



VISIT TO SOUTH EAST ASIA 1968

DJAKARTA

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON,  
AT BANQUET GIVEN BY PRESIDENT SUHARTO

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13 JUNE 1968

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:-

Thank you, Sir, for your kind welcome and warm remarks about the relations between our two countries. My visit to Indonesia in the course of my first visit as Prime Minister to this area reflects the close concern and interest which the Government and people of Australia have in your country. This interest is not new found.

Australians are proud to have extended the hand of friendship to Indonesians in the earlier days of the struggle for independence. We are even prouder, Sir, that you accepted that friendship and paid us the honour of nominating us as your representative at the United Nations negotiations at that time. It was in those days that a firm basis was laid for an enduring and neighbourly relationship. Those early days of close co-operation were followed in due course by events that were less happy. But through all these times of differences and confrontation Australia's interest in Indonesia did not slacken.

For example, during all that time our aid programme continued and your students remained at their studies at our universities. It was also possible at that time to reach agreement on the marking of our common border in Irian. In all our dealings during those difficult times we sought to indicate that we were fully conscious of the need to preserve as wide an area of co-operation as possible and continue to work towards a confident and productive relationship. I believe that you shared this aim and looked forward with us to the time when the full warmth of our relations could be restored. And that time has come. It is a matter of the highest satisfaction to me and to all Australians that relations have now been fully restored and indeed, as I think, lifted to new levels.

The Australian Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Hasluck, has visited Indonesia three times in the last sixteen months. Your Foreign Minister has just concluded a visit to Australia. There have been numerous visits by other Ministers between our two countries in the last two years. At the Parliamentary level we had a Parliamentary Delegation here last year and your Parliamentary Delegation has just returned from Australia. Large numbers of individual members of the Australian Parliament from both sides of the House have come here on visits both official and private. Our Air Force Commanders have exchanged visits. We have Army officers training in each other's country. Units of the Australian Navy have been most courteously received in recent visits in Indonesia.

This is quite a satisfying list. But in itself it does not fully convey the warmth of the relations established, the growing frankness of the exchanges that we have and the desire to seek out even more ways of helping each other overcome our individual and our shared problems. It is this spirit and not just the fact that there have been these meetings which is so important and which ensures that we shall go forward along the course of mutual help and interest with trust and respect. None of this that I have said is surprising to me, nor, Your Excellency, from what you have said, is it surprising to you. Nothing is more natural than that Australia and Indonesia, situated as they are and occupying the places they do in the political and economic life in this part of the world, should be the best of friends with a common interest in developing good neighbourly relations.

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For whatever happens in this part of the world affects us both, not always equally, but surely nonetheless. We look out on the same vista of international affairs from the same geographical situation, and we give thought to the same questions, and cope with similar problems. The conclusions we arrive at, the actions we take, are not always going to be the same. We each have our particular traditions, and links, and interests which together with the facts of geography, determine those individual conclusions and actions. But, in many cases those conclusions will be the same, and when they are not it is important that we both have a clear understanding of the reasons for any diversion of approach. And I think there is already ample evidence that this is a realistic aim and that this can, and will, be achieved.

So I believe, Your Excellency, that our two countries must go forward together. I believe also that each of our two countries recognises that. I believe that not only our two countries but the other neighbouring countries in the region must also go forward with us. And I believe finally that we shall accomplish this goal, God willing, to our mutual benefit, prosperity and to the service of the independence of each one of our countries and of those other neighbouring countries in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, would you join me in drinking a toast to the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

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