addition Sukarno had hard feeling toward Malaysia who was abstain in UN voting regarding West Irian status. From Malaysian side, Sukarno was regarded as a dangerous leader who had a great sympathy to both Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as well as to China, and therefore had to be opposed. Whatever the case, the Indonesian campaign to "crush Malaysia" (*Ganyang Malaysia*) was notably marked by a growing closer relationship between Jakarta and Beijing.

In coming to the discussion of the Jakarta-Beijing axis we must first overview the state of the relationship among U.S., the Soviet Union and China after 1960. It was apparent that approaching 1963 Sino-Soviet differences over a whole range of such important issues as ideology, the international communist movement, war and peace, the relationship among socialist states

and with non-communist countries had reached an irreconcilable phase. To make the conflict worse, in 1963 the Soviet Union and the U.S., together with British signed the so-called Test Ban Treaty, an agreement were so loose and ambiguous. The signatories were not forbidden to conduct underground nuclear arms tests, not did it tie them to hold the treaty, therefore, tended to strengthen Soviet and American domination over such weapons, to the expense of such minor countries as China. Therefore, the PRC could not accept the treaty and accused the Soviet Union of colluding with America to practice nuclear hegemony. This situation and the withdrawal of Soviet economic, technical and military aid from China led Mao and his supporters to be self-reliant in domestic and foreign policies, and to the development of China's own nuclear weapons. This was the time when the "revisionism" brand was applied to the Soviet Union and radical foreign policy was followed. Now, the "Soviet revisionist" and "U.S. imperialists" were China's main enemies.

As to how the Sino-Indonesian axis finally came into being, Peter C. Hauswedell's study (Hindley, 1964) gives us some insight into background. According to Hauswedell, by 1963, there were two regional conflicts considered to be threats to peace and stability in Southeast Asia: Vietnam and Malaysia. The political situation in Vietnam was developing into a full-scale military conflict involving one of the superpowers more directly. Being close to the area of conflict, China was very concerned about a possible Sino-American confrontation, as had taken place in Korea in 1950. Conscious of the superiority of the U.S., Chinese leaders advised their Hanoi Comrades to act with great cautiousness and to avoid any large-scale and frontal attack on South Vietnam.

The opening of Indonesia's confrontation, therefore, was not greatly welcomed by China. In the first place, in comparison to Vietnam, Malaysia was not as important to China's security. The mid-1960s was a time when the "second intermediate zone" emerged in Mao's strategic thinking. In opposing Malaysia, Indonesia was facing England, a country of "intermediate zone" which had to be courted by Beijing. In addition, China was more interested in maintaining a good relationship with London – because the British attitude toward China was different from the U.S. and because of the China's economic and trade interests in British-controlled Hong Kong. Meanwhile, China overall interest in the region was mainly to remove any military threat from its neighbors. Indonesia's confrontation, contrary to China's objective, had invited a strong additional British military presence. The combination of those factors, according to Hauswedell, made the Chinese

leadership hesitate in giving full support to Sukarno's confrontation.

China, however, was very eager to support the PKI in its effort to gain power in Indonesian politics. Being the largest communist party outside the socialist bloc, the PKI was very important for China in its competition with the Soviet Union to win sympathy and support from other communist parties. As has been indicated above, the PKI was the first to sound opposition to the Malaysian plan. For the PKI and Sukarno confrontation was important, although both viewed this for different reasons. The PKI wanted the Indonesian army, its arch-rival, to be busy with an external threat so the party could buy the time to strengthen itself for possible seizure of power. Sukarno wished confrontation would shift the army's attention from crushing the PKI. For him, the fall of the party would also mean his demise, as later happened in September 1965. The Indonesian army itself, being an anti-Chinese anti-Communist force, looked at the establishment of Malaysia and Singapore's fusion into it as a formation of a Chinese-dominated country, possibly being pro-China in the long run. Some army leaders, viewed, the Malaysian project, protected under the western military shadow, as a hindrance to Indonesia's ambition to become the dominant power of the region. The army, therefore, supported the confrontation with the understanding that it would be carried out with limited military involvement (Crouch, 1978: 55–62). Thus, Indonesia's domestic political maneuvering caused everybody, to borrow Hauswedell's words to jump onto the "bandwagon" of the confrontation.

