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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 April 1985

Sir Robin Nicholson F Eng FRS
Chief Scientific Adviser
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
SW1

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1574.

Dear Sir Robin,

POSSIBLE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENT WITH INDONESIA

Thank you for your letter of 2 April. I am sorry that the machine hiccupped, and that you were not consulted about the Prime Minister's briefing.

2. The decision to brief the Prime Minister on the question of a science and technology agreement was taken at a relatively late stage in the preparations for her visit, following our receipt of a warning from HM Ambassador in Jakarta last month that the Indonesians themselves might well raise the subject with the Prime Minister. The Ambassador pointed out that the idea of an agreement was not only a pet scheme of the Indonesian Minister of Development Planning, but that agreements of this kind were strongly favoured by the Minister of Research and Technology, who was to be the Prime Minister's host during her visit to Bandung on 11 April.

3. Given this background, it seemed to us highly imprudent to advise the Prime Minister to reject any approach outright. We therefore agreed with the DTI and our Aid Wing strictly defensive briefing couched in non-committal terms - the minimum we calculated necessary to leave a favourable impression on Mrs Thatcher's Indonesian hosts. I enclose a copy. The key lines are: "Very willing to explore the possibility of entering into a science and technology agreement. Suggest that officials might discuss this to see what kind of agreement can be reached."

4. As you know, we in the FCO are very conscious of the possible drawbacks of this kind of agreement and the briefing makes them clear. If anything does emerge from the Prime Minister's discussions in this context, it will need to be examined carefully by all concerned in Whitehall, not least of course yourself.

5. I should perhaps add that, although we entirely take the points in Elizabeth Ransom's letter of 16 August, 1984, there is evidence in this particular case that an agreement could have concrete advantages for British interests. Some time ago the Indonesians were planning to send 1500 postgraduate trainee scientists under a World Bank funded technical programme

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only to countries with whom they had bilateral agreements, and it was only after the Embassy's strong intervention that the Indonesians were persuaded to make an exception for the UK. Over 30 trainees have now been designated to come here during the first year of the project. A senior Indonesian official expressed the hope that the UK would participate (as the Germans, French, Japanese and Americans already do) in a programme whereby scientists from universities and scientific research institutions regularly visit Indonesia under the umbrella of individual cooperation agreements to give lectures, hold seminars, etc.

Yours sincerely,
Howe on Wellcome
for R Q Braithwaite

cc (without enclosures)

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15 APR 1965

