

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER (THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES)
ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF HIS RECENT JOURNEY ABROAD.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - 13TH AUGUST, 1959.

It is no part of my intention to inflict upon the House a species of travel talk. Nor do I desire to make a comprehensive statement on current foreign affairs, some aspects of which, such as the events in Laos, are engaging our close and anxious attention.

What I want to do as concisely as possible is to speak of those large problems with which I concerned myself during my overseas visit, of some of the leading personalities and of my conversations and impressions.

In relation to matters now under discussion and disagreement between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers, I will offer some observations arising from talks in Washington, London, Bonn and Paris. I will say a little about the European Common Market and the "Little Free Trade Area". My talks at The Hague with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands and at Zurich with the Dutch Foreign Minister deserve some mention in this House. Subsequently on my journey I had talks in Karachi and New Delhi of which I will say a little. I ended with a very useful and interesting meeting with the new government of Singapore.

Naturally a great deal which is said in conversations conducted privately cannot be repeated. I will, therefore, largely confine myself to a statement of my own impressions, and occasionally views, in the hope that they may in a small way assist our joint consideration of matters which have a lively interest for Australia and Australians.

My visit to Washington was sadly interrupted by the death of Mr. John Foster Dulles. Of him and his work, all I need say in expressing my own opinion is that while it was always permissible and occasionally, I thought, proper to disagree with his view, it was never possible to have anything else but the most profound respect for his ability, his integrity and his courage.

Notwithstanding the intervention of these sad events, the President was good enough to give me a lengthy interview, the course of which demonstrated quite clearly that Mr. Eisenhower is in a state of health and vigour which one might not have expected two or three years ago. He has been for some time very reluctant to engage in Summit talks without a preliminary determination of the agenda and some preliminary achievements which might serve as an earnest of goodwill. On this point, I felt in Washington itself that opinion was developing a growing sense of the urgency of consultation.

Nobody who knows Mr. Eisenhower will doubt his loftiness of outlook and his passionate devotion to the securing of peace. I think, therefore, that we were all, after my return to Australia, delighted to find that he had arranged an exchange of visits with Mr. Khrushchev and that he would also take the opportunity of personal consultation with European leaders. He has made it clear that he is not negotiating on behalf of other people. One may accept this without forgetting that in so many international negotiations it is the first step that counts, and that the breaking of the ice as between individuals is the essential precursor to the breaking of ice between nations.

Mr. Dulles' successor, Mr. Herter, flew in from Geneva with the other Foreign Secretaries on the morning of the Dulles' funeral. He was good enough to give me an interview an hour after his arrival. I was particularly interested in this because, although I was on close personal terms with Mr. Dulles,

I had never previously met Mr. Herter. I did my best to encourage him in what I thought his good work at Geneva, in constantly propounding with clarity and moderation the approach of the democracies to the settlement of the German question.

If I may say so without impertinence, Mr. Herter is a man of a singularly winning personality, behind which there is clearly a highly informed mind. We will, I believe, find much satisfaction in our future co-operation with him.

I had several long talks with Vice-President Nixon whose bold approach to international problems, prior to my visit, in Latin America and, subsequent to my visit, in the Soviet Union, commends itself to the Australian mind. It is quite clear that he is a great believer in going to the seat of the trouble and meeting other people freely and frankly. As I will point out later, this seems to me to be essential in the near future of the world.

I do not propose to take up time in this statement in relation to my discussions with the World Bank in respect of the Mount Isa railway project. That matter is still the subject of negotiation in Australia, and I would wish to avoid any public argument about it.

In London I had lengthy conversations of a quite informal kind with the Prime Minister and with the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. I also attended, by invitation, a meeting of the Cabinet at No. 10 Downing Street, a meeting at which the possibilities of a Summit Meeting were discussed.

The fact that I attended this meeting and took part in its deliberations, and very shortly afterwards went to Bonn and Paris was, I gather, interpreted in some sections of the press as an indication that I was the chosen emissary of the United Kingdom Government. This was not true. I had arranged my appointments with Dr. Adenauer and General de Gaulle two or three weeks before, and in my meetings with them I confined myself to eliciting their views on various topics and offering them such views as I had myself. I subsequently put Mr. MacMillan in possession of my impressions.

