



PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO INDONESIA, SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER

THE RT HON. WILLIAM McMAHON, CH, MP.

AT ISTANA TETAPAN, MALAYSIA

14 June, 1972.

My intention, with your approval is to take you fairly quickly through the communique which was issued at probably somewhere about two o'clock today, and which has been agreed to by the Governments of Malaysia and my own country after fairly full and detailed discussions between Tun Razak and myself. If then subsequently you want to, by all means ask me questions. I'll want to give priority in the asking of questions to members of the Malaysian press. So, if that is satisfactory to you, I'll carry on in the way I've just mentioned.

Well, first of all, could I preface my remarks by saying something to you. I came up here, first to Indonesia, then Singapore, and now Malaysia on what I termed initially as a good-will mission. I wanted to make certain that the relationships between Australia and the three countries I visited were based upon a sound footing and that we had their confidence and goodwill. I am sure that as I go home that objective has been achieved. Now, this goodwill confidence and trust is not based solely on historical considerations or an historical background. It's based, to a large extent, on the fact that we all know that we have to play our part in the future in trying to ensure peace and prosperity and progress in an area in which each of us lives. And we know that none of us - none of the four countries - can withdraw from the area, or withdraw from the obligation that we've got to our own people, and in co-operation, try to ensure the kind of objectives that I mentioned to you a few moments ago.

I could not have asked for a better relationship with President Soeharto than I have. As you know, we were able to give Indonesia substantially increased defence and civil aid, for which they expressed their approval. And I think we could take it that on most matters of mutual interest, there was a meeting of minds and a coincidence of views. Equally, too, when I went to Singapore, I found exactly the same with Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, who is an old friend of mine - one who I have known for a long time and regard not only as the great Leader of his own country, but in a personal way as well. Again, the relationship could not have been better, and we had a common view on most of the problems that arose.

I think I can summarise his views in a statement that he made at a dinner that he gave for me. If you haven't got copies of it - the members of the Kuala Lumpur press - please let me give you a copy, because it does show the strength of goodwill between the two countries and the way in which our views coincide. He said he's got faith and trust in the Five Power Arrangements: He wants them to be sustained. He wants tourism to develop between our two countries, and he knows that together we must play our part in the development and progress of the South East Asian theatre.

I'll just read it out our attitudes on South Vietnam are the same. Our attitudes to development of the South Asian countries are the same too. And what he does say is that the Five Power Defence Arrangements have received a degree of importance that over-shadows the other matters that we've discussed. He also says that the Defence Arrangements of the Commonwealth Five Powers have provided continuing stability to an area important to us, the people who live in it, and perhaps to you in Australia, and there is no reason why we should not make further progress in regional co-operation to consolidate the present stability of the area. He also refers to a position that is exactly the same as ours relating to South Vietnam, and he expresses the view that when the American forces do withdraw - and he hopes not in disgrace - then the forces that are left behind can be allowed to sort out their future by themselves without external interference by force. That, of course, is a view that is shared by my own Government and by my own actions. We've clearly indicated where our heart and where our will lies.

Now to come here, I want to say this too, and I want to say it frankly. I've known your Prime Minister for some time, I've known him again on a friendly, and I believe, a basis of complete trust between two people, and I could not have hoped for greater co-operation and goodwill that I have found here during the course of the last three days. Naturally enough, I talked to him when he came out to the airport to bring me into Kuala Lumpur. I have had dinner with him on two occasions, and I have had a long discussion with him on matters of mutual interest. For a large part, the discussions centred around what was happening in the Asian theatre.

His pre-occupation, as with our pre-occupation, in international affairs, is what contribution could we make - the people of goodwill, the people who regard themselves as friendly and co-operative neighbours - what contribution we can make to the objectives that I've mentioned in relation to the other countries, and the objectives that Tun Razak himself shares with the other three of us. But we also went over a wide range of other matters. But, first of all, you know Tun Razak is very interested in the problems - not only bilateral, but multilateral ones as well - and he did raise with me the question of the part that he took in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, and his attitude towards the neutralisation of South-East Asia.

For my part, after discussion with him - and I think you can take it that this joint communique is a summary of my discussions with him of the occasions that I have mentioned - I did confirm that the Malaysian Government's goal that South East Asia should be a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, under effective international guarantees, is entirely consistent with the policies of his own Government.

We welcomed the declaration as a regional initiative directed towards peace and stability in the area. These were words that I believe we could generally say in paragraph eight that the Prime Ministers agreed that the common objectives of the two Governments was the creation of conditions of peace, security and independence in this area, in which the work of regional co-operation and national development can go forward.

Then we come to paragraph nine, which, as far as the defence area is concerned, does, I think, clarify the relationships between the two countries. Again, I could not have asked that my discussions with him could have been any better. They were frank. They were free, and they were based upon the idea of mutual interest, goodwill, and a desire to co-operation.

What we did agree was that the Five Power Arrangements provide a framework for close and effective co-operation, which is of value to both Governments. Then the Prime Minister for Malaysia assured me that the continuing presence of Australian forces, both land and air, in Malaysia/Singapore in the context of the arrangements is welcomed by the Malaysian Government and contributes and confidence in the area.

I go on to add the two Governments have no differences under the Five Power Arrangements, and I reaffirm that Australia would at all times honour its obligations. I think that most of you are pretty able and talented pressmen. I draw your attention to the whole of paragraph nine. But I think I can just repeat that the Prime Minister of Malaysia assured me that the continuing presence of Australian forces, both land and air, in Malaysia/Singapore, in the context of the arrangements, is welcomed by the Malaysian Government and contributed to defence and confidence in the area.

We then passed on - I'm not giving you the actual sequence of events in which events occurred because this is not the actual sequence, but this is the way in which they were drafted. We then went on to the question of the second Malaysia Plan and the desirability of having continuation of Australia's aid, which is making a steady and continuing contribution to Malaysia's economic development.

Various projects were, in fact, mentioned, such as - I won't go through them, but they are in paragraph II, and you will see some of them there. We discussed a Pahang River basis study, and assistance to Mardi in pastoral and fodder research. I did subsequently arrange for one of my very senior officers who came with me - the second in command of our Department of Trade and Industry - to discuss with three senior officers of the Malaysian administration, a wide range of matters that had been raised by the Malaysian Prime Minister with me. I thought it was better in these cases, where technical problems were involved, that the officials should carry out the discussions.

Then we referred to the question of the numbers of students who are visiting Australia, and we reaffirmed the strength of the friendship and goodwill between our two Governments and people.

All in all, therefore, I can only comment this way. I personally believe it was a successful mission. I know it was carried out with a maximum of goodwill. