

■ The weakness of the Philippine stand on Sabah is indicated here.

AMERICAN PRESSURE ON SABAH

The most welcome, though whispered, news from Malaysia is that the ailing Radhakrishna Ramani is finally giving up his 35 year-long Malaysian exile, to return to his native Madras, away from the cares of Sabah.

Ramani is the man who described the Philippine Sabah claim a compound of fantasy, fallacy and fiction at the United Nations; the same man who uttered the wittiest, if most sarcastic, remarks at the ill-fated Bangkok talks in which the Philippines had to call on the late services of Leon Ma. Guerrero, to make its side better understood in a bilateral discussion in which English, rather than Tausog, was the language used.

On the eve of the Bangkok negotiations, a much-concerned foreign office was seriously groping for an idea of what kind of negotiator this Ramani was, and in enthusiastic prose the cable

from the Philippine mission to the United Nations said:

"Born in Madras, India; educated at University of Madras and received the following degrees: Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy and English); Master of Arts (English language and Literature); Bachelor of Laws. Was admitted barrister at law of Middle Temple in London in 1929; practised law in Kuala Lumpur from 1930 to 1963 with exception of period 1942-1945 when he practised law in Madras.

"Member of legislative council of Federation of Malaya from 1948 to 1954 and served on numerous legislative committees dealing with post-war legislation and other constitutional developments in Federation of Malaya.

"President of International Commission of Jurists (Malaysian branch) and attended international law conferences at New Delhi, Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro and Athens.

"Deputy permanent representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in 1963, becoming its permanent representative in Nov. 1964. As president of the security council in May 1965 he was widely praised for his impressive forensic ability particularly during Dominican Republic crisis.

"A strict vegetarian, ailing but extremely intelligent and articulate."

What Ambassador Salvador P. Lopez in the U.N. did not have to add was that Ramani had soaked himself on the Sabah question since 1962 a year before the Malaysia federation was announced, which announcement was to start a 33-month-long border war with Indonesia and a similar duration of abnormal relations with the Philippines.

The "extreme intelligence" of Ramani was to become evident to the Filipino negotiators in Bangkok; it did not prevent them from confessing in their hotel rooms that the man was a full-strength demolition squad. At one instance when his cutting words were protested

by the Philippine delegation, the Malaysian spokesman explained that it was not Ramani's fault. Ramani, the spokesman explained, had a sharp tongue and a precise language; it was never the knife's fault if it was sharp.

All this serves to illustrate the climate that now prevails at Padre Faura as it is delightfully whispered that the old vegetarian is returning to his native India. To our diplomats, Ramani's absence is a better chance for our claim to Sabah — in case another round of talks is held, though that be most unlikely.

There may be a thousand and one ways of dispatching such a reaction without much comment; the more pertinent suggestion is that Philippine-Malaysian dialogue, or its absence, on Sabah can not rely over-much on personalities. Yet, in a way, such reaction serves to illustrate that the enthusiasm on the Sabah question is undimmed.

There may be a momentary suggestion that the Sabah question, let alone the current Philippine-Malaysian troubled relations may now

be shoved aside as a minor problem, the more one talks of future Philippine-American relations and Asian-American security arrangements. Yet this suggestion misleads. A heavy emphasis on Philippine-American relations does not offer a diversion from the Sabah question; it ratifies rather the need to find a resolution of that question which, in Washington's eyes, must now impair solidarity in the region.

As the Philippines preoccupies itself with its own anxiety about America's future role here, and the Pacific, so may Washington be expected to increase its pressure on us on this sensitive question.

But, whether the administration is as keen to receive that pressure as it is to solicit, it is something which by now it must be able to give an indication of. — *Francisco Tatad, Manila Bulletin Dec. 6, 1968.*

COOPERATION AMONG NATIONS

We have begun to realize that while self-help in individual countries is of crucial importance, we can achieve our larger purposes of improving the lives of our peoples through interdependence. Our faith in regional cooperation rests on this axiom — that the economic progress of any one country in Southeast Asia will be enhanced by collective regional development efforts. — *Ferdinand E. Marcos*