



VISIT TO US, CANADA AND UK

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Panel Moderator: Lawrence E. Spivak  
Panel Members: James Robinson - NBC News  
Bill D. Moyers - Newsday  
William R. Frye - World and Focus Syndicate  
James R. Shipley - Time Magazine

**Spivak:** This is Lawrence Spivak inviting you to Meet the Press. Our guest today on Meet the Press is the Prime Minister of Australia, Harold E. Holt. The Prime Minister recently completed a state tour through Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Taiwan. He came to the United States to confer with President Johnson. We will have the first questions now from James Robinson of NBC News.

**Robinson:** Mr. Prime Minister, Australia has frequently voiced concern about a power vacuum being created east of the Suez, but more specifically Southeast Asia, by the coming withdrawal of British military in that area. While here in the United States have you sought or received assurances from this Government that the US would move into that void?

**PM:** You mentioned the coming withdrawal. I think we need to correct that premise. The United Kingdom Government has taken no firm decision on this. Indeed, I have been assured by Prime Minister Wilson that no final decision will be taken at least until we have had a chance of talking this over together. But the United States has, as you know, commitments all around the arc of Asia and the Pacific running from Korea, Japan, Taiwan, South Vietnam, Thailand, and there is this one area of Malaysia in Singapore which it has regarded, quite properly, as a Commonwealth and primarily a British interest. And British intentions east of Suez therefore are of concern to the United States as indeed they are to my country.

**Robinson:** Do they view the same concern that your country does, specifically, if the British, which they have indicated time and time again because of monetary commitments, they would have to perhaps withdraw their forces from Malaysia and cut down the forces, which they have already done in Hong Kong?

**PM:** What is certain is that the United Kingdom intends to reduce substantially its forces in that region. It has taken no final decisions as to complete withdrawal. And we do take the view, in your country and mine, that a British presence in the area is desirable not merely for military reasons, it is a moderating, stabilizing influence in the area. The countries there want them to stay, and we hope that they will continue to stay.

**Robinson:** Does your Government have the military wherewithal now to bolster its forces further in the Southeast Asian area?

**PM:** Well, we are a small country, as you know, in terms of population about one-seventeenth the size of yours. We are currently devoting 5 per cent of our gross national product to defense expenditures, and we have a force in this

area with the British forces; and we have some thousands of troops with yours in Vietnam. We are currently building up the strength of our forces, and we do review from time to time what we are capable of doing in this area.

**Robinson:** Mr. Prime Minister, you have already increased your forces, or recently increased your forces up to 6,000 in Vietnam. If that war steps up in intensity would you also share a greater proportion of the burden of fighting?

**P.M.:** Well, I repeat, we do review from time to time, usually at the time when we are framing the budget, when we decide just what we can afford to spend on defence in a year, the extent of our contribution in these various areas. We have other commitments, of course. We have the defence of Papua and New Guinea to concern ourselves with, and we are making, I repeat, this contribution in Malaysia and the Singapore area. But we have representatives from the three Services engaged in Vietnam. The only country other than the United States to do so. And we pay our way with our own troops, unlike some of the other friendly forces participating there.

**Spivak:** Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. We will be back with Meet the Press and more questions for our guest, the Prime Minister of Australia, but first this message.

**Announcer:** Now back to Meet the Press. Please remember questions of the panel members do not necessarily reflect their own point of view. Here is our moderator, Lawrence Spivak.

**Spivak:** Resuming our interview, our guest today on Meet the Press is the Prime Minister of Australia, Harold E. Holt. We will continue the questions now with Mr. Shipley.

**Shipley:** Mr. Prime Minister, with your troops fighting in South Vietnam you are rather identified with American policy in that area. How has this affected your relations with your other Asian neighbors with whom you have just visited?

**PM:** I found a warm friendliness for Australia wherever we went, and this applied both in Cambodia and Laos which officially are neutral countries, and indeed, Cambodia tends to look in the direction of the Socialist camp, as you know. Of course in Taiwan and Korea, Australia was welcomed no less warmly, indeed possibly even more so because we were the first to join you in resisting aggression in Korea with the Koreans themselves, and we have had good relations with Taiwan, with whom we recently established an Embassy.

