

CONFRONTATION

I know that I'm no Kipling but I like to jot a rhyme,
And when I'm on the night shift it helps to pass the time.
It's usually about the time I spent out in the East,
It was a long, long time ago – half a century at least.

My time out there was wonderful, the best I ever had,
I was seventeen when I went out, nothing but a lad,
You grow up fast out in the east, I know that's true for sure,
Though the gov'ment won't admit it, they had sent me off to war.

The country was Malaysia, a nation new and bright,
But some bugger called Sukarno was itching for a fight,
He wanted to control the east and run it for himself,
To make his own new nation, and he'd do it all by stealth.

He tried to stop Malaysia from being given birth,
And when he couldn't get his way he made it hell on earth,
All he wanted was Sarawak - Sabah and Brunei,
And the whole Malay Peninsula, beneath its bright blue sky.

He craved it for himself alone, for power he did thirst,
So he started 'Confrontation' - in Borneo at first.
But Indonesia had no friends, that nation stood alone,
Malaysia had many and they came across the foam.

For she was in the Commonwealth, and new she could get aid,
And help would come from far and wide, a Commonwealth Brigade,
They gave it number twenty-eight, many nations it comprised,
And they'd do their duty to protect, without a compromise.

We would protect Malaya, the peninsula of course,
Others were in Borneo, to provide a border force,
There were Commandos from the Royal Marines, SAS and Arty too,
Infantry and Sappers, sailors, Gurkhas and aircrew.

They fought them in the jungle, so green and dark and damp,
Patrolling in the ulu, and then coming back to camp,
Their camps were up on hilltops, well defended by a few,
So that they could see the enemy when they came into view.

When they were out patrolling, along the jungle tracks,
They did so with the greatest care, they had to watch their backs,
For the Indos may be out today to lay an ambush down,
To try and catch them unaware, those soldiers of the crown.

When he couldn't win in Borneo, Sukarno changed his tack,
He'd land on the peninsula and take us all aback,
But his sneaky plan just didn't work, for we were waiting there,
To surround them and encircle like a rabbit in a snare.

There were Aussies; there were Kiwis, Brits and Gurkhas too,
To the defence of proud Malaysia, the old brigade it flew,

We dashed on out into the field, the RMR to help,
And sort out the insurgents, let 'em know just how it felt.

Then in 1966, it all came to an end,
For poor old Indonesia had no more money for to spend,
Sukarno, he had spent so much upon the jungle fight,
That his Generals overthrew him and it finished overnight.

The Tunku and the Agong were lavish with their praise,
And we could settle down again, to gentler, softer days,
For this land they call Malaysia is beautiful I know,
And now we'd help develop it, now we'd help it grow.

Malaysia has grown a bit, since those far off days of yore,
She has her own Defence Force - doesn't need us anymore,
But if you were just to ask the lads - who served there way back when,
They say they'd go tomorrow if the need arose again.

Ernie Yeomans