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BRITISH GUIANA BRAZIL BOUNDARY COMMISSION.
BRITISH SECTION.

71, Murray Street,
Georgetown.
9th July, 1956.

A 17 Confidential

Subject: Surinam - British Guiana Boundary.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to your telegram No. 73 of May 15th and your letter 60013/36 of May 19th 1956 and to inform you that, as a result of a meeting of the Netherlands, Brazilian and British Commissions at Paramaribo between 21st and 28th June, a satisfactory agreement has been reached with Netherlands Commissioner regarding the River Kutari.

2. A report on the Trijunction Point has been signed by the Heads of the three Commissions. This report includes a reference to the identification of the river Kutari which reads as follows:-

" 6. Identification of the river Kutari.

(a) On a previous expedition Admiral Kayser had been shown the junction of the river Kutari with the river Sipaliwini by local Indians. The astronomical observations of the Netherlands Commission at this point make the latitude agree very closely with that given by Sir Robert Schomburgk in his Report

to

The Under Secretary of State for the Colonies,
Colonial Office.

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to the British Royal Geographical Society. Schomburgk did not state the longitude very definitely.

(b) This river Kutari has been surveyed from its junction with the river Sipaliwini to the sources of its main branches. Its junction with the Aramatau, its general direction and its main characteristics below the point where Schomburgk embarked are all in agreement with his description, except that his estimate of the width below the Aramatau junction is excessive.

(c) The river Aramatau has also been surveyed, but its course and character are both very different from the description of the Kutari given by Schomburgk. Moreover it is about 28 kilometres shorter than the Kutari, and therefore, even if considered to be a branch of that river, it could not be the longest one branch.

(d) Although the exact point where Schomburgk first joined the upper reaches of the river Kutari has not yet been identified, further survey work to be carried out by the Brazilian Commission may provide information as to where he crossed the watershed. The Mixed Commission agree that there could be no doubt that he travelled down the lower part of this river and that it is Schomburgk's Kutari.

(e) The Mixed Commission, being satisfied that this is the only river which in any way answers to Schomburgk's description of the Kutari, agreed that the boundary between Surinam and

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and British Guiana, as defined in the instructions issued to the Mixed Commission, should follow the left bank of its longest branch.

3. Admiral Kayser has also signed the minutes of the conference in which it is recorded that he is satisfied beyond doubt that our River Kutari is the same river which Schomburgk named the Kutari.

4. While discussing the subject at Paramaribo it was discovered that the Netherlands Commission were referring to Sir Richard Schomburgk's account of the journey made by his brother, Sir Robert Schomburgk. Whereas the British section were using a copy of the Report which Sir Robert Schomburgk made to the Royal Geographical Society on his own travels. The two accounts differ considerably in details, and particularly as regards certain geographical Co-ordinates. It was agreed that Sir Robert Schomburgk's own official Report was more likely to be correct than his brother's second-hand and very much shorter account in an ordinary travel book.

5. Incidentally the Netherlands Commissioner inadvertently confirmed my suspicion that he wished to leave the Kutari boundary uncertain in order to provide an excuse to re-open the New River Question. He explained that the question whether we had found the correct Kutari was, in his opinion, of little importance, because he himself and many other people in Holland were convinced that the New River was the boundary. However his instructions were to fix the Trijunction Point at the source of the Kutari and he was prepared to do so and to leave the question of the New River to the Dutch

Parliament

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Parliament to decide.

6. Unofficial conversation in Paramaribo certainly seemed to confirm Admiral Kayser's remarks that it was generally believed that the New River should really be the boundary.

7. I have laboured this point because, as you will see from the map of British Guiana, all our future work on the Brazilian Boundary will be wasted if later on the New River becomes our boundary with Surinam.

8. I realise that it is a somewhat delicate question to raise with the Netherlands Government. It does seem however very desirable that we should have some guarantee that the Dutch are not merely persuading us to demarcate a considerable length of their boundary with Brazil, by means of an unratified agreement that the River Kutari is the Boundary between Surinam and British Guiana.

9. I regret that it will not be possible to send you the full report and completed maps of the Tri-Junction Point area for some considerable time because certain minor details, dimensions etc., have still to be confirmed by the Brazilian Commission regarding neighbouring Boundary Marks. Also as a result of the conference at Paramaribo it has been decided to redraw some of the maps on different scales in order to illustrate the report more efficiently. There is also a small gap in the general map between the headwaters of the Aramatau and the Kutari. This can be filled in from the Brazilian surveys this coming season.

10. With regard to the Northern Terminal of the Boundary between Surinam and British Guiana, we have now fixed this point with the Netherlands Commission. It was found, however, that the bearing of 28° from the site

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site selected for the Northern Terminal Pillar would intersect the line of the Navigation Channel which is on a bearing of about 10° E. I did not know of any specific reason why the boundary should continue out to sea on a bearing of 28° and therefore, in order to avoid international complications about buoying the channel, we have placed the direction pillar so that it indicates the boundary on a bearing of 10° E, i.e. parallel to the line of the channel.

11. I trust that this amendment will meet with your approval. If there was any particular reason for the bearing of 28° E it is a comparatively simple matter to rebuild the direction pillar to indicate this bearing instead of the 10° E bearing. It would however be necessary to refer the matter to the Netherlands Government first, presumably, as the Netherlands Commissioner was very insistent that it was of vital importance from a navigation point of view to have all the buoys under one control.

12. It is impracticable to build the boundary mark further West along the coast owing to the nature of the ground, and in its present site it is as nearly as possible in the position indicated by the co-ordinates given as the proposed site in the draft treaty. The actual co-ordinates ($5^{\circ} 59' 53.9''$ N. $57^{\circ} 08' 51.5''$ W.) are somewhat different because even the latest (1927) chart of the Courantyne Mouth is considerably out in longitude. Consequently the proposed co-ordinates ($6^{\circ} 00' 25''$ N. $57^{\circ} 08' 10''$ W.) are actually in the sea, but the pillar has been placed at the point on the ground which the co-ordinates indicate on the chart.

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13. In my opinion British Guiana loses nothing by the alteration of the bearing from 28° to 10° except a small area of extremely shallow water which becomes a low isolated bank of mud or sand at the lowest spring tides only.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

J. R. Phipps
Major, R. E.
Chief British Commissioner.

P.S. The question of the amended bearing has since been referred to His Excellency the Governor of British Guiana, who has signified his approval of the 10° bearing.

J.R.P.

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