**Shipley:** You must have had a few scratchy moments with Prince Sihanouk. Would you mind telling us about your exchange of views with him?

**PM:** Well, I have a very good exchange of views with Prince Sihanouk, and I feel that I have learned to understand more deeply and clearly the motives which direct his country's policy. He has taken over as leader a country which over the centuries has been subject to harassment by its neighbours; he is trying to preserve a culture and tradition; and he does not believe in foreign intervention in any country, least of all his own.

**Shipley:** You must have asked him then about the use of his country, and particularly Prince Sihanouk trail, to bringing forces down from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. What did he have to say about that?

**PM:** Yes, we discussed that. He acknowledged that people were driven across the border occasionally. He did not want them there: he did not encourage them to stay there. He tended to discount the use of the Sihanouk trail. I think from my subsequent inquiries rather more so than the facts as we know

them were justified. But everybody that I have talked to about this admits that it is a very difficult trail for his limited forces to police, and perhaps he feels why should he have his own people come under attack when it is not his Problem, as he sees it.

Moyers: Mr. Prime Minister, a top general in Hanoi recently indicated that if we reached the state of negotiations the fighting is likely to be continued simultaneously with the negotiations themselves. Do you see this as a real possibility and what do we do if that happens?

PM: I think it is very difficult to predict what we do in the circumstances which cannot be clearly foreseen at this point of time. I have always believed myself that a military victory would be incomplete: we would have to have a political settlement.

Moyers: What do you think the terms of such a political settlement might be?

PM: Well, terms that would be acceptable to the powers which met at Manila would include the right of South Vietnam to resolve its own affairs, decide on the form of Government it wanted, and to be free from aggression, terrorism and infiltration from the North.

Moyers: Do you see the eventual reconciliation of North and South Vietnam through elections?

PM: I think that is something which would be very far ahead for both of them: But the South Vietnamese themselves acknowledge that at some point of time an opportunity should exist for the people of the two areas to decide whether they did want a unification.

Frye: Mr. Prime Minister, how much do you think the Soviet Union has gained by its backing of the Arabs in the Middle East?

PM: I do not know that anybody has gained very much out of this very tragic situation. And I think we can take some encouragement from the way in which the Soviet Union has really, as I have interpreted events, tried to avoid enlarging the dangers, and indeed, has been prepared to work with other great powers in limiting their consequences.

Frye: How extensively is it willing to work for a genuine peace? Do you see anything of the nature of a mideast Tashkent emerging?

PM: I am not clear about that. But I do think the recent history of the Soviet has shown a disposition to live more cooperatively with the free world as we would describe it with trade and other matters of international consequence.

Frye: Well, let me turn just for a minute then to the UN role in that area. The UN, the removal of the UN's Peace Army has been criticized on the ground that it is like taking down an umbrella the moment it starts to rain. On the other hand, of course, to have kept it there would have been to override Egypt's sovereignty. Do you think it is desirable or possible for the US to develop in practice the power to impose the will of the world community on a nation state?

P.M: If the major powers are prepared to give full backing to the United Nations, and this has been the great disadvantage in these matters over recent years, it has been hard to get unanimity amongst the major powers, then there is a real prospect, I believe. And it would also depend to some degree on how far the great powers are prepared to assist economically and from the defence point of view in sustaining such a settlement.

**Spivak:** Mr. Prime Minister, a great many Americans believe that the war in Vietnam is going to be a long one. From your vantage point closer to the area will you give us your estimate of how long you think the war will last?

**PM:** Well, in Malaysia, where we had a somewhat similar consideration, but a very much less complex situation, and fewer people involved, it took us the better part of fifteen years. By us, the British and other Commonwealth forces. I do not foresee anything of that length of time in South Vietnam. But until the North Vietnamese are convinced themselves that there is not that much to be gained from persisting, then the fighting will continue. I, being an optimist by temperament, think there is a possibility, just as there has been in other postwar situations of the Communists moving quickly once they decide the game is not worth the candle.

**Spivak:** Well, do you think the war can be shortened if we continue the bombing, or that it is more likely to be shortened if we stop the bombing?

