



VISIT TO U.S., CANADA AND U.K.

LOS ANGELES, U.S.A.

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT  
TO THE LOS ANGELES WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

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31ST MAY, 1967.

It is a very great personal pleasure for Mrs. Holt and myself to be here in Los Angeles. I don't suppose there is an area of the United States where we have more close personal friends than we do in this city, and my problem usually is to find some good official reason for coming here and renewing my acquaintance with them. Thank you for providing at least one occasion which is a notable one, even in the eyes of my own compatriots, because the World Affairs Council has a prestige which has reached out well beyond the shores of your own country, and I regard it as an honour to have the opportunity of talking to this representative and very distinguished gathering of citizens from the West Coast of the United States of America.

It is perhaps not inappropriate that I meet you on the day following your celebration of Memorial Day. We have in Australia a somewhat similar commemoration on what we call our Anzac Day, that is the day which really marks the emergence of nationhood for my country when in 1915, April 25, the Australian and New Zealand forces landed on the shores of Gallipoli and there forged, in their comradeship together, the word Anzac which has come to mean so much emotionally to us over the years, and each year, on the anniversary of that day, we hold what is the most solemn non-religious observance on any day of the year in our country, and so I can well appreciate the feelings which have been passing through the minds of millions of citizens of this great Republic as you have commemorated American participation in struggles for freedom down through the years of your history, and at a time when so many of your young manhood is involved in the conflict in Vietnam and in preserving the peace in other parts of the world.

I have always an interest and almost a fascination in this city of Los Angeles and, indeed, of California generally because in the ministerial career to which Mr. Hodgkiss has so kindly made mention, I was for seven years Minister of Immigration in my own country and we have, as you probably know, a vast land mass approximately the same dimension as the United States of America if you will allow me to exclude Alaska and Hawaii. But of metropolitan United States we have approximately the same dimension, but we haven't more than 190,000,000 people - we are just pushing up to 12,000,000 people. Yet there was a time not so very long ago before World War II when the population of California and the population of Australia was the same - we both had 7,000,000 people - and I used to be told, as Minister of Immigration, that you couldn't increase the population effectively by more than about 2% per annum - that the load on resources and the problems, social and others created would make this impracticable for you.

As I looked across the Pacific to what was going on in this State of California I could see a very much more rapid growth rate occurring there and, of course, you have far outstripped us. You are now, I understand, approaching your 20th million in this

country, while we are still moving towards our 12th, having started together at 7 not so very long ago. But you won't mind my saying that it is a rather different proposition to build population when you have to draw on so many other nationalities, and there are today fourteen nationalities substantially represented in the Australian community, most of whom have come to us in the post-war years. When you do not have, as you are so fortunate to have in this country, the vast resources of capital on which to draw in order to build the community, and fortunately for California, fortunately for the United States and, I believe, fortunately for the free world, California has been able to take advantage of the movement of people from other parts of America and the resources of capital which you have here, the more ready assimilability of your fellow countrymen into the California environment.

But having said that and acknowledged it with appreciation and deep gratification, I wouldn't want you to think that, because we are a people of less than 12 millions striving as best we can to increase by assisted migration from so many countries that we are not a significant country in the scheme of things and certainly that we lack significance in an area of the world which is becoming increasingly vital for you. Let me just give you a few facts to support what I am putting to you.

In the first place, we rank amongst the first twelve trading nations in the world. India is regarded very properly as a very considerable country, it has 42 times our population, but it has only twice the value of our gross national product. Indonesia is regarded as a very considerable country in our area of the world. It has a population of more than 100 millions, more than nine times the population of Australia. It has only one-third of the value of gross national production of my country.

We have a very special relationship with the United States and with the United Kingdom which makes us a good friend and ally and a helpful friend in particular situations. You mentioned, Mr. Hodgkiss, the fact that I had recently been to four countries in South-East Asia. One of these, Cambodia, is a country which does not enjoy diplomatic relations with the United States. Those relations were severed as you will know some time ago. But Australia represents the United States' interests in Cambodia and Australia represents Cambodian interests in South Vietnam. So we are able, in our own way, to serve a useful and helpful purpose in preserving good relationships and in assisting the transactions which necessarily must occur between one country and another.

