COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

SPEECH

BY

Rt. Hon. SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.,

ON

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

[*From the "Parliamentary Debates"*, 13.8.64.]

Sir ROBERT MENZIES (Kooyong—Prime Minister) [11.45].—I propose to say something at, perhaps, some little length about the events in and around Vietnam, but before I do so, I think I should make a reference to one or two points that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Calwell). I think the honorable gentleman has almost a fixation about me. I appear to pop up like King Charles' head in all his speeches. I can understand that. But may I just make a reference to what the honorable gentleman said about my alleged views on summit conferences? It is quite true that I made a speech in New York. It was a lunchtime speech and if anybody regards that as riotous living, he is welcome to do so.

Mr. Peters.—It depends on the lunch.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—You do not get much if you are going to make a speech. What I was putting to that audience in New York was that there was no virtue, in itself, in having a summit meeting. A necessary condition of a summit meeting was that people on both sides—or on three sides in this case—should approach the matter in good faith and with a genuine desire to arrive at a settlement. I made the point that if one side—as in this case—went through the motions of saying: "Yes, we will have a summit meeting", and while the meeting was actually on, weakened the position of the other negotiators by military action—and that is the position along the frontiers of Borneo—then that is not a genuine summit meeting at all. It would be a dangerous kind of meeting to have because, by its implicit concession to force, it would be a form of appeasement. That is what I said in New York, and if the Leader of the Opposition disagrees with that, he is welcome to do so. I certainly have no apologies to make for those views.

The Leader of the Opposition then said something of the usual kind to the effect that instead of talking in military terms, we ought to be increasing the aid we give to under-developed countries. It is very interesting to recall that we have two under-developed countries in our immediate neighbourhood and for which we have an immediate responsibility—Papua and New Guinea. If you take our net expenditure there—because we get no exploitation of these territories—and what we pay through the Colombo Plan and the aid of an economic kind that we give under the South East Asia Treaty Organisation agreement in all its various forms and through certain specialised agencies of the United Nations, you find that Australia today is providing the equivalent of 100 million American

dollars a year for these purposes. In anybody's language—and certainly in mine—that is a very substantial sum of money. Therefore I put these facts on the record because I would not have it believed that this country is falling down in its human responsibilities.

I propose to say something now about Cyprus. I will not speak at any great length on this subject because it is more a matter of giving some information to the House. I propose, then, to address myself to the nub of this matter—the argument that goes on about Vietnam and our relations to it and the activities of certain small Australian forces in South Vietnam. The Republic of Cyprus—I want to get this matter out of the way first—was established as an independent state in 1960 following negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers. As honorable members know, the outcome of those negotiations was accepted by Great Britain. The settlement brought an end—or so it was believed—to a long-drawn stalemate which had been caused by the preceding Greek Cypriot campaign for Enosis, or union with Greece, in the face of Turkish refusal to contemplate Cyprus falling into Greek hands and the consequent difficulties of Great Britain as the governing or colonial power.

The settlement made in 1960 provided for special constitutional safeguards. These were, in effect, a veto on certain legislation for the Turkish minority and for the right of the guarantor powers—Greece, Turkey and Great Britain—to intervene if the terms of the settlement were contravened.

That settlement was received at the time with some hope. It has not worked out. In the opinion of the Prime Minister of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, the Constitution has failed. Disputes have arisen between the Turkish minority and the Greek Cypriot majority while Greece and Turkey, from the outside, have maintained, (a) great interest, and (b), from time to time, activity. These troubles began at the end of 1963 when Archbishop Makarios said the Constitution was unworkable.

Attempts to settle the dispute were made, first, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation—because both Greece and Turkey belong to N.A.T.O.—and then when they failed, attempts at a settlement were made through the United Nations Organisation. Through the Security Council which acted on this matter, the United Nations arranged in March of this year for a United Nations force to go to Cyprus to restore order. The United Nations also appointed a mediator and requests were made for certain financial assistance to which we made a small contribution. A request was also made for a police force for ordinary police purposes and Australia, through the courtesy of the various State Governments, has made a contribution to this force. The Security Council passed a series of resolutions concerning these arrangements on 4th March and 13th March and again on 20th June of this year.

In spite of these actions, the position has remained difficult and perhaps has become more difficult. It is very hard to say that and I do not want to say anything which would appear to allocate any blame because I do not think it is for us to do that. I believe, as I am sure all honorable members believe, that in this complex affair—and it is immeasurably complex—it is important to stand behind the United Nations Security Council and to do all things possible or to encourage all things possible to be done to avoid civil war or a continuance of it and to bring about a peaceful settlement of the problem.