Meanwhile, the Hanoi leadership, disregarding Beijing's advice to act cautiously, adhered to a more radical stand against American escalation and launched an all-out war. Therefore, Hanoi's radicalism, the PKI's support of Sukarno's confrontation and the Beijing-Moscow conflict moved the PRC into a more active policy in supporting Indonesia, although it was not involved militarily.

Sukarno's confrontation turned from vocal to military when a U.N. special agency, formed for the purpose of investigating whether the federation plan was supported by local people, found that the Indonesian objection was unfounded. Sukarno's proclamation of confrontation in September 1963 was not illogical. The Tunku announced the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia before the U.N. Commission issued its findings openly.

China first propaganda support of Indonesia's confrontation emerged in April 1963. An article, which appeared in *Shijie Zhishi*, commented on the publication of a white paper regarding the

establishment of Malaysia on February 2, 1963. The federation, according to the article, was formed for the purpose of protecting British interests in Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo. It was also meant to suppress the people's struggle for independence in the area, that is to say, "using the federation [from the state] to unify and rule" and "to divide and rule." Moreover, the "British imperialist" was using "the independent federation" to strengthen its military presence in Southeast Asia for the purpose of further aggression. In addition, the British used the new state to maintain their economic interests in the area since British capitalist monopolized 70 percent of rubber production and 60 percent of copper and 60-70 percent of the area's foreign trade (Bi Wen, 1963: 16). Referring to the Malaysia plan's relationship to "U.S. imperialism" the article continued:

American imperialism has great military and economic interest in the area. [Therefore] on the one hand it welcomes and supports the "Malaysian Federation," but on the other hand it shamelessly cuts the ground from the British feet. The U.S. President Kennedy several times voiced American support for the plan "because it is a hope to protect the security of the region." In reality, U.S. activities are squeezing the British ... [because] since late 1961 [the U.S.] by using the Philippines President Macapagal proposed an "enlarged Federation of Malaysia" consisting of Singapore, Malaya, North Borneo, and the Philippines.

*Dagongbao* (17 September 1963) called the Malaysian plan a "joint production" of "U.S. imperialist and British colonialist," and jokingly it said, therefore, be called *Mei lai Dongya*—which means "America comes to [south] East Asia—instead of Malaysia."

After Sukarno's formal announcement of his "crush Malaysia" campaign in late 1963, China's support was even more vocal. Now the Chinese media started to link American support under Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson to establishment of the federation of Malaysia by the "British colonialist" was an exchange for the British support the just struggle of the Indonesian people to fight "old and new colonialism" (*Dagongbao*, 27 March 1964). "New colonialism" was Sukarno's favorite term in his reference to Malaysia. The *People's Daily* called the Federation of Malaysia a "neo-colonialist product of British imperialism" with Washington's blessing. Its purpose was to suppress national liberation and peace movement in Southeast Asia. At the same time, it constituted a threat to peace movements in Southeast Asia. At the same time, it constituted a threat to peace and security of the area, particularly to Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Dagongbao*, 27 March 1964, see also Chao Hai, Malaixiya, Xin Zhiminzhuayi de Chanwu" [Malaysia, A product of Neo-Colonialism], *Shijie Zhishi*, (19 October 1964), pp.26-27

China's opposition to Malaysia reached a new degree, when in November 1964 the Malaysian government announced the opening of the Nationalist Chinese government Consulate General in Kuala Lumpur. Although the announcement also emphasized that the decision "does not imply a change in Malaysian policy of recognizing neither the Kuomintang China nor the Communist China." Beijing reacted strongly and accused Kuala Lumpur of approaching a policy of recognition of Taiwan, an act of hostility toward China. In addition, quoting the Nationalist China news agency, Beijing mentioned the existence of military cooperation between the "Jiang Gang" and the Tunku government in forming an anti-Communist front in Asia and in suppressing communist guerrilla activities in Malaya (*NCNA*, 1 December 1964 & *SCMP* 3350, 4 December 1964: 37-38). China also blamed American encouragement to both Taipei and Kuala Lumpur for Taiwan's involvement in the Malaysia dispute<sup>3</sup>. It was, according to China, Malaysian support American policy to create "one China and one Taiwan" and a "dirty political plot" against the PRC (*Renmin Ribao*, 2 December 1964).