I think I can fairly claim that there can be very few, if any, Heads of Government that can be found around the world today who would have been accepted in all of the four countries which I have just visited. Some could have gone to one or two or three of them, but very few people who would, on the known policies of those countries, and Cambodia would probably be the most difficult of access, have been accepted in all four. Indeed there is a ban on Western journalists in Cambodia, but a plane load of pressmen accompanied me on my journey and this ban was waived for that particular visit.

So Australia, not possessing any taint in the eyes of the countries of Asia of having a colonial power past, is accepted as a friendly country. They know that we have had to struggle with the problem of developing a vast continent, not all of it favourable in either its climate nor its terrain, but which has lent itself to rich development - thanks to the energy and courage of a pioneering people. They have watched this and they welcome the guidance we can bring to them. While it is fashionable in some intellectual quarters to talk about the desirability of getting, to put it in

the crude terms they express, white faces off the mainland of Asia, all our experience and all the trends, or certainly the more significant trends of contemporary history, are moving in the other direction. We are finding a desire to co-operate, a desire to team together for mutually helpful purposes. I have only to mention such recent institutions as ASPAC, the Asian Development Bank, the sort of collaboration which occurs in SEATO, the teamwork which was represented at the Summit Conference at Manila as instances of the kind of thing I mean.

You have mentioned, Mr. Chairman, that I shall be visiting the United Kingdom to discuss British intentions regarding their troop dispositions East of Suez, and I can assure you that, knowing fully the mind of the Governments of Malaysia and Singapore, they welcome our presence and the British military presence on their territory as a factor contributing to stability, moderation and security in that area of the world. So you will gather from these facts that this small country, measured in terms of people, but rich in potential, with considerable agricultural production ranking us amongst one of the great exporters of the world, with fabulous mineral resources, the new discoveries of which we are finding almost week by week, with the kind of influence we can exert through our friendship with your own country, with Great Britain and the countries of the Commonwealth, and the friendships we have developed in Asia, Australia is able to play a role which is not without significance for free people and for the causes of freedom throughout the world today. We haven't asked others to do the job for us.

It is true that we are linked with the United States in the ANZUS Pact under which the United States, Australia and New Zealand have agreed to come to the aid of each other in event of aggression against one or the other, but we don't feel any sense of either condescension or inferiority in this because we have played our own part in two World Wars. It may interest some of you of the younger generation who have perhaps not been made aware of the fact, that Australia actually lost more men killed in the First World War than did the United States. We were the first alongside you in the struggle in Korea and we have been early with you in the struggle in Vietnam, and there we are - a great land mass lying on your Pacific flank.

We know that it would be against the security interests of the United States ever to have Australia in unfriendly hands. For our part, we are determined to do what we can to ensure that this will not happen. Again it may interest you to know that not only do we withhold from consumption for our own needs a higher percentage of our gross national product than any other country, with the exception of Japan, and we need to do this for purposes of defence. We need to do it for the needs of our growing population.

You in California have had a very rapid rate of growth and, I am sure, those who are in official positions here and have to cope with the problems of growth know just what those stresses can mean to a country, but taking the United States as a whole, the annual growth rate in terms of population is not all that great. It is higher than in the United Kingdom. It is considerably lower than it is in my own country and if you had to cope with the rate of population growth comparable with that in Australia, you would find it necessary to construct an additional 500,000 homes for your growing population with the schools, the hospitals, the transportation systems, all the other capital facilities that a growing population requires.

So we have on the one hand these pressures on our resources

in order that we may grow as a nation, we have the obligation which we cheerfully accepted to make a reasonable contribution to the joint defence efforts in the area and our proportion of gross national product going into defence is greater than that of any of the Western countries, with the exception of your own country and of the United Kingdom. We have not overlooked the obligations we have in the field of civil aid outside our country, and again it may interest you to be told, seeing that we give our aid without any strings attached, no loans, all in the form of grants or technical assistance, that per head of population, the civil aid flowing from Australia ranks third amongst the countries of the world and is even higher than that per head of the United States or of the United Kingdom.