This was the position when the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth of Nations met in London. After considerable discussion, a statement on this matter was made in a communique and I quote from it—

> The Prime Ministers expressed concern about the situation with regard to Cyprus. They reaffirmed their full support for the United Nations Security Council resolutions of 4th March, 13th March and 20th June 1964. The Prime Ministers asserted that the Cyprus problem should be solved within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the principles of democracy and justice.
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> They appealed to all countries concerned to refrain from any action which might undermine the task of the United Nations peacekeeping force to which a number of Commonwealth countries are contributing, or might prejudice the endeavours of the United Nations to find a lasting solution in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

This, I venture to say, was impeccably correct. The United Nations Security Council met again in emergency session, things not having improved very much, on Sunday last. The President appealed to the Turkish

and Cypriot Governments to cease hostilities. Now a resolution has again been passed. I was going to read it in its full terms, but it can be summarised by saying that it calls for an immediate cease fire by all parties, it calls for their co-operation with the United Nations peace keeping force and it calls upon all States to refrain from any action which could exacerbate the position. I think it will be agreed by all honorable members that we will not help a settlement of this extremely difficult matter by offering observations from the sidelines or by taking sides, because without a great deal more knowledge than any of us can have it might be very difficult to apportion all the blame to one party and none of it to the other. We all want a peaceful settlement, and the greatest prospect of that settlement will come from backing the actions of the Security Council.

Now I would like to turn to the matter which was the subject of the original statement by my colleague, which has given rise to most of the debate, both outside the House and in it. My colleague's statement was a clear and objective one. It did not go in for fireworks. It put the House in possession of whatever official knowledge we had of these matters. I therefore do not need to repeat what he said. If it is any comfort to anybody to know it, I can say that before he made his statement he discussed the matter with me and we agreed that he was the appropriate Minister to make the statement. So he made it.

The Australian Government thought that the action of the United States of America, under attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, under attack in international waters, was well warranted and ought to be supported, and we said so. Many people in different parts of the world said so. Oddly enough, I did not wait, as I am occasionally charged with waiting, to find out what the majority were doing. We were the first people to make a public announcement after the President's speech and after his indication of what he was going to do. Not for the first time, we were the first to speak. Does anybody seriously quarrel with what the President did? I almost pause for a reply, because the Opposition, as I will show without any difficulty, has occupied the most ambiguous position on this point. It is a bitterly disappointing fact that the one sour note that reached the public print should have come from the Leader of the Australian Labour Party, the great alternative governing party in this country, accompanied by a sort of lecture to the President on his duty not to extend the struggle and to see that he had resort to the United Nations—he having publicly stated that he wanted no such extension and that he would seek such resort, and having acted accordingly.

It is just as well, I think, to recall what the President said. My colleague quoted the language of the resolution of Congress, and I want to quote from the text of the President's nation-wide statement which preceded that resolution. After referring to the attack and the orders he had given, he said—

> This new act of agression aimed directly at our own forces again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of the struggle for peace and security in South East Asia. Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Vietnam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America. The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and Government of South Vietnam will be redoubled by this outrage.

Without anticipating in detail what I will say a little later, it will be observed that the President referred to "our commitment to the people and Government of South Vietnam", which does not arise from a treaty. He has no treaty with South Vietnam. I will explain a little later, if it needs to be explained, how these things arise and flow from the South East Asia Treaty, but it is worthwhile just reminding honorable members opposite the America does not feel it necessary to talk about a formal treaty before going to the aid of South Vietnam, and that America recognises a commitment that has not been drafted by a lawyer. This is a very important statement. Then the President went on—

> Yet our response for the present will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, though others appear to forget, the risks of spreading a conflict. We will seek no wider war.

Then he went on to say—

> I have instructed Ambassador Stevenson to raise this matter immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations.

He ended by saying—

> It is a solemn responsibility to have to order even limited military action by forces whose overall strength is as vast and as awesome as those of the United States, but it is my considered conviction, shared throughout your Government, that firmness in the right is indispensible today for peace. That firmness will always be measured. Its mission is peace.

I venture to say that that was an historic and important statement, and it was followed by a resolution in Congress which was carried in one House with one dissentient vote and in the other House unanimously. I propose to refer to that resolution, which my colleague read to the House earlier. I believe that the resolution has no direct precedent in American history. We are living in a most historic period. I will quote just the operative passages of the resolution, if I may do so without wearying the House—

> The U.S. regards as vital to its national security and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in South East Asia.