**PM:** I am strongly in support of the continuance of the bombing. I refuse to believe that the bombing is not having an important effect. I do not feel that a country which is mounting aggression, which is supplying its own forces from its national territory, should be immune from attack. I regard as unrealistic the argument that there would be negotiation if the bombing would only cease. We were told earlier there would be a negotiation if the Americans withdrew their troops from the area. And a country that is looking for negotiations, it can find through the various diplomatic channels ways of achieving this. I do not myself believe that the North Vietnamese are yet in a mood for negotiation.

**Robinson:** Mr. Prime Minister, moving from Vietnam back to the more peaceful land of Australia, your country by geography is Asian. By race it is white. And you continue a pure white immigration policy, excluding Asians, your neighbours, from immigrating into Australia. Will that not boomerang against your country?

**PM:** Again your premise needs qualification. You would probably be surprised to know that there are 12,000 Asian students in our schools and universities; That some 30,000 people have been admitted since the war who would not have been eligible under the regulations which applied before the war; that some thousands of people of Asian origin have taken out full naturalization in Australia. No, we have liberalized the arrangements quite a good deal. And the governments of the area recognize the value for them or secure, stable and relatively homogeneous Australia.

**Robinson:** Well, I have met many Southeast Asians in my long tenure in Southeast Asia who had a lot of antagonisms against your country, and more specifically against your government, and even more specifically against that on your racial immigration laws. Are you saying that you are going to moderate those even more and more as time goes on?

**PM:** I have said we have moderated them, and time and circumstance -- our circumstances include a rapidly growing trade with Asia compared with the 1950's when 15 per cent of our export trade was east of Suez, it is 40 per cent today. Japan has become the biggest customer in the world for Australian goods. These things have a bearing on all this. But might I emphasise that not one representative of an Asian government has ever raised with me in my many travels around the area the question of our immigration policy.

**Shipley:** Mr. Prime Minister, when our President was recently a visitor in your country there was a certain amount of paint splashing and running about the streets. What has been the political effect in Australia of your support of the American policy in Vietnam?

PM: Well, you know your paint splashing reference, it was a very isolated reference. The President had the most marvellous reception in my country that any visiting dignitary has ever received. And I know he was greatly heartened by it. We fought the last election on the issue of Vietnam and the participation there for the first time in our history of draftees called into the Services. And we had a record majority victory, despite this as a central issue. Most Australians have accepted this verdict, and I would say there has been a considerable abatement of any active public demonstration or protest against the policy.

Shipley: Would you say that Australia goes all the way with LBJ then?

PM: In relation to Vietnam I have said I go all the way with LBJ, and most Australians are going all the way with me on these issues.

Moyers: You have been to Southeast Asia three times, Mr. Prime Minister, in the last 14 months. Have you noticed any changes, particularly in regard to economic and political development between trips?

PM: When I was here the last time you may remember I said that one of the great dividends which had already been secured from American participation in Vietnam was the growing economic, social and political strength of the countries sheltered by the American shield. My recent visit confirmed this more strongly for me, particularly in Taiwan and in Korea, where both countries have the greater growth for their national product which ranks among the highest we found anywhere in the world.

Moyers: What is Australia's specific stake in South Vietnam, Mr. Prime Minister? Do you feel threatened by the North Vietnamese, or behind them, the Chinese?

PM: Well, what was Australia's stake in its participation in World War I and World War II? Australians believe that countries should be able to live free from aggression. We were first by you, I repeat, in Korea; we were early with you in Vietnam, helping to resist the aggressor and preserve the independence of a small country. Now that is the kind of world in which we want to live. But apart from that, we believe that if this threat of aggression can be removed from the countries of the area that they will progress, they will throw off these historic shackles of the past -- the evidence in Japan, in Korea and Taiwan and Thailand, and others in the area, Malaysia, these countries are all showing what can be done once this threat has been removed from them.

Frye: There is a theory that if the United States had failed to stand firm in Vietnam, the attempt at a coup in Indonesia might have succeeded. Do you know of any intelligence information to support this theory?

PM: No, but I support the view myself. I have little doubt in my mind that had America not intervened in South Vietnam, just had it not intervened in Korea, we would not have even had a struggle in South Vietnam. That we would not have produced in Indonesia the strength of the support for the generals against those who instituted the coup, and against the Communist Party which led to the overthrow of the Communist Party.

