

Despatch No. 17
(1631/8/64)

BRITISH LEGATION,
RANGOON,
January 23, 1964.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Shriagar Ali Shatto, accompanied by senior Pakistani government officials, visited Rangoon at the invitation of the Revolutionary Government, from the 18th to the 23rd of January. This was a return visit for Mr. Shatto 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 Indo-Pakistan relations and to discuss border problems, took place between Mr. Shatto and U Nu, with their delegations which included the Pakistani Ambassador in Rangoon, Mr. P. M. Chaudhary, and the Burmese Ambassador in Karachi, U Than Hla. Mr. Shatto was received by General Ne Win. He also called on Brigadier San Yu, Minister for Finance and Revenue, and on Colonel Chit Lyding, Minister for Trade Development. At the conclusion of Mr. Shatto's visit

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The Right Honourable
R.A. Butler, P.O., R.P.,
etc., etc., etc.

a joint communique was released, the copy 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. Amto laid a wreath at the martyrs' Mausoleum and visited the tomb of the last Royal Emperor, Bafar Shah, and the Shwedagon Pagoda. Dinners were given for Mr. Amto by the Burmese Foreign Minister and by the All Burma Pakistan Association. The Pakistan Ambassador gave a reception for Mr. Amto, and on the eve of his departure Mr. Amto 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. Amto himself gave a press conference in the course of which he answered questions covering Pakistan's foreign policy as well as Burmese-Pakistan relations. The main points are summarized at Annex D.

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

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General Aung Myin 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 Aung Myin 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 seemed 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 was to be determined long the Naaf River should be determined.

7. The Moslems in that portion of Arakan which adjoins the border with Pakistan number about 400,000 and have lived there for generations and have acquired Burmese nationality. As they are patently of Pakistani origin and occasionally some Pakistanis cross into Burma illegally mingling 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 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 and conditions of the community of 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 commun-
ities, as the Department are already aware. But the
Indians are even harder hit than the Burmese as the
majority of them are in the lowest paid jobs.

These Indians were 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. The British Government discussed the whole question
with the Burmese 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.

3. 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 Irawaddy 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 B).

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

Mr. Bhutto replied that the Chinese are very patient and would take such a matter in their stride and bide their time. He agreed that it was of paramount importance to the Indian sub-continent, and, indeed, to the Burma-China 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 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 India, 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. BETTERIDGE)

TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE

"At the invitation of the Government of the Union of Burma, His Excellency Mr. Zulfiqar 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. Zulfiqar 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 political 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.

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"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. Zulfikar 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.