This is the American Congress speaking. Now, Sir, if I may interrupt the reading of the resolution, if we cast our minds back, particularly those of us who have been seised of the responsibilities for the Government here, we will remember very vividly how anxious we were only a few years ago about the possibility that in the conflict of ideas between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, and in the building up of the nuclear deterrent to armed hostilities in that connection, South East Asia might be overlooked. There was a very strong feeling at one time that perhaps it was a little in the background. The answer to that anxiety is in the passage I have just read.

In all my discussions with the late President Kennedy and with President Johnson and with the Administration of the State Department I felt there was a growing realisation of the importance of South East Asia. This was a matter of some satisfaction to us because although we knew all too well the vital significance of the relationships across the Atlantic, we also felt that the problems of South East Asia came very near home and that our immediate security in Australia was much involved in them. Therefore, I repeat that this resolution by Congress is of historic importance. The resolution continued—

> Consonant with the Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty, the United States is therefore prepared as the President determines to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol State of the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty requesting assistance in defence of its freedom.

In this resolution we see the constitutional process referred to in the A.N.Z.U.S. Pact and in the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty at work affirming the power of the President to take action as commander-in-chief. The importance of this cannot be overlooked by any Australian unless he is bemused by academic and unreal ideas. After all, the matter of substance is the defence of freedom in South East Asia. I would sum this up by saying that the congressional resolution removes constitutional restraint on the President's freedom of action. Of course, he still remains subject to the practical restraints which arise from his need to have in Congress broad support for whatever he does. But the important thing is that the resolution has affirmed that the maintenance of peace and security in th region—this region immediately adjoins u —is in the vital interests of the United States. We would indeed be blind, Sir, if we did not realize and acknowledge that it is also in our vital interests.

The South East Asia Collective Defen Treaty ought to be referred to. I shoul have expected its provisions, in the broad, to be very well known and not matters which needed to be recited every week, every year, or once in any other period of time. However, I think I should mention them, because they have been overlooked by some of the spokesmen opposite. The Treaty was made in September 1954 and was ratified early in 1955. It was negotiated on behalf of Australia by my Government. The parties to it were the United States, the United Kingdom, Thailand, the Philippines Pakistan, France, Australia and Ne Zealand. The Treaty itself paid proper attention to the promotion of the economic wellbeing and development of all peoples in the Treaty area. If honorable members care to look at Article III, they will find that thi idea of economic advancement is not ne and has not been suddenly discovered by the Opposition.

Mr. Uren.—Name it. It is only peanuts.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—It has been of substantial assistance. It reads—

> The Parties undertake to strengthen their free institutions and to co-operate with one another in the further development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed both to promote economic progress and social wellbeing and to further the individual and collective efforts of governments towards these ends.

The parties to the Treaty were well aware of these points. The Treaty acknowledges that one of the facts of life was that unless

there was resistance to Communist aggression there would be no opportunity for economic advancement, peaceful life and peaceful development. Article II reads—

> In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly——

In other words, there is a joint and several obligation; it is not necessary to have a unanimous decision to discharge the obligation—

> by means of continuous and effective self help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent the counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

Article IV reads—

> 1. Each Party recognises that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate——

That is, the protocol States, including South Vietnam—

> would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

As I have just indicated, the Treaty provided for the designation by unanimous vote of nations as protocol States. South Vietnam, like Laos and Cambodia, is one of the protocol States.

The Treaty contemplated, therefore, that protocol States might have to be defended against aggression. It stated with particularity—

> It is understood that no action on the territory of any State designated by unanimous agreement . . . shall be taken except at the invitation or with consent of the government concerned.

We are in South Vietnam to the extent that we are there by the invitation of the Government of that country. The U.S.A. is there by the invitation of the Government of South Vietnam. We have no subsequent treaty with the protocol State; neither has the U.S. It is very disturbing, to say the least, that the Australian Labour Party should choose this period in international history to assert that Australia, which is acting at the request of South Vietnam, should not do so without some new and special treaty with the Government of South Vietnam. What a barren performance that would be of the obligations of the South East Asian Collective Defence Treaty. The Leader of the Opposition said that people had not been sufficiently informed. I should have thought that these matters were almost as familiar in the minds of people as anything could be. They have been referred to very frequently. I remind the House that extensive statements about our activities in South Vietnam have been made at the time of each performance on our part—first, by the late Mr. Townley when he was Minister for Defence, and later by Senator Paltridge as Minister for Defence.