Indonesia's confrontation against Malaysia accelerated to a higher degree when in December 1964; Malaysia was elected a non-permanent member of the U.N. membership on January 7, 1965. It regarded the decision to seat Malaysia as the outcome of a situation created by colonial powers in the U.N who were against Indonesia's principle of opposing colonialism (Boyce, 1968: 104-105). It was not surprising that China, being kept out of the international organization for so long, welcomed Indonesia's decision. *People's Daily* regarded the Malaysian sitting in the Security Council as "naked provocation and hostility toward Indonesia." The paper suggested that the exit of Indonesia was another ample fact that the U.N., dominated by "U.S. imperialism," acted as a "tool for aggression."<sup>4</sup>In reference to Sukarno's speech after his withdrawal, the paper said: Sukarno correctly said that the crown of real freedom does not lie in being a member of the United Nations. A country, which cannot stand its own feet, is not a free and independent country even if it is a member of the United Nations. "Malaysia" is an accurate example [of the principle] (*Renmin Ribao*, 11 January 1965). Thus, Malaysia was singled out as an example of a country without full independent. Another article in *Shijie Zhishi* described

<sup>3</sup> "Jielu Meiguo Cedong Jiang Bangshen Shenru Malaixiya de Yinmou" [Unveil the American-instigated Plot to Include Jiang Clique Into The Malaysian Plot], *Renmin Ribao*, editorial, 2 December 1964.

<sup>4</sup> "Jianjue Zhizhi Yindunixiya Tuichu Lianheguo" [Resolutely Support Indonesia's Withdrawal from the United Nations]. *Renmin Ribao*, editorial, 11 January 1965.

Malaysia as a "U.S. imperialism tool" in its scheme to "use Asians to fight Asians" (Ge Geng, 1965: 15-16).

The close ties between Indonesia and China during 1963-1965 were forged at a time when both countries were internationally isolated. Most neutral countries resented Indonesia's growing radicalism on the questions of Malaysia. China, in the meantime, was also isolated by the western powers and among the neutralists, while its dispute with the Soviet Union estranged it as well from the eastern bloc, with the exception of Albania. Mozingo (1976) described the Sino-Indonesian relationship as an attempt to establish a "third force strategy." The purpose was to oppose both the U.S and the Soviet Union. Internationally, the period was specifically marked by Sukarno's efforts, since his withdrawal from the U.N., to form the "New Emerging Forces" (NEFO) to oppose the "Old Established Forces (OLDEFO). For that purpose Sukarno wanted to form the conference of the New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) as an alternative to the U.N. As for the China's part, it tried to form an international united front against a status quo, which was coerced by America and the Soviet Union. The support given by China to Indonesia's confrontation against Malaysia was a manifestation of the close Sino-Indonesia cooperation. However, the sudden turnaround following the September 30 affair in 1965, with the crushing of the PKI and leftist elements in Indonesia including Sukarno, the confrontation came to a sudden stop, while the Sino-Indonesian axis disintegrated. Indonesia officially terminated the confrontation in 1966. The PRC, however, continued to oppose Malaysia due to political developments in China during the Cultural Revolution.

### 3.2. China's Continuation of Confrontation

The sudden political change in Indonesia after the September 30, 1965 Affair, followed by Sukarno's fall and the purges of the PKI and other leftist elements, caused the sudden stop of Indonesia confrontation against Malaysia. Although initially reluctant to join in the Malaysian conflict, the PRC was now left alone to continue the confrontation. Regarding Indonesia's discontinuation of the struggle against Malaysia, Beijing accused the Jakarta's decision to be a result of "U.S. and British imperialist" persuasion and pressure on the Indonesia "right wing military regime" (*NCNA*, 2 June 1966) As in the past, in reference to the Federation of Malaysia, China continued to use such derogatory terms as "the so-called Malaysia," or to put the world "Malaysia" within quotation marks and in other ways insinuate the new state's non-existence.

