

DJAKARTA

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON,  
AT A DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRESIDENT SUHARTO

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14 JUNE 1968

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:-

It would, for any Australian Prime Minister, at any time, be a special privilege to be a host to the President of the Republic of Indonesia. But on this occasion there is perhaps a doubly special pleasure because quite soon, I think perhaps tomorrow, you begin a series of fairs and carnivals in Djakarta to celebrate the 441st anniversary of the foundation of this city. It is therefore doubly pleasant that I should have quite inadvertently so timed this visit that it coincides with this celebration.

It is perhaps salutary to someone from Australia to consider this and to consider that this city, in which we are tonight, was founded 250 years before the nation which I represent was founded in my country. This long stretch of history behind you was reinforced to me last night by the cultural exhibition which you so kindly presented and which was from the various parts of this great archipelago. You showed dances stretching back three, four, five hundred years and which we for our part cannot match. Our own national existence has been shorter than has been the existence of this city though we do draw from centuries past, a culture from Great Britain that we must turn and will turn to our own ends as people from other nations come and make a new nation in Australia.

But it is a double privilege to have you as the guest of honour, for we in Australia have a keen awareness of the leadership which you are giving to this nation in difficult times; a keen awareness of the problems which you with courage and imagination are seeking in these times to overcome. We wish you all success in these endeavours, not only for your own sake but for our own sake too and for those of other neighbouring countries. For if you achieve success in the task which you have set yourself, then our future will be the easier, so will the future of other neighbouring countries: so will the future of the region as a whole. In this great and difficult task which you have before you we will, as far as our nation is concerned, be helpful as far as we are able, considering the commitments at home and abroad which we have.

Sir, what we can do will depend on many factors, but I do assure you that we will try as a nation to play that part in helping to fulfil the dreams you have for the future of your nation and the dreams we have for the future of the whole of the region to which we are contiguous, of which perhaps ultimately we will be an important part. Sir, you will know that just recently we have taken a decision in Australia to double next year the amount of aid which last year we provided to Indonesia and it is a matter of special pride that this was one of the first decisions made by the Australian Government since I became Prime Minister of my country. But that is, in the context of the problems facing you, a small contribution. We will, besides that, stand behind you in the councils of the world to seek to see that other greater countries, not contributing more per head perhaps, but contributing more in total, enjoy with you and ourselves in the goal you have set.

We are glad to have large numbers of your students studying in our country, and we hope that when they return, as they do return, to their homeland, the result of their studies will be shown in technological progress, in administrative progress, in the general assistance to you in your governmental activities which through such training we hope to give.



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And you will know that, regarding investment in this country, the first main conference in Indonesia of private firms and private individuals took place in August of last year and had, as its origin in Australia, a large number of Australia's leading businessmen and industrialists who came to Djakarta at that time to participate and who, as regards many of them, have pursued their interests since then. In some cases, in turn, investment will follow. In other cases, investment might not follow but technical assistance, technological assistance, will be there for the asking and we feel that it is possible that in the context of the Indonesian economy, the technical assistance which we can provide may be, and I say only may be, more significant and more appropriate than the technical assistance of some greater complexes of some greater countries, because it may be that at our stage of development, and at your stage of development, this technical assistance will be better than it might be from some mighty complex of a power country.

But this, important as it is, must go side by side with agricultural improvements which I know is close to your hearts. Is it impossible to increase food production in Indonesia? If it is possible to double the production per hectare of land, for example, of rice, then that must be a basic requirement for future progress in any direction because the production of food in sufficient quantities, to ensure that food is sold without an increase in price must be the basis on which all other building takes place and we would be interested, Sir, in seeking to try and play a part in that should you regard that as a large priority in the many other activities in which you are engaged.

I do not wish to traverse the whole field of co-operation between our two nations. I think we have made some advance in the cultural agreement signed between our two countries: one which provides for exchange of scientific knowledge for bringing closer together the academics in our country and in yours: for bringing to our own nation those cultural heritages which you have: for bringing for the Indonesian people that which we can do to entertain them. These must, in the long run, build up to a better understanding between our two peoples and indeed, Sir, it is my belief that the signing of such an agreement will give added impetus to an interest already evident but not as evident as it should be in Australia to the studying of Indonesian language, of Indonesian history, of Indonesian culture, and this I believe will take place in our country in the future.

That step has been a part of the past between Indonesia and Australia that I think is a part of the vision of the future between Indonesia and Australia but there are tensions in the whole of the area in which you find yourselves geographically and we find ourselves geographically, and I would hope that it would be possible in the course of the future, the near future, to see that these intentions were as far as possible damped down and that you and we and all the other nations in this area could at least say to each other that we respect and honour the territorial boundaries of each nation and will not, under any circumstances, seek to upset them. This is, Sir, just a matter of damping down the tensions: if it happened it would be good, and if after it happened or while it was happening we could, together, seek to improve, however slowly, but constantly the living standards of the individuals in each country, then we would be laying a real foundation for what is possible if the men and the women of each nation in this area, under the leadership provided to them, are prepared to make it possible, and because I think that you, Sir, are prepared to make it possible and because I think you are aiming at making it possible. That is the third reason why tonight I have such a sense of privilege in having you beside me in the Indonesian capital, and in asking all those gathered here to rise and drink with me to the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

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