I am sorry if I seem to overdo it, but the point I want to make is that what is going on in South Vietnam through us in a small way, and through the U.S. in a large way, is the direct consequence of a treaty to which we are one of the parties. As a matter of fact, in 1961 South Vietnam appealed to the U.S. to increase military aid because of the violation of its territory in the north and the U.S. responded, but without a military alliance and without a treaty. It is interesting to recall that the Opposition—the Leader of the Opposition repeated the claim this morning—has long made it a matter of pride that when in government it invited U.S. forces to come here during the war. Did it make a treaty? Did the United States require a treaty? Did Australia require a treaty? No, because the realities of life were so overwhelmingly clear that this poor academic nonsense about having a treaty was never even thought of. But today we are told that this is exactly what ought to be done.

I have already taken quite a long time, but I just want to mention one or two other aspects of this matter quite briefly. I notice that the Opposition, including the Federal Executive of the Australian Labour Party, is saying that the right way to handle this matter is to reconstitute the Geneva Conference. Of course, the Geneva Conference established the cease fire and the boundary at the 17th parallel, and declared for a cessation of armed hostilities. What is it to be reconvened for? The Leader of the Opposition said the other day that the powers should meet to resubscribe to and honour the agreements. But who has broken the agreements?

Is it suggested that somebody not in the Communist zone is conducting a war of aggression? Does anybody think such nonsense for a moment? The people who are

violating the cease fire and the essential substance of the Geneva accords are the people from the north, the north Vietnam forces, the Vietminh, backed as they unquestionably are at suitable times by the Communist Chinese, and having as their agents the Vietcong in their pockets of activity around South Vietnam. If there is any reaffirmation of belief in a cease fire to be made, it ought to be made by the people who are violating the agreements. The powers may, for all I know, have another conference in Geneva or elsewhere, and it will be a very good thing if a precondition is that there is a cessation of hostilities, a termination of these guerrilla activities, because, for the reasons I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, I believe firmly that good faith is an essential to any conference that may be called.

The Leader of the Opposition has a general view which he puts. He appears to think that Australia is unnecessarily buying hostility with the Asian people. He is always fond of trying to create some division between the past and the present in this Government. He says we are buying hostility. Does he really believe that we would cultivate the respect of the Asian people if, as I rather think he would like us to do, we abandoned our support of Malaysia, which is vigorous in all respects, or if we said to South Vietnam and to the South East Asian Treaty countries that we were quite happy to have an agreement with them but that we were very reluctant to perform an agreement? Is this the way to acquire the respect of our Asian neighbours? Sir, international goodwill is not to be firmly established on a basis of a denial of treaty obligations or a denial of the overall importance of resisting Communist aggression.

But the Leader of the Opposition is not the only spokesman for the Labour Party. I think I have some right to expect that his most prominent colleague in the victory of the left wing in Victoria recently, a person whom I might describe as his running mate —the honorable member for Yarra (Dr. J. F. Cairns)—a prospective deputy leader at least speaks with some authority on behalf of the Labour Party. If he does not, then the party has a curious way of disowning him. On 9th August, the honorable member for Yarra made a powerful speech, I gather, to 2,000 people at a Hiroshima commemoration rally in Sydney. He had, of course, an audience of people who advocated nuclear disarmament, ignoring the fact that if nuclear disarmament proceeded alone, the Communist powers would have overwhelming military strength. These people also apparently carried slogans about no war in Vietnam, a consummation devoutly to be wished for, I must say. But the pleas ought to be addressed not to our side, but to the other side if they are to have any true value.

The honorable member for Yarra is reported, I hope accurately, as having said that Australia should not follow the United States line—of course, we have heard him say that many times—which he defined as pursuing a policy of war which had no basis in morals or justice. He was not talking about some war of the 19th century; he was talking about these incidents that have been engaging our attention; he was talking about these activities of war in the Gulf of Tonkin and, by the way of counter attack, on the shores of North Vietnam.

I have reminded the House, and, I hope, the people, of what the President of the United States said, and the manner in which he dealt with the matter and the manner in which Congress dealt with it—the high level on which the whole thing was put and the immense importance of it to the future of this country—yet a prospective leader of this country is heard to say that they are pursuing a policy of war which has no basis in morals or justice.

If that is not the view of the Opposition—and I do not believe for one moment that it can be—then I hope there will be those who will be willing to say so in their turn. It was really an extraordinary summary of American policy. It is apparently both moral and just that aggressive Communist powers should seek to strike down free people but immoral and unjust to resist them. The honorable member for Yarra went on to say, according to the report, that the United States could not claim that it was being attacked in the present Vietnam crisis—I think the crews of the American destroyers would be fascinated to know that —or that it was acting in self-defence. He says that the United States cannot say that. The U.S. has said it. The honorable member for Yarra is challenging the veracity of

the head of the American Administration. He is challenging the intelligence and information of the entire Congress of the United States which has every avenue of information available to it.