Now, let me say something about Vietnam in particular. You mentioned the Middle East, Mr. Chairman. I don't claim to be any considerable authority on that area of the world and indeed, frankly, although I know it is occupying a great deal of attention and exercising a considerable amount of concern at the present time, I don't myself see it developing as seriously as some of the pundits would suggest. I don't believe for a moment that any of the major powers want a Third World War and it is my own belief, perhaps an optimistic one but it is a judgment, that this flurry in the Middle East will settle down in the course of time - the ill-feeling between the Arabic countries and Israel has been chronic ever since Israel has struggled to establish a nation here under most difficult circumstances and, for my part, I don't see it as becoming a matter of global concern in the sense of global involvement, but we have never from the word "go" been under any illusion or delusion as to the seriousness of the issue in Vietnam. Just as we were the first to declare ourselves alongside you in Korea when we saw this as a purposeful communist attempt to establish domination over that area of the world, and felt that if this were allowed to go unchecked, so this process would continue down through the rest of South-East Asia and, indeed, reach out to other parts of Asia as well, so we have seen the Vietnam conflict in much the same terms from the outset.

This has been a much more complex and difficult business than that which we faced with British and other Commonwealth forces in what was then known as Malaya, but there you had the challenge of communist guerrilla activity seeking to sabotage, destroy and subvert the community there, with a view to having finally communist domination in that area of the world and it took us many long years in a situation which was not nearly as complex as that we face in Vietnam, where the numbers were very much smaller, but we finally succeeded.

When I was over here last year, I did make considerable reference to the gains which had already been achieved as a result of the American contribution in South-East Asia and, in particular, in Vietnam.

(Remainder of the transcript incomplete in parts).

There was a good deal of talk about a domino theory..... I argued the premise that, thanks to the American intervention and the strength of American participation, we were seeing the domino theory operate in reverse. We were seeing countries that were formerly being threatened re-establish themselves social, economic and political conditions, and we saw this in such countries as Korea and Taiwan.

In the course of my own most recent journey I have had an opportunity of seeing some of these things at first hand myself. I have seen the improvement which has occurred in Malaysia since we have overcome the communist threat there, and what has been

happening in Thailand. Thailand, with substantial American assistance, has set out to build up its strength against the communist threat in that country, and I would only wish that the press which gives this episodic treatment day by day of what is going on in Vietnam, would occasionally point to the substantial achievements which have resulted from your participation in the struggle there - the strength that you have given to other countries, the rebuilding and the strengthening which has gone on as a result of your participation, and then, indeed, of the importance of the conflict there than is readily apprehended by some members of our respective communities.

I want to say something in very particular terms about one aspect of the Vietnam operation, because I have noticed with some concern that the bombing policy which has been carried out very thoroughly by the United States has come under question in various quarters. It has been put, on the one hand, that if we were only to cease the bombing, the negotiations for peace would commence. Well, I know that your President wants peace and he hasn't spared himself in the search for peace.

I can assure you that my own country is hankering for peace. We have a vast country to develop. Quite apart from the loss to Australian life and limb, the damage that is done, we can ill spare the resources that go into the military operations there and if a just and enduring peace could be secured by negotiation, we will support every endeavour to secure this result, but I have followed this as closely as any human being can. The messages we have received from all the sources where these attempts have been made there have been well-meaning efforts on the part of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, there have been well-meaning efforts on the parts of a number of countries including Canada and Italy. But there is no substantial reason of which I am aware to believe that Hanoi is prepared to enter into negotiations and to use the pretext that this would happen if only the bombing would cease, is running against all the evidence that comes to us. Every time there has been a lull in the bombing, this has been seized on with alacrity in order to build up the supplies and strength of the other side to the damage and to the detriment of our own cause. Now on this, the American and the Australian positions are, I believe, identical.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Do you think an embargo would be effective against North Vietnam?

