

VISIT TO US, CANADA AND UK



WASHINGTON, USA

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS BETWEEN PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND
PRIME MINISTER HAROLD HOLT OF AUSTRALIA IN THE STATE
DININGROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE

1ST JUNE, 1967

PRESIDENT JOHNSON - Prime Minister and Mrs. Holt, members of the Cabinet, members of the Diplomatic Corps, members of Congress, members of the Press, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Tonight we are fortunate to celebrate not one, but three very welcome visitors - the Australian Prime Minister and his lady, and the first day of June. They make a very warm and happy combination. The Prime Minister and I have spent a very fruitful day with each other. We have been doing what comes naturally to each of us - talking. Now, this evening, we have joined you at the table, if only to demonstrate a first law of politics - man does not live by words alone.

Prime Minister Holt, you and your gracious lady make this house a very happy one tonight. After dinner, we hope to repay you with some entertainment down the hall in the East Room. I think you will feel at home there. It is the room where we Americans indulge in something very close to an Australian blood sport -- but here in America, we call it a press conference. On those occasions, Mr. Prime Minister, I am often reminded of you for another reason. There always seems to be a boomerang loose in the East Room.

So that is one private bond between us. It gives personal strength to the public ties that unite our two peoples. History already records our affection and our trust - and the partnership and alliances they invigorate. It will some day record what the casual, the cynical, the doubting, the short-sighted, or the impatiently critical may miss. That is our shared success in helping to build a secure, stable, and prosperous new part of the world - the new Asia. The nations of free Asia - many of them new to independence - have already turned a corner. They are determined that aggression will not turn them back - and, Mr. Prime Minister, so are we.

This climate of hope owes a great deal to an Australia that offers Asia an example of what freedom can mean. The free Asian need only look south to see his tomorrow. He will see an Australian Government, led and directed by a competent management, elected by the people, and devoted to the people's interests. He will see the free and vigorous Australian people - whose living standards are among the highest in the world - who share widely in their nation's wealth - who hardly know any poverty at all and who are virtually each and every one of them employed - who have the highest rate of home ownership to be found anywhere in the world.

All Asia can see hope when they look at this happy land - a land where government and private industry put the fruits of the earth to increasing good use for all, with the help of Ed Clark. As the Ambassador said to me for the last 10 days awaiting your arrival, 'Let us all look to tomorrow - and when we look to tomorrow, let us look to Australia.'

Let us honour the shining record and the promise of our good friends and our good partners - the Australians. Tonight, to those few we could crowd into this room - and this is one dinner where we didn't get any rejections - I ask each of you to toast one of their bravest and one of their best - the Prime Minister of Australia.

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PRIME MINISTER HOLT - Mr President, Mrs Johnson, members of the Congress, the Cabinet, the Diplomatic Corps, the Judiciary, all the other many distinguished people who are here tonight.

I am, of course, gravely handicapped by the fact that there has been a malfunction in this particular instrument. So the President - either by accident or design - has assured that I shall be speaking to you off the cuff. Frankly, I prefer it that way because when one speaks that way, one speaks from the heart. Tonight, my heart is very full. It is a great honor to the Australian people; it is a great honor to the Australian Prime Minister and his wife, and to his government to have a function tendered to him in this fashion and to hear - as I have heard tonight - the moving words which have come from the President of the most powerful, the mightiest, richest, strongest nation in the world.

So I say, 'Thank you, Mr. President as President of the United States. May I say thank you also to Lyndon Johnson and Mrs Johnson - our very warm and very dear friends. I feel that the friendship which has long existed, cemented in the comradeship of struggle in order to help others to achieve the liberties and the freedom to which we all aspire - that has developed between our two countries - has been warmed by the growth of this friendship which has developed between Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Holt. Long may it continue - long after both of us have left the offices which we at present enjoy.

We are honored by the presence of you all. I was impressed by the distinguished names that came before me as we received you together with the President and Mrs. Johnson in the receiving line this evening. I thought, how many Heads of Government could come to a function such as this and find themselves among so many friends - close friends - some old friends, and some new friends. I don't know any people who make their friendships more quickly and abide more deeply than the friendships that develop between the people of America and the people of Australia.