The honorable member for Yarra elaborated this astonishing proposition by saying that the North Vietnamese torpedo boats —I like that, because it admits that they were North Vietnamese—had been within a few miles of their own shores when they came in to attack the United States ships. Does he really deny that they were 30 miles off shore, as has been stated authoritatively in America?

Mr. Pollard.—Do the Americans deny it they were involved in the attack on Cuba?

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—The honorable member for Lalor (Mr. Pollard) has a singular talent for changing the subject, and I sympathise with him. If the honorable member wants now to set up another attack on the United States over Cuba, over what I thought was a remarkable effort on behalf of freedom by the late President Kennedy, let him say so. If we are to have a symposium of hatred and criticism of the United States, let us have it. At least we will know then where the Opposition stands. But to resume what I was saying: Is it really denied that the American destroyers were 30 miles offshore? Does the honorable member for Yarra or anybody else assert that the warships of a nation when steaming in international waters may be attacked with impunity?

The honorable member went on to charge the United States with helping to prevent political, economic and social changes in South Vietnam. This, of course, is a monstrous falsehood. But he ended up by saying that Australia should call immediately for a ceasefire in Vietnam, to be followed by talks between all countries involved in the conflict. He is unaware, presumably, that the President of the United States has already put all these courses of action in train. We, Sir, do not direct ceasefires. This is not our function. The honorable member overlooks the obvious fact that no country has a greater interest than we have in the cessation of armed hostilities in South East Asia, provided that that cessation does not yield the field to the onward sweep of Communism.

The honorable member also overlooks the fact that President Johnson himself took the earliest opportunity to encourage action by the Security Council. I have already referred to what the President said in his Address to the Nation. We in Australia are in a position in the world in which we have, no doubt, great opportunities, but equally, no doubt, face great risks. The Opposition, in more recent days, has been rather fond of saying what we ought to be doing about defence. I do not resent any criticism in that field, because I do not regard our provision for defence as static. It must go on, develop and march with the times. The plea from the Opposition would be more eloquent if we had heard it over any considerable period of time. The fact is that we are, as the Treasurer (Mr. Harold Holt) pointed out in the Budget Speech, spending 50 per cent. more on defence than we were four years ago. And, as I say, that is not the end of the story.

I do not want to occupy time on this, as it will no doubt be debated, as some one was suggesting earlier today; but let us suppose that the Opposition, being in office, spent much more on defence. Why would it do it? This is a question that the Opposition really should put to itself. Why would it do it? Would it do it because it thought that Australia's defence was a matter for Australia alone? Does it have that isolationist view? I could not believe that. Does it really believe that if we were attacked by a great power we could defend ourselves without allies and without mutual systems of defence? It could not believe such nonsense as that. Therefore, presumably, it would do it so that we might be in a position to make an effective contribution, worthy of us as a nation, to the common defence. But if we are to do that there must be some system of common defence. If we are to do that we really must have these alliances in substance with the people who have the greatest power to preserve freedom and who carry the major burden of its preservation.

Surely the Labour Party must agree with that. If it does not, presumably it would never, if it had been in office, have tried to secure the A.N.Z.U.S. Pact or the South East Asia Treaty. But suppose it had entered into these pacts, and suppose it realised that the defence of Australia, and indeed of freedom generally, were a matter

of community of effort, of broad alliances with, to use the phrase that the honorable gentleman objects to so much, "great and powerful friends in the world". Suppose it understood that. Are we really to understand that, having made those treaties, having done whatever it thought proper in the defence field, having perhaps more forces than we now have, it would have said in those circumstances, when Vietnam, a protocol country, asked for help: "No. We are very sorry. We cannot give you help. We know that America is doing so. That is all right for America, but we cannot give you help unless you now sit down and thrash out a special mutual treaty with us."? I end there, because I referred to it earlier.

This, to me, is the most fantastic evidence of the utterly unreal and utterly academic approach that these people have when they consider these great problems. When they did have the responsibility of government, when there were real things happening that they understood, they had no such approach. They did not talk about treaties then, but now they do. Now they want to put a clog in the operation of the machinery of the South East Asia Treaty. Why? Is it because they believe in the Treaty, or because at heart they do not believe in the Treaty? Or is it because, which seems most probable, they have such deep divisions of opinion between soberminded right wing members of the Labour Party who, I will undertake to say, have agreed with almost everything I have said today, and a left wing which, in its heart, is not hostile to Communism but, in its heart, is deeply hostile to the United States of America, the greatest free power in the world?

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