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Despatch No.17

(1631/8/64)

BRITISH EMBASSY,

RANGOON.

January 28, 1964.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, accompanied by senior Pakistan government officials, visited Rangoon at the invitation of the Revolutionary Government, from the 18th to the 21st of January. This was a return visit for that paid by his opposite number, the then-Burmese Foreign Minister, to Pakistan in 1961. The programme for the visit and a list of the Pakistan Foreign Minister's suite are enclosed as Annexes A and B respectively.

2. The talks, which were designed to review Burma-Pakistan relations and to discuss border problems, took place between Mr. Bhutto and U Thi Han, with their delegations which included the Pakistan Ambassador in Rangoon, Mr. P. M. Chaudhuri, and the Burmese Ambassador in Karachi, U Than Hla. Mr. Bhutto was received by General Ne Win. He also called on Brigadier San Yu, Minister for Finance and Revenue, and on Colonel Chit Myaing, Minister for Trade Development. At the conclusion of Mr. Bhutto's visit

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The Right Honourable
R.A. Butler, P.C., M.P.,
etc., etc., etc.

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— a joint communique was released, the text of which is also enclosed as Annex C.

3. The first day of the visit was spent at Sandoway, a seaside resort, with the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Thi Han. This was the only excursion from Rangoon. On his return from Sandoway Mr. Bhutto laid a wreath at the Martyrs' Mausoleum and visited the tomb of the last Mogul Emperor, Zafer Shah, and the Shwedagon Pagoda. Dinners were given for Mr. Bhutto by the Burmese Foreign Minister and by the All Burma Pakistan Association. The Pakistan Ambassador gave a reception for Mr. Bhutto, and on the eve of his departure Mr. Bhutto entertained his hosts to dinner.

4. During the visit newspaper comment was confined to satisfaction at the cordial atmosphere in which the talks were held and at the agreement which resulted. Full coverage was given to the Pakistan Foreign Minister's statements in the English and vernacular press; Mr. Bhutto himself gave a press conference in the course of which he answered questions covering Pakistan's foreign policy as well as Burma-Pakistan relations. The main points are summarised — at Annex D.

5. According to the Pakistan Ambassador, Mr. Bhutto failed to arouse any enthusiasm in

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General Ne Win for a second Afro-Asian Conference. The General indicated his dislike of conferences, saying that he had "burnt his fingers" at the Colombo Conference on the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962. He feared that an Afro-Asian conference would indulge in polemics on that same issue, on the Kashmir dispute, on Indonesia's confrontation of Malaysia, and so forth. He wanted, if possible, to avoid giving offence to any country and, in short, to keep himself to himself. He did say that he would not necessarily refuse to attend if the conference came off, but he was most reluctant and declined to sponsor or promote it. He showed himself equally reluctant to attend a conference of non-aligned powers. This attitude on the part of the General merely confirms what I have reported before about the Burmese Government's marked isolationism and the shift in her policy from non-alignment to non-involvement. That the inspiration comes from General Ne Win himself is clearer than ever.

6. Apart from this failure to line up Burma with the Afro-Asian states, my Pakistani colleague regards the visit as a success. The discussions were amicable and the Burmese side showed understanding of the Pakistan concern for the Arakanese Moslems, and undertook to look again at their extremely onerous policy on

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capital and personal remittances. Somewhat unexpectedly, the Burmese agreed to hold meetings from time to time between the two Foreign Ministers. On the other hand, the Burmese succeeded in getting the Pakistanis to accept their view of how the border with East Pakistan along the Naaf River should be determined.

7. The Moslems in that portion of Arakan which adjoins the border with East Pakistan number about 400,000 and have lived there for generations and have acquired Burmese nationality. But they are patently of Pakistani origin and occasionally some Pakistanis cross into Arakan illegally and mingle with the local population. As part of a drive to detect these illegal immigrants the local Burmese authorities have for some time employed extremely oppressive measures. The Pakistan Government are anxious that these Arakanese Moslems should not be goaded into leaving Burma and taking refuge in East Pakistan which cannot support them. Mr. Bhutto therefore urged the Burmese to modify their attitude towards these people and offered the maximum cooperation in dealing with any genuine illegal immigrants. The Pakistani Ambassador tells me that the Burmese showed good will and he expects some progress in this matter.

8. Mr. Bhutto, who invited me for a private talk, told me that he had raised with General Ne Win in general

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terms the hardships caused to the community by the Burmese Government's extreme reluctance to allow money to be taken or sent out of the country. This is a matter which vitally affects all the foreign communities, as the Department are already aware. But the Pakistanis are even harder hit than the Indians as the majority of them are in the lowest paid jobs.