It is quite true that on the major matter of a top-level conference I was completely in agreement with Mr. Macmillan and had in fact said so publicly at the National Press Club in Washington before I went to London. I think Honourable Members may take it as quite certain that Mr. Macmillan's advocacy of a top-level meeting has the overwhelming support of both Parliament and public opinion in the United Kingdom. It has been criticised in some other countries as suggesting appeasement. This, of course, is not justified; it suggests nothing more than the simple fact that when all the formal procedures, despatches and diplomatic exchanges, have failed to resolve important differences, commonsense indicates that leaders of governments should talk directly to each other. It is, I think, a source of great satisfaction to British people like ourselves that following upon Mr. Macmillan's visit to Moscow, Great Britain should be recapturing some of the moral and intellectual leadership in world affairs which she is so fitted to exhibit. Anybody who considers the part played in these recent months by British leaders, and who adds to this some understanding of the remarkable economic recovery of Great Britain, will reject the moans about Great Britain now being a second or third-rate power for the sort of nonsense that they are. Great Britain, after all, never was possessed of a dominance based on numbers. But her place among the great world powers is obvious and tremendously significant.

Honourable Members will know that it is part of the Communist propaganda to represent the United States of America as the strong-hold of reaction and as the one Great Power opposed to Communism. The Communists try to convert every issue into one of "Soviet Union versus United States". This is so false a picture, though, having regard to military and physical resources, so plausible a one, that it is essential that British leadership and initiative and prestige should continue.

In 1956 I paid a special official visit to Germany and had ample opportunity of getting to know Chancellor Adenauer. The result was that on this occasion we met as friends and were able to get down to our discussions without preliminaries. In the result, I had four or five hours with the Chancellor, in the course of which I was, of course, particularly concerned to elicit his views on current international problems. It is neither proper nor necessary for me to state his views on all the matters we had under consideration. But there are some things that can and should be said.

Dr. Adenauer has led his country with singular distinction and success. Under his general direction, West Germany has made a post-war recovery of the most spectacular kind. The German people are working very hard and very successfully to reconstruct and expand their industries, which have already become a very material factor in international trade. There is very naturally a strong desire to see Germany reunified. But at the same time, I did not get the impression anywhere in Europe that reunification is regarded as an immediate possibility.

I felt that the Chancellor's chief anxiety was lest there should be such a recognition of the East German regime as would perpetuate a severance and tend to make ultimate reunification improbable. In particular, Dr. Adenauer exhibited some anxiety lest there should be some de facto recognition by the United Kingdom. I pointed out to him that if he had in mind the making of normal business arrangements relating to trade with East Germany, then the Government of West Germany seemed to me to be already involved in such arrangements on its own account. The German reply to this was that it is one thing to make, under protest, working arrangements with a separated portion of your own country but quite another matter for some foreign nation to do similar things.

This led us to a closer analysis as to why there should be apprehensions in the German mind. It very soon appeared that the Chancellor himself believes that public opinion and government opinion in Great Britain are strongly and even bitterly anti-German and anti-Adenauer. I did my best to combat this view, which in my belief is erroneously founded. It is, I think, and as I said to the Chancellor, unfortunate that one or two large-circulation English newspapers have published intemperate observations on the German problem. But I ventured the opinion that they did not represent sensible opinion in Great Britain, the British people having no faculty for the perpetuation of hatreds but, on the other hand, having a considerable respect for what has been done by the Chancellor and his people since the end of the war.

Having found that the Chancellor had a very warm respect for Mr. Macmillan, I took the opportunity of urging that he should increase his personal contacts in order to clear up any points of difficulty or misapprehension which might arise.

Dr. Adenauer had considerable reservations about a Summit Conference which was not preceded by proper preparation and the selection of the topic or topics to be discussed. But I did quite clearly get the impression that he agreed that what has been called "a Western Summit" should be held and that he would be happy to attend one. In this respect, recent developments are, we will all agree, most satisfactory.

Apart from the question of reunification, the two other matters then under consideration at Geneva were, first, the juridical basis of the partial occupation of Berlin by Western powers and, second, the possibility of some working arrangement in respect of Berlin which would represent a sort of moratorium for a period of years.

We both agreed that legal arguments, in the absence of any tribunal to decide the issues, should not be unduly pursued. I offered my own opinion that the best thing to do would be for each side to publish its views so that people around the world might consider them, and that they should then "agree to disagree" for the time being.

One other matter which I discussed with Dr. Adenauer was the developments in relation to the European Common Market. I advanced the view (a view, I thought, widely held in Great Britain) that if the six nations of the Common Market found themselves side by side with the projected seven nations of the Little Free Trade Area, and nothing further happened, there would be an economic division within Europe of a mutually dangerous kind. Such a division would, I pointed out, be not only unhealthy from the point of view of the seven, but also from the point of view of the six, since so great a proportion of the trade of the six is conducted with the seven. I therefore pointed out that it seemed to me to be important that the organisation of the seven should be regarded as the constituting of a bridge across which negotiations with the six might be carried on.

Dr. Adenauer seemed to me to feel that in the course of time, Great Britain and other countries should be associated with the main European arrangements. But he clearly thought that such discussions could not be hurried, since France was going through a programme of economic reconstruction and should be given some time to complete it. I should add at this point that Dr. Adenauer was disposed to think that the period would not be unduly protracted but, the following day in Paris, President de Gaulle, while accepting the need for association in principle, clearly had in mind a longer period before negotiations could become fruitful.

In spite of what I believe to be the erroneous impressions entertained by Dr. Adenauer about British policy, I am convinced that he is patriotically devoted to the maintenance of peace in Europe on a foundation of strong Western association, and that there are few difficulties which he raised with me in the course of our talks which could not be resolved by frank exchanges with the other Western leaders.

In Bonn, as in Paris, I became greatly strengthened in my belief that a very great deal turned upon the attitude and approach of the President of the United States. It was, therefore, as I have already indicated, with particular pleasure that I read of the decision of President Eisenhower to establish direct personal contacts with Mr. Khrushchev, both in America and Russia. These exchanges have been referred to by President Eisenhower as an attempt to melt a little of the ice that has been accumulating in recent years.

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It is, in fact, an outstanding phenomenon of recent times that personal contacts between leaders have come to be regarded as the exception rather than as the rule.

In the course of most of my talks, I kept emphasising my own belief that the events of the last two or three years, ominous as some of them have been, have made it more and more important and indeed urgent that personal contacts should be developed. At an earlier date, as Honourable Members will recall, I shared the belief that preparatory work was an essential condition of a successful conference. There is still validity in that belief where the projected conference is to deal with specific and concrete matters. But in the last two years in particular, Communist propaganda has been concentrated upon what it calls "a peace offensive" and upon an attempt to create the impression that the Soviet Union wants peace and is willing to discuss it with anybody at any time and that all the reluctance is on the side of the West, that is, on the side of the democracies. This is untrue in fact, but it must be demonstrated to be untrue before the tribunal of world opinion. Standing as they do for a peaceful settlement of Europe and the creation of a state of human affairs in which the threat of major war may be reduced, the democracies have nothing to lose and everything to gain by a constant willingness to engage in personal meetings and a constant willingness to expound their beliefs and proposals. I did, in fact, continue to offer the opinion, both publicly and privately, in the United States, in Great Britain and on the Continent, that even an unsuccessful conference at Geneva - unsuccessful in that it was not producing any concrete results - had great value in the contest for the minds of men. I constantly emphasised that even though the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union might continue to reject the proposals put to him, the very fact that those proposals were made and maintained and explained to the world, should have a considerable effect upon what we refer to as the "uncommitted nations"; particularly those of Asia whose attitude was of vital significance to Australia and who were themselves constantly feeling the weight and pressure of Communist propaganda.

Mr. Macmillan's visit to Moscow, though I have no doubt it was the subject of some criticism or reservations both in Europe and in the United States, was in my opinion a real stroke of statesmanship. It did a great deal to encourage the idea that there is no salvation for the world in the perpetuation of frozen relationships or of inveterate hostilities. This is not to say that we of the democracies weaken in our rejection of Communism as something utterly alien to our traditions, our institutions of self-government or our conceptions of human dignity. But it does mean that we believe that we cannot impose our ideas upon other nations any more than they can or should impose theirs upon us. We must, in brief, all learn to live in the same world without war. Many people like myself have frequently criticised the Soviet doctrine of peaceful co-existence, by pointing out that having regard to some tragic world events in recent years, it appeared to be a doctrine which permitted aggression on one side and rejected it on the other. But if, as a result of personal contacts and patient negotiation, the state of affairs can be brought about in which co-existence connotes complete mutual non-aggression and rights of self-determination in countries with old or new claims to nationhood, then such a new doctrine of co-existence can and will be cheerfully accepted by all lovers of peace all over the world. Great as the apprehensions are which are naturally felt in Germany about the possibility of Communist aggression, they would, I think, be sensibly diminished if the leaders of the Soviet Union decided upon a course of true realism in international relations preceded by genuine discussions and founded upon a recognition of the right of every nation to live its own life and to govern itself in its own fashion. Detailed discussions will need much preliminary work. The function of personal meetings at the summit is to make such things possible.

In Paris I had several hours with President de Gaulle, whom I had not seen since the war and whose own personal career since the war must have been marked by a profound sense of frustration until he was called to power two years ago.

President de Gaulle occupies, of course, under the new French Constitution, a position of immense power. He enjoys in his own right, and for eloquent historical reasons, a position of immense prestige. He clearly has a considerable sense of pride in what has happened, and in particular with the remarkable economic recovery of France. This recovery has, in fact, been so great that, whereas two years ago when I was abroad the dominant factor in the European Common Market was Germany, and France was regarded as something of a problem, France is today becoming one of the vital factors in the European economic settlement.

As the President himself enjoys good personal relations with Great Britain's leaders, I would feel that the scope for co-operation at the top level is very considerable. I was particularly interested to learn both from President de Gaulle and from his Prime Minister, Mr. Debré, of their outlook on the Algerian problem. That they must sensibly put an end to the fighting is, of course, both natural and inevitable. But they are certainly not contemplating the imposing on Algeria of any ready-made constitutional structure. On the contrary, they feel, as I think most of us here would, that whatever form of self-government should be created in Algeria should, so to speak, grow out of the Algerian soil and exhibit in its own fashion local Algerian attitudes and desires. I share the belief that ultimate forms of Government should never be imposed from without, but should, starting at the ground level and in the simplest forms of local administration, be encouraged to grow into something which is indigenous and not exotic.

A system of government which is long-established and well understood in an old democracy is not necessarily appropriate, either initially or ultimately, to a country with new-found independence. This truth is frequently forgotten.

At The Hague I was interested to meet the new Prime Minister, Mr. de Quay, and his colleagues. It was of importance from an Australian point of view to discover whether the change of government in the Netherlands involved a change in their policy in relation to West New Guinea. I was informed that there was no change.

On my part, I was content to repeat that the statement of Australian policy set forward by me in the Australian Parliament on 24th February, 1959, after the valuable visit of Dr. Subandrio, the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, remained unaltered.

These two positions were reaffirmed when I had a lengthy discussion with Mr. Luns, the Netherlands Foreign Minister, at Zurich. In both The Hague and Zurich, I found considerable importance attached to the development of administrative contacts between the Dutch and the Australian sections of New Guinea.

We have, as Honourable Members know, already by our public declaration of 6th November, 1957, initiated such contacts. As each of the two powers concerned - the Netherlands and Australia - has as its expressed objective the developing of the native population to the ultimate point of self-government, there seemed to me to be considerable advantage from the point of view of the native population in frequent comparing of notes and collating of experience between the two administrations; and I said so. Indeed, I am sure that the process is one which can be profitably expanded.

I arrived in Karachi just as the monsoonal rains were about to begin. These rains later developed some ruinous floods, with consequences which excite the sympathy of all of us.

Pakistan has, as Honourable Members know, sustained a number of fairly quick changes in the administration since the lamentable death of that great man, Liaquat Ali Khan. The new President, General Mohammad Ayub Khan, in substance took over in 1958 from the then existing administration and at present governs very largely in right of his own authority. There is inevitably a somewhat military flavour about the administration, since several of his Ministers are military officers. The President himself regards this as a purely temporary state of affairs. He told me, and I think with great frankness and sincerity, that he hoped to proceed to the stage of popular elections within a couple of years and that the administration could then become purely civic. In the meantime, he and his colleagues are behaving with great vigour in the face of some enormous problems.

We, in Australia, do not always realise that upon the partition of old India into India and Pakistan, no fewer than 18 million refugees passed between the two countries, most of them in a state of absolute poverty. There are still large settlements of such refugees to be observed in or near the great cities, many of their population existing in a state of indescribable squalor. Housing and re-settlement have therefore become major problems to be tackled with vigour and concentration.

Apart from these matters there has been, of course, for many years, conflict between Pakistan and India in respect of Kashmir, and very great and unresolved differences of opinion about the waters of the Indus; the head-waters of which are in India but the ultimate flow of which is literally vital to the rural economy and the national existence of West Pakistan. On this matter, just before I went away, a statesmanlike achievement was made by the President of the World Bank, Mr. Eugene Black, who, largely through his own efforts but with the complete backing of his directors, has negotiated a settlement of this problem which will involve substantial financial contributions from other nations including Australia, contributions which we are very willing to make. A settlement of this matter will, I believe, do much to relieve the tension between the two countries.

When I point out to Honourable Members that in both India and Pakistan (and, in a real degree, because of their own differences), substantially more than 50 per cent of the Budget is devoted to military preparations, it will be seen how essential it is, if these two countries are to devote an adequate volume of their resources to economic and social development, that so great a point of difference should be removed.

I found General Ayub, and later Mr. Nehru in New Delhi, pleased with the projected settlement and warmly appreciative of its high significance.

In the course of three days at New Delhi, I had a number of long and interesting conversations with Mr. Nehru. He carries vast responsibilities which his high prestige causes to fall to a large extent on his own shoulders.

He was naturally concerned about recent events in Tibet and in the Province of Kerala.

He was good enough to convey to me in an intimate way some of his own views about recent developments in Continental China. It is not my function to repeat them here but I found them of considerable assistance in discussing our own policies with my colleagues in the Cabinet.

I conveyed to Mr. Nehru once more an invitation to visit Australia at some time convenient to him. He pointed out some of the difficulties of dates and seasons and I undertook to communicate with him a little later.

In Singapore I had very good meetings with the members of the newly-elected government.

The new Chief Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, is a young man, highly educated, and the average age of his Cabinet is under 38.

Mr. Lee himself is a man of great intellectual capacity. He is a Socialist, but I would accept his statements that he is opposed to Communism and that his policies and actions are designed to cope with it. A perusal of the election pamphlets of Mr. Lee's party did not justify some of the more extravagant statements that have appeared about the new government. The fact is that these ministers have been elected by a proper democratic process and are, therefore, entitled to our complete friendship and co-operation. They have immense problems; a large population on a small island, increasing by 60,000 a year; an uncomfortable measure of unemployment running at about 6 per cent; an inability to expand resources in so small a place except by industrial activity which would require the confidence of outside investors. It is clear that there is a strong desire to become associated with the Federation of Malaya, an association which, in the view of the Singapore ministers, would tend to relieve some of the pressures upon their own population and resources.

While in any place like this one expects to find some of those attitudes of mind which derive from a lengthy opposition to the old colonialism, I did not find the Singapore ministers in any way lacking in realism or a desire for friendship. In particular, I was most happy to find that the coming to Australia of students and their subsequent return had been a remarkable success and had done much to create a better understanding of the Australian character and outlook.

I came back to Australia much better informed, if not wiser. On the whole, I have some real optimism about the future.