Mr. Holt : I think in substance, as far as we are concerned, there is a trade embargo. There are other countries, of course, supplying goods but that would involve a major decision as to either the attack on the shipping in Hai Pong or the mining of Hai Pong. I know this is a matter which is exercising the minds of your own administration a good deal. I prefer, since the decision does not lie in my hands, but virtually in the hands of your own administration, not to express a view which might be an embarrassment to them, but they have to allow that in taking this action they might involve to a very much greater degree, not only China but Russia, who is, of course, one of the principal suppliers of North Vietnam. We have made it clear that it is not our purpose to destroy Vietnam nor to subjugate their country, but we do intend to press on with action which will prevent the aggression and infiltration proceeding from North Vietnam.

Q. Would you care to make a forecast on how you think the war will end? What are the various steps involved?

P.M. I wish I knew how the conflict would end. It would, I hope, proceed from a will to negotiate and, apart from being an optimist by temperament, I don't put that beyond the range of possibility

in the not-too-remote future. I have had some contact and experience with the communist mentality. We have seen this in the Berlin airlift, in the Cuban crisis, in many examples in contemporary history, both in the internal field and certainly in some of the domestic issues which have arisen inside countries such as my own, where there has been.....in some of our industrial organisations, and you have found that where there seems to be a complete impasse, a brick wall created between you and the opposing side, that at some point they make up their own mind that the game is just not worth the.....They will decide themselves the time to call it a day, and I believe that particularly over recent weeks when the good weather has persisted in North Vietnam, must make the leaders ponder and ask themselves - where are we going to get to if we persist with this? They can't win the war on the ground. They can only go ahead taking punishment indefinitely. They might look to the time when, as in Malaya as the thing was, they could carry on guerrilla operations, but the country as a whole would be able to carry on as Malaya carried on despite this, and with the punishment which is being inflicted industrially on the country and prospects for future economic progress, apart from the damage which might be inflicted on the forces engaged in the field and so on, I feel that the time must come when they say - this is when we negotiate. Now, for us and for you and you in particular, because you have the large share of the burden on this matter, it is not merely a matter of negotiation in order to stop the aggression, the fighting. There must be a settlement which will stick. There must be a just and enduring settlement which will enable the people of South Vietnam to decide their own destiny in their own way, and it is not to be peace at any price, much as we all long for peace, but when that time comes, we will all be better equipped to know just how we should conduct our negotiations.

Q. Would you comment on the position of Ho Chi Min in his own country? Is he a George Washington or a Benedict Arnold?

P.M. I think that that largely depends whether you are a communist supporter or a supporter of a different system of government. There is no doubt that he has enjoyed a strong support from those who have been politically inclined and accept the communist and socialist way of life. In North Vietnam, as indeed in South Vietnam and through much of South-East Asia, the greater part of the population live off the land and do not look very far beyond their own particular area of cultivation and they have been accustomed through the centuries to having one particular War Lord or one dominant regime, usually extorting from them what can be extracted and so there isn't the same individual and national conscience that we experience in countries such as our own which have a democratic libertarian tradition, but I have seen the evidence of an opposition building up to the Ho Chi Min regime. The intelligence that we get out of North Vietnam is not very considerable, but I would think that he still does exercise a very considerable influence over his own administration and over his country. It would be difficult to appreciate the effort put into reconstruction after the damage that has occurred there if this were not so. He is now, of course, a very old man in terms of normal public life. It may be that his successor will be no less determined to push on the sort of policies that he has pursued. I think it is fair to say that although there is a great deal of Chinese communist influence in North Vietnam, the North Vietnamese don't want the Chinese there any more than the South Vietnamese want the Chinese in South Vietnam, and if a negotiation could be conducted, I think that a line of division and a course could be established whether it involves a movement, as it did previously with people from one area to another, in order that those who wanted to live one kind of life could go to a country offering that - others who

wanted the sort of life which we hope will develop in South Vietnam could move there, but I don't think any of us can claim to be authorities as to the thinking, or the state of public opinion in North Vietnam at this time.

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