You have kindly included in the record of music, which we delighted in this evening, the Australian tune - some people have tried to make a national anthem out of it - 'Waltzing Matilda'. Well, it hardly rates that. But at least no Australian can hear 'Waltzing Matilda' without a beating of the heart and a quickening of the pulse. And Mrs. Hammerstein, who has almost been assimilated by you, stirred as that number came up.

Now, Mr. President, earlier today, we had this exchange of words to which you refer. I must acknowledge my gratitude and indebtedness to you for the very valuable talk we had together, and for the talks I had later with your distinguished and most able secretaries, Mr. Dean Rusk and Mr. Robert McNamara. The unfortunate thing about all this is we can't say a great deal about it. That, of course, is a large part of the value of these discussions. They are intimate discussions. We reveal to each other what we think, what we know, in a way which could not be publicly disclosed without some difficulty or disadvantage in one direction or another. But it has its problems. The press, of course - those people that meet you in this other room here and prove difficult to you - in my own country, they prove difficult to me - are always anxious to know what it is we have had to say to each other.

I recall it particularly, because you may recall that on the last time we met in this room, you had - in the course of your speech - a few words of verse. I found it a bit hard to draw on my limited repertoire at the time to come back with something that seemed appropriate. I was delighted to find that tonight you hadn't extended me even further by some fresh presentation of some classic tract from the beauties of English literature. But this was taken up by a cartoonist in my country - perhaps struck by the fact that not much came out of our public communications - and he drew a very graphic cartoon of yourself and myself under which he had me making this statement - "We had a frank exchange of poems".

I did come along tonight prepared in case you did slip one out quickly. It was three lines from, I think, 'Julius Caesar' by Shakespeare. I think it is relevant to our respective problems.

'On such a full sea are we now afloat; and
We must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.'

That sums up, I think, Mr. President, where you and my country stand in relation to one of the most significant conflicts of modern history, a conflict in Vietnam, which to my mind, overshadows in significance even the topical and troublesome conflict which you see flaring up in the Middle East.

The conflict in Vietnam is fundamental to the future of free men. It is a fine thing that in the history of mankind, three Presidents of the United States - from different branches of the politics of the United States - a Republic President and two Democrats - have seen that this was an issue between men to be free or men to be slaves.

You are fighting the battle for men to be free. You, Mr. President, I believe will go down in history not because you took up that struggle which had been so clearly perceived by President Eisenhower and by President Kennedy, but because - more clearly than any other leader of the European race, you have seen the Asia of tomorrow, the burgeoning, blossoming Asia of a new era, that you have seen - and I believe I have seen for my country as I moved about it - perhaps more than any other Head of Government not of Asian race himself.

The last time we were here, we talked of this together and you said many things which were significant to the future, I believe, of mankind. Since then, I have had the opportunity to go through more countries of this area. Perhaps we shouldn't speak so much of Asia as if it were just a grouping that described a whole lot of people in much the same terms, because there are greater diversities of cultures, of traditions, of habits of life, of physical appearance, of outlooks, than are to be found anywhere else in the world - but her hope. To my mind, the 20th century may have been the century of Europe, but the 21st century will be the century of Asia.

If this be the case, it will be because an enlightened President of the United States of America saw that in the prospect - that the people of Asia had to throw off the shackles of the past, to throw off the tribulation of the past, to poverty, to disease, to illiteracy, to hunger, to ill health, to all the things that have kept man bound through the centuries, and by modern technology, by principles of freedom, by the friendliness and encouragement and help that enlightened people in a modern age could bring to three-fifths of mankind, we have virtually transformed the world in which we live.

This is the promise you hold out to us, Mr. President. I hope that with the courage of resolution you have shown in so many other directions, you and your people will have the courage, the resolution, and the vision to see this hope of mankind realized. Thank you for your friendship.

May I say this final word. The President and I today were exchanging views as to how we approach the problems of life. I said, "Well, I like to base my philosophy on being fair, firm, forthright and friendly." He said, "My objectives are peace, progress and prosperity." I said, "Let's marry the two together and I think we have got it made."

Thank you very much. While you are on your feet, may I ask you to join me in a toast to the President of the United States of America, and Mrs. Johnson.