Nationalisation has squeezed them out but when they seek to depart to their original homes they find that they are only allowed to take a mere fraction of their life savings. Mr. Bhutto discussed the whole question of remittances in some detail with the Burmese Foreign Minister and his top officials. It is just possible that the Burmese will be prepared to look more sympathetically at the hardest cases than hitherto.

9. The frontier problem arose from the fact that since long before the separation of Burma from India, the boundary had been determined by the middle stream of the main navigable channel of the Naaf River and fluctuated accordingly. This fluctuating boundary will now be replaced by a fixed boundary. A hydrographical survey will be made and the middle stream of the main navigable channel as it then is will be marked by buoys and become the new permanent boundary. This method, which was put forward by the Burmese, was incorporated in a Memorandum of Agreement signed on the 21st of

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— January (Annex E).

10. During my talk with Mr. Bhutto I asked whether he had gained any impression of China's attitude towards Burma, adding that I assumed that the Chinese had been disappointed at the breakdown of the peace parleys with the communist insurgents.

Mr. Bhutto replied that the Chinese are very patient people and that they would take such a matter in their stride and bide their time. He agreed that it was of paramount interest to Pakistan and, indeed, to the Indian sub-continent, to have a strong and independent Burma between China and the eastern borders of Pakistan.

11. The Pakistan Foreign Minister volunteered to me an explanation of the Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement. He said that from his point of view it was one aspect of Pakistan's efforts to seek accommodations wherever possible and to minimise possible areas of friction while "maintaining vigilance". The Border Agreement was not intended to exacerbate relations with India. Faced with numerous grave problems Pakistan felt obliged to take such steps as were in her power to safeguard herself, though he had possibly been subconsciously aware that an agreement with China would be unwelcome to India as strengthening the Pakistan position. He thought it unfortunate that some of Pakistan's allies had taken the matter amiss. France, he said, was

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independent and powerful enough to defy American opinion as regards her forthcoming recognition of China.

12. I am sending copies of this despatch, with enclosures, to the United Kingdom High Commissioners in New Delhi and Karachi (with a spare copy for the latter in case he wishes to forward it to Dacca) and to the Political Adviser to the C-in-C Far East, Singapore. I also enclose an extra copy for the Commonwealth Relations Office.

I have the honour to be
with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(G. C. WHITTERIDGE)

TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE

"At the invitation of the Government of the Union of Burma, His Excellency Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Minister for External Affairs of Pakistan, paid a visit to the Union of Burma from the 18th to the 21st January, 1964, for a review of Burma-Pakistan relations. During the visit His Excellency Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto called on the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and took the opportunity of presenting Pakistan's views on matters of mutual interest. The Pakistan Minister for External Affairs also held discussions with the Honourable U Thi Han, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Burma, on matters of interest to the two countries in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual understanding.

"The two Foreign Ministers reviewed the existing relations between the Union of Burma and Pakistan. They noted with satisfaction the progressive development of good neighbourly relations between the two countries, and agreed to work towards consolidation and further strengthening of these relations by promoting close co-operation in economic, cultural and other fields.

"The position of Muslims in Arakan was also a subject of discussion between the two Foreign Ministers. The Pakistan Foreign Minister expressed his belief that the Burmese Government would solve the question of Muslims in Arakan with sympathetic consideration and assured that Pakistan on its part would be glad to extend maximum co-operation in any way possible consistent with its policy of good neighbourly relations. The Burmese Foreign Minister recalled the assurance given in 1961 and said that the question had been largely resolved. It would, however, continue to receive sympathetic consideration.

ANNEX C: (cont.)

"The Foreign Ministers of Burma and Pakistan reviewed the question of the boundary between the two countries in the Naaf River. They agreed in principle that the inherited fluctuating boundary between the two countries, should now be transformed to a fixed boundary as provided for in the Memorandum of Agreement signed between His Excellency Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Minister for External Affairs of Pakistan, and the Honourable U Thi Han, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Burma, at Rangoon on the 21st of January, 1964. The two Foreign Ministers expressed their mutual satisfaction at the complete removal of any possibility of future misunderstanding on the question of the international boundary between their two countries.

"Further, the two Foreign Ministers agreed to hold a Ministerial level meeting at an early date to discuss machinery and procedures to eliminate sources of friction and disputes at the borders as well as to discuss other matters of common interest."

Rangoon,

January 21, 1964.