

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

SPEECH

BY

Rt. Hon. SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.

ON

MALAYSIA DEFENCE.

[From the "Parliamentary Debates," 25th September, 1963.]

MALAYSIA DEFENCE.

Ministerial Statement.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES (Kooyong—Prime Minister)—by leave—I present to the House the following papers:—

Malaysia Defence—

Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement of 1957.

Notes exchanged between Australia and Malaya in March and April, 1959.

United Kingdom - Malaysia Agreement of July, 1963 (excluding Annexures).

Notes exchanged between Australia and Malaysia in September, 1963.

In reference to the last of these papers, I point out that in answer to a question last week, I summarized the effect of these notes exchanged between Australia and Malaysia. In substance I then said that our existing arrangements with Malaya would now apply to Malaysia.

It may be remembered that so far back as April, 1955, the Government emphasized the importance of Malaya to the security of the zone in which we live, and pointed out that in consequence, Malayan integrity and defence were matters from which we could not and should not stand aloof. Reasons of this kind, directly affecting us, were of course, closely allied with the proper interests of others—who are our friends. The establishment of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, of Seato—to the functions of which the Reserve was relevant—the

negotiations of the Anzus pact, are all in the same pattern. That is a pattern, not of aggression, but of defence; not of isolation in defence, but of common effort for the common security.

There has been some suggestion that our forces in Malaya went there primarily for purposes of internal security. This is not so. As I have indicated, they went there and are there as a part of a strategic reserve with the United Kingdom and New Zealand and as a contribution to the defence of the South-East Asian area. True, we quickly agreed that our forces could be employed in operations against the Communist terrorists in Malaya. They were so employed, with success, and with great credit to themselves and Australia. The facts were, of course, that these terrorists were promoted and supplied by Communist authorities outside Malaya, and that their activities were as much acts of war against the territorial and political integrity of Malaya as would have been overt military invasion. We think that the people of Australia have agreed with these policies and decisions. In all these arrangements, and in any to be made, the usual rule will apply that the employment of Australian forces remains under the control of the Australian Government. We have acted and will continue to act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations.

But Malaysia, the new nation, is here. The processes of its creation have been democratic. The United Nations Secretary-General, having appointed suitable persons as examiners, reported that the people of North Borneo and Sarawak desired incorporation into Malaysia. The Prime Minister of Singapore, one of the great sponsors of Malaysia, has just received an overwhelming endorsement at the polls. We have publicly and unambiguously said that we support Malaysia which is, never let it be forgotten, a Commonwealth country, just as our own is. Should there be any attempts to destroy or weaken Malaysia by subversion or invasion, what should Australia do about it? We know that the United Kingdom accepts, in substance, the position of a military guarantor. Honorable members now know the terms of our own recent exchange of notes.

The Government of Malaysia has said clearly that this exchange is completely satisfactory to it. But it has not been the normal practice of Commonwealth countries to spell out in detail their sense of mutual obligation, nor to confine themselves to legal formulae. For example, our vital engagements with the United Kingdom are not written or in any way formalized. Yet we know and she knows that in this part of the world we look to her, and she looks to us. We each apply in a spirit of mutual confidence a golden rule of mutual obligation.

But for the benefit of all concerned, honorable members would not wish me to create or permit any ambiguity about Australia's position in relation to Malaysia. I therefore, after close deliberation by the Cabinet, and on its behalf, inform the House that we are resolved, and have so informed the Government of Malaysia, and the Governments of the United Kingdom and New Zealand and others concerned, that if, in the circumstances that now exist, and which may continue for a long time, there occurs, in relation to Malaysia or any of its constituent States, armed invasion or subversive activity—supported or directed or inspired from outside Malaysia—we shall to the best of our powers and by such means as shall be agreed upon with the Government of Malaysia, add our military assistance to the efforts of Malaysia and the United Kingdom in the defence of Malaysia's territorial integrity and political independence.

I now present the following paper:—

Malaysia Defence—Ministerial Statement, 25th September, 1963.

Motion (by **Mr. Adermann**) proposed—

That the House take note of the papers.

Debate (on motion by **Mr. Calwell**) adjourned.

Sir Robert Menzies.—Perhaps I may be permitted to say that copies of what I have just said and of the documents referred to will be available at once for all honorable members.