Frye: The policies of Sihanouk and Sukarno have some considerable similarity. Sihanouk, too, has tried to appease the Communists. Has he had rude awakening as a result of this most recent Communist guerilla activity in his own country?

PM: Well, I think there is a similarity in that both of them have tried to revive a sense of national identity, a lively consciousness of belonging to a particular country. But Sukarno is a revolutionary of a rather turbulent and dramatic order.

I would not put Sihanouk in that category. He is a man who has far more concern for economic development and the progress of his country than Sukarno ever had. He is troubled currently by some Communist activity there, but I think this is significant because he had tried to live in friendship with them.

Frye: Is it an incipient Vietnam?

PM: No, I would not say that. It is on a much smaller scale, and he has got it very much under control.

Spivak: Mr. Prime Minister, our allies in Europe have given us virtually no support, certainly very little support in Vietnam. From what you said a minute ago in answer to another question, do you believe that Vietnam should be considered or must be considered a European as well as an Asian problem?

PM: I think it is an important interest for Europe, and the fact that the Secretary General of the United Nations felt moved recently to say that this could lead to a third world war surely makes of vital interest for the western countries. I think it a great misfortune that so few leading figures from the west - and this goes for the United Kingdom as well - have not been in the area. They have not sensed, as your President has, or many of your senior American citizens who visited the place, what the potentialities are, what the movement is, the excitement of growth and development occurring there. If they did I think they would be more sympathetically disposed.

Robinson: Mr. Prime Minister, as you said, you have just recently set up an Embassy in Taiwan. Could you explain to us that Australia has been one of the leading countries shipping grains to Communist China, which has sustained that regime in many instances in power?

PM: Oh, I would not put it as high as that. China can get wheat from many wheat-exporting countries. We think that the sales of our wheat to China mean more to our economy and the contribution we can make than, relatively speaking, it does to China. But that is putting the more materialistic view of things. I have said publicly in this country quite strongly that there must be eventually an accommodation with China: it is unrealistic to view the future otherwise. And if we are to establish some point of contact, some bridges of cooperation, some friendship, nothing is more effective than trade. You can have cultural exchanges, sporting exchanges, visits by journalists and others, but trade provides better than anything else a mutuality of interests. And I think it would be encouraged.

Spivak: Gentlemen, we have less than three minutes.

Shipley: Mr. Prime Minister, you said in response to Mr. Spivak's question that you thought the war in Vietnam might begin to come to an end when Mr. Ho Chi Minh thought the candle was not worth the game. What sort of influences are likely to persuade him to that conclusion?

PM: Well, I myself attach a good deal of importance to the sustained bombing which has been particularly effective over the last couple of months. The military pressures, also I think are having a cumulative effect: the number of defectors is increasing. The very degree of the terrorist campaign against the cadres in the villages, the revolutionary development cadres which the South Vietnamese people have set going there, this shows that the Communists are feeling the pressures from this. And these things tend to be cumulative. If there are shortages of food and necessities of life, I cannot be told that morale is not eventually affected by these things.

**Moyers:** On the subject of Mainland China, Mr. Prime Minister, do you believe the time has come to admit the Communist Chinese into the United Nations?

**P.M.:** No, we do not, until Communist China has given evidence of a willingness to adopt the rules of the game in the United Nations, and until we have worked out a satisfactory arrangement in respect of Taiwan, no settlement with mainland China would be acceptable to us which did not also take care of the people of Taiwan. We supported the United States and other countries which concluded at the most recent discussion of this that the time was certainly not right for their admission.

**Frye:** What do you think are China's intentions in Hong Kong?

**PM:** I do not believe that they want to press this to a point which threatens the security and stability of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is too valuable an outlet for Chinese trade, Chinese commerce. It means a great deal in foreign exchange to the Chinese, who are short of this. No, they might cause some mischief, but I do not think they will press it to real trouble.

**Spivak:** We have thirty seconds for an answer and a question.

**Robinson:** Mr. Prime Minister, do you see any reason for continuing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization?

**PM:** Yes, I do, even if some members have not been as wholehearted in their support: there are others who are very much concerned with cooperating together in the area to resist Communist expansion and they should be encouraged to continue this.

**Spivak:** I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up.  
Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for being with us today on Meet the Press.

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