On the diplomatic front, to fill the gap left by Indonesia, China welcomed the establishment of the "Permanent Mission of the Malaysian National

Liberation League" (MNLL) in Beijing on January 12, 1966. According to P.V. Sharma, possibly a Singaporean or Malaysian India, who acted as the chairman of the mission, the MNLL was united front organization representing various Malayan and Singaporean "People's movement at home and abroad" in struggle to "crush Malaysia" in order to achieve "true independence, democracy and peace in Malaya." Following China's rhetoric, Sharma also indicated that the Malayan people had learned from their experience that to free themselves from the rule of imperialism and its "puppets," the act of "revolutionary violence" was the only answer to "counter-revolutionary war" (*Renmin Ribao*, 13 January 1966). Kang Yonghe, the Vice Chairman of the Chinese Commission for Afro-Asian Solidarity, who gave a welcoming reception to the Malaysian organization, pledged that the Chinese people would continue to support the Malayan people's persistent struggle against "U.S. and British imperialists" and their "lackeys." Referring to the Malayan people's fight to "crush Malaysia," Kang called it a part of the struggle of the peoples all over the world to oppose imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.<sup>5</sup> On February 1, 1966, in another Beijing reception, Sharma announced that the Malayan people's struggle was entering its eighteenth year, while he also mentioned that various organizations under the MNLL condemned the "Soviet revisionists" who cooperate with the U.S. and its "running dogs" in splitting the anti-imperialists forces. Therefore, the Malayan people would always strongly fight against "modern revisionism" (*Renmin Ribao*, 2 February 1966)." Sharma's and Kang's statements revealed that in alluding to the local government officials in Malaysia (and Singapore) both Malayan and Chinese communists, up to the mid-1960s, still refrained from mentioning those Malaysian official's by name. In May 1966, when the PRC successfully tested its first nuclear explosion, Sharma sent a congratulatory note on the occasion. He said the China's new weapon gave "added impetus" to the Malayan people in their struggle to "crush Malaysia" as the British and U.S. "neo-colonial product." At the same time, the explosion had "internationally broken the American and Soviet monopoly over nuclear arms" (*NCNA*, 19 May 1966 & *SCMP* 3705, 25 May 1966: 26-27).

Entering 1967 China was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution. Showing his pro-China stand, in a reception to commemorate the "18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the struggle of the Malayan people," Sharma said:

"From our revolution practice the Malayan people fully realized that Mao's thought is the compass guiding us toward victory. We, Malayan people, hail the history successes of the Red Guards, workers, peasant, soldiers, revolutionary students and

intellectuals have already achieved and will continue to achieve in the course of the Cultural Revolution" (*NCNA*, 1 February 1967, & *SCMP* 1806, 7 February 1967: 32).

Again, indicating his pro-China posture in the Sino-Soviet conflict, he also accused the "Soviet revisionist" who has openly supported Malaysia. Even when Singapore released itself from the federation and gained its own "independence," the "Soviet revisionist" lost no time in embracing the "Lee Kuan Yew puppet" and its "new type of colony" (*NCNA*, 19 May 1966 & *SCMP* 3705, 25 May 1967: 32-33).

The year 1967 was a time when indications emerged in Malaysian foreign policy that it was moving from right to center. This began when Malaysia together with other countries formed the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. One year later Malaysia forwarded a proposal to make Southeast Asia a neutral zone (to be discussed in Chapter IX). The declaration of the ASEAN formation followed the ratification of the Bangkok Declaration on August 8, 1967 by representative from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The next day *Xinhua* reacted very strongly by accusing the association of being a "new anti-China, anti communist alliance," formed under the order of "U.S. imperialism." The Chinese news agency also said that the economic, social, administrative, technical, and scientific cooperation, which was mentioned by the Bangkok Declaration, was only a cover to its actual objectives, namely, to act as a part of the U.S. imperialism ring to encircle China. Thus, ASEAN was none other than the "twin brothers" of SEATO (*NCNA*, 9 August 1967 & *SCMP* 4000, 14 August 1967). *People Daily* added another accusation that ASEAN was a joint-defense organization to meet "China's threat." Therefore, since SEATO existed only in name, ASEAN was another variant of SEATO<sup>6</sup>.

Toward the end of 1967 China's propaganda against Malaysia was included in its quarrel with the Russians. In October the Tunku announced the Malaysian intention to open diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. *People Daily*, while reminding readers that Malaysia was a "product manufactured by the U.S. and British colonialism-imperialism" to sabotage the national liberation movement in Southeast Asia, also said that: The Soviet revisionist clique's opening relations with "Malaysia" is not difficult to understand, [because] for years they have been trying to make friends with U.S. imperialist lackeys and running dogs in Asia. The purpose is to strengthen their counter-revolutionary collusion with U.S. imperialism in order

<sup>5</sup> *Renmin Ribao*, 13 January 1966, see also *Renmin Ribao*, 23 June 1966 for the same statement by Kang Yonghe.

<sup>6</sup> "Meidi Zougou de Fangeming Xiao Lianmeng" [A Small Counter-revolutionary Association of U.S. Imperialist Running Dogs], *Renmin Ribao* (Editorial), 12 August 1967.

to encircle China and also to realize their own type of neo-colonial-ism. At the same time it was not a coincidence that the Rahman reactionary group wants to cooperate with Soviet revisionist clique [to oppose China] (*Renmin Ribao*, 22 October 1967).

The opening of Malaysian-Soviet relations marked the increasing resentment of China toward Malaysia. Now, both the MNLL's and PRC's propaganda directly called the Malaysian and Singaporean governments as "Rahman-Lee puppets," "cliques," or "running dogs." Commenting on the visit of Foreign Minister Tun Abdul Razak to the Soviet Union in mid-1968, the *People's Daily*, quoting MNLL's organ the *Malayan Bulletin*, called the visit a clear sign of the strengthening of "counter-revolutionary cooperation" between the "Soviet revisionists and the Malaysian puppets" (*Renmin Ribao*, 28 June 1968). *Xinhua*, again quoting the *Malayan Bulletin*, charged that Soviet intrusion into Southeast Asia by forging a close relationship with Malaysia was caused by its fear of China's high prestige and the influence of Mao's thought in the region, which was being followed by the revolutionary Malayan and Southeast Asian Peoples (NCNA, 27 June 1968). Another article publishing by *Xinhua* in early 1968 clearly accused Malaysia of being the puppet of England, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and therefore, should be eliminated.

Malaya [including Singapore] continues to be a British new-type colony to this day, and due to the decline of British imperialism, the danger of U.S. imperialism replacing it in enslaving the Malayan people is becoming graver. The Soviet revisionist is stepping up their collusion with Rahman-Lee puppet groups in the attempt to undermine the Malayan people's revolutionary struggle. Hence, to eliminate the influence of British imperialism, which is aided by Soviet modern revisionists, the Malayan people must overthrow the Rahman-Lee puppet regimes (*Renmin Ribao*, 20 January 1969).

Since early 1969, China's propaganda attacked the Soviet Union's change of policy to Malaysia. Only two years ago charged the *People's Daily* in February 1969, the Soviet Union accused Malaysia as being an "imperialist-created puppet state." Now, on the contrary, the "Soviet revisionist" had pledged to cooperate with that "puppet state."<sup>7</sup> By the end of 1969, for Chinese propaganda, Malaysia had become the project of collusion among Chinese enemies on all fronts to suppress "people" and to oppose China. Commenting on the expansion of Malaysian armed forces, *Xinhua* argued:

The Rahman-Razak puppet clique's military expansion has had the support of the Soviet revisionists. Social – imperialists, and the British imperialism. Malayan papers disclosed that Soviet revisionism actually helped the Rahman-Razak puppet clique to reorganize the navy and expand the air force and is preparing to provide artillery, tanks, and airplanes and other modern weapon to equip the reactionary troops of "Malaysia," together with a large sum of money as military aid to the puppet clique. British imperialists with its accomplices, Australian and Indian reactionary have in the past few months been shipping small arms (NCNA, 23 February 1968 & *SCMP* 4126, 27 February 1968: 30).

It is interesting to note that most Chinese media's references to Malaysia were taken from other sources, especially various bulletins published by the MNLL in Beijing and by underground communist newsletter in Malaysia and Singapore. Those sources tended to exaggerate and even to falsify the facts. In reality there is no evidence to support Beijing's allegations that Moscow, as early as 1969, had supplied or was ready to supply Malaysia with arms and military equipment. The anti-Communist Tunku's influence in 1969 was still great and unchallenged openly. In addition, most of Malaysia's military hardware originated from Britain, America and other Western countries.

### 3.3. The Cultural Revolution and the MCP

Except for references to the activities and statements of the MNLL in Beijing under Sharma which always upheld armed struggle under the guidance of Mao's Thought as the guiding principle to fight against imperialist "lackeys" and to "Crush the puppet state Malaysia," the Chinese media throughout 1966 and 1967 did not cover many MCP activities. Even in reporting those activities, Chinese newspapers relied mostly on new bulletins and statements issued by the MNLL and underground newspapers published by anti-Malaysian fighters in Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>8</sup>

Political developments in Singapore and Malaysia, however, changed the fates of two leftist organizations during confrontation. In Singapore, the pro-Beijing *Barisan Sosialis* suffered a stunning defeat. The party policy's of parroting Chinese (and Indonesian) slogans as "crush Malaysia" and "phoney independence" alienated its constituents. General opinion considered the party to be the "voice of Peking," and therefore, its popular support eroded. In Malaysia the left – leaning Socialist Front suffered the same defeat, caused mainly by a breakup within its leadership. The Malaysian party was a fusion between Malay leftist socialist and

<sup>7</sup> NCNA, 4 September 1969, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (FBIS), DR, CC, 1.172 (5 September 1969), pp A12-13.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, *Peking Review*, 7 (11 February 1966), p.4; *Renmin Ribao*, 13 January 1966, 2 February 1966, 23 June 1966, 12 December 1967.

Chinese labor Organizations. In February 1966, both factions decided to seek their own ways (Pillai, 1966). Although the Malaysian party was against the creation of Malaysia, and thus, in line with Indonesia's and China's policy, communalism hindered its unity. It was also apparent that Indonesia's abandonment of confrontation has left the future of the "crush Malaysia" campaigns a big question mark. In the meantime, in spite of Beijing's cultural revolutionary massive propaganda and reports on the opposition of the people to the "Puppet State Malaysia," the MCP, which was mainly active in the Thai-Malaysian border, was not quick to adopt radicalism as preached from Beijing. Taylor assumes that there might have been an internal conflict within the party on the issues of armed struggle. Chin Peng might have been reluctant to follow radical policy, while there were others within the leadership who preferred to follow China's directives (Taylor, 1974: 312-12). Just during the 1963-1965 period when Indonesia, backed by China, was still actively following a confrontational policy, China did not report the activities of the communist in West Malaysia. Its reports on confrontation against Malaysia still concentrated on armed struggle in North Borneo.

The MCP's first answer to the Chinese Cultural Revolutionary call for world revolution came in mid-December 1967. *People's Daily*, quoting the underground Malaysian paper *Malayan Herald* reported that the MCP, which followed Marxism-Leninism (a key word for China's path in the Sino-Soviet conflict), always "raises high the red banner of Mao's Thought." All members of the party, according to the article, were diligently studying the teaching of Mao, because all guerilla fighters of Malayan People's Liberation Army (MNLA) were always listening carefully to the broadcasts on Mao's Thought via Radio Beijing (*Renmin Ribao*, 12 December 1967). In addition, *Malayan Bulletin*, the organ of the MNLL in Beijing in mid-February 1968 described the situation in "guerilla zones" near the Thai-Malaysian border. The report was full of praise of Mao's Thought and Maoist rhetoric.

Inspired by Mao's Thought, The MNLA and people in guerilla zones fight heroically and tenaciously ... smashed the offensive of the U.S. backed British imperialist and the Malaya puppet clique's attack on the Malay-Thai border regions and guerilla zones in North Malaya ... In all those struggles the broad masses of the people manifested a spirit of daring to struggle and to win. Although in almost every instance they met with broad masses of the people who do not fear imprisonment, injury or sacrifice, battle the armed troops and police of the enemy. The mass struggles have proved that the Rahman-Lee cliques are paper tigers (NCNA, 23 February 1968 & SCMP 4126, 27 February 1968: 29-30).

Reminiscences of Chinese communist experience during the war against Japan and the Chinese Nationalist was shown when the report mentioned that the government of the guerrilla zones were all carrying out land economic system as a means to be self-governed and self-supported (NCNA, 23 February 1968 & SCMP 4126, 27 February 1968: 29-30). On June 1, 1968, which was the twentieth anniversary of communist rebellion in Malaya, the MCP issued a statement on the resurgence of its armed struggle based on a principle of "using revolutionary armed strength against counter-revolutionary armed strength," and "surrounding the cities from the countryside" (*Guangmin Ribao*, 19 June 1968)

China answers MCP's call with a CCP congratulatory note on the twentieth anniversary of communist struggle in Malaya. The letter supported the MCP's decision to reactive armed struggle as propagated by China.

The CCP believes that the MCP, which has gone through the fierceness of battle experience and has been hardened by fighting encounters will combine the universal truth Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong's Thought with concrete conditions in Malaya. [The party will] firmly hold to the red banner of the armed struggle, unite closely with all Malayan races, develop and continue armed struggle and will lead the Malayan people to rid British imperialism and U.S. aggressors [in its efforts] to overthrow the Rahman-Lee puppet cliques and to establish a new and independent Malaya [based on] unity and democracy (*Renmin Ribao*, 30 June 1968).

The Malaysian government confirmed the resurgence of communist-armed struggle by the publication of a white paper in 1971. It interpreted the MCP's return to violent revolution as the party's admittance of failure and the defeat of so-called "open and legal struggle,"<sup>9</sup> which had been in effect since the late 1950s. According to the Malaysian government, communist small-armed groups crossed the Thai-Malaysian border and carried out terrorist activities directed toward local people. The purpose was to dramatize their comeback and their capabilities as well as constitute propaganda to attract their supporters.<sup>10</sup>

Since mid-1968, therefore, Chinese propaganda included West Malaysia as one of the areas where "people's armed struggles" were going on. *Xinhua* reports on the development of those "people's revolutions" mentioned various successes gained by the MNLA in repulsing the enemy's attacks and in "annihilating" their armed forces. The successes of the MNLA, according to *Xinhua*, were due to the support

<sup>9</sup> *The Resurgence of Armed Communism in West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1 October 1971), p.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5



of the people (NCNA, 26 September 1968, & SCMP, 2 October 1968: 29).

The cultural Revolutionary period in China was marked by call from Beijing to revolutionaries around the world, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America to raise arms to oppose and overthrow all "reactionaries." This call was especially strong after the publication of Lin Biao's famous article "Long Live the Victory of People's War" in September 1965. Lin Biao's thesis specifically called the use of "surrounding the cities from the countryside" strategy as applied by China during its revolutionary war in the 1930s and 1940s in world revolution. The late defense minister and soon to be, for a time, their apparent to the chairman theorized that revolutions in developing countries (Asia, Africa, and Latin America) as the world's countryside were the first step toward further revolutions in the developed areas of the world, which according to Lin were world's cities.<sup>11</sup> Malaysian communist rhetoric also followed Lin Biao's analysis. An article in the *Malaya Bulletin* which was later published by the Chinese media described the revolutionary situation in Malaya in mid-1968 as victorious for the Malayan people in their struggle to oppose Malaysia and Singapore which were "British new type" colonies, aided by U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionist" (*Peking Review*, 8 March 1968: 35) In discussing how Malayan revolutionaries should act, the article, although it did not mention Lin Biao, stressed the importance of his theory.

... in order to win victory it is imperative to persist in the path of using the countryside to encircle the cities and seizing political power by armed force, to oppose the counter-revolutionary armed forces of the U.S., and British imperialist and their running dogs with revolutionary armed forces and to oppose the unjust colonial war of the imperialists and their running dogs with the just war of national liberation (*Peking Review*, 8 March 1968: 35).

Since 1968, therefore, in its propaganda against Malaysia, in addition to reports on guerrilla

<sup>11</sup> Lin Biao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War," *Peking Review*, 36 (3 September 1965), pp. 9-39, especially pp. 22-25 on the applicability of the "people's war" internationally. The publication of Lin Biao's article coincided with American military escalation in Vietnam. It is therefore generally believed that Lin referred mostly to the strategy and tactics of facing the U.S. in Vietnam. Although Lin preached the importance of Mao's theory of people's war as the most appropriate strategy and tactics to use in revolutionary struggles in the less developed areas, he also emphasized the importance of "self reliance" as the basic principle for those revolutions. Cf. David Mozingo, *An Interpretation of Lin Biao's September 3 Article* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1965); David Mozingo, Thomas W. Robinson, *Lin Biao on "People's War": China Takes A Second Look Into Vietnam* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1965).

movements in North Borneo and the opening of the communist rebel's representative office in Beijing, the activities of the resurgent MCP were also included in Chinese coverage.<sup>12</sup>

By the end of 1969 the Chinese propaganda war against Malaysia reached a new point. On November 23, 1969 the Malayan Communist underground newspaper, *Barisan*, declared in its editorial the inauguration of the Voice of Malayan Revolution (*Suara Revolusi Malaya - VOMR*), a radio station whose primary task was to propagate the "great Mao Zedong Thought and the struggle of the MCP and the [Malayan] people." The establishment of the radio station, according to the underground paper, was based on the reason that in their oppression of the people, "imperialism and reactionaries" in Malaya for a long time had been using radio broadcast to spread counter-revolutionary propaganda. Thus, VOMR was a tool to "disseminate revolution in order to defeat counter-revolution" (*Guangming Ribao*, 5 December 1969). Reacting to the newly established VOMR, Tunku A. Rahman accused that the radio station was located in Yunnan province in South China (*Asian Analyst*, January 1970:13).

The establishment of the VOMR was a part of China's propaganda program during the Cultural Revolution period. In addition to VOMR, Beijing also formed the Voice of the People of Thailand, another radio station to give propaganda support to the "people's war" in that country.

#### 4. Conclusion

The writer of this paper argues that contrary to the traditionally accepted opinion The People's Republic of China participated in the Indonesian campaign to crush Malaysia half-heartedly.<sup>13</sup> In fact despite its strong propaganda broadcast in supporting Indonesia, the PRC was actually a passive participant in the program. This is due to the fact that the Chinese supported Malayan Communist Party at that time was pursuing a more conciliatory policy toward the Malaysian government. In addition China was probably worried that bad relations with Malaysia would affect the well-being of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. Seen from strategic basis, the attitude of the Chinese was based on Mao's teaching that in a

<sup>12</sup> See for example: NCNA, 25 April 1968 (SCMP, 4166, 29 April 1968, p.28); NCNA 28 April 1968 (SCMP, 4167, 30 April 1968, pp.26-27); NCNA, 11 December 1968 (SCMP, 4320, 17 December 1968, p.23); NCNA, 28 December 1968 (FBIS, 1.7 20 January 1969, pp. A2-3); NCNA, 12 February 1968 (FBIS, 1.29, 12 February 1969, pp. A3-4); *Peking Review*, 9 (28 February 1969, p.19).

<sup>13</sup> This paper is a part of the writer's dissertation presented to the Graduated Division University of Hawaii, 1986. The writer has added more current information to the paper.

revolutionary war, the revolutionary army should not face two enemies at the same time. At that time the Chinese was supporting The Malayan Communist Party, which was raising arms against the Malaysian government and operating in the border area of Malaysia and Thailand.

In the meantime, although the PRC was pursuing a radical diplomacy, the MPC was basically taking peace offensive tactic. Furthermore, the MCP after 1960 was already in a defensive position and was not regarded by both the Malayan government and the British administration as a serious threat. Facts in this paper show that the increasing hostility between Indonesia, supported by China, and Malaysia, supported by the West, did not automatically increase the activities of the rebellious MCP.

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<sup>14</sup> See Lin Piao (old Wade-Giles spelling), or Lin Biao (Pin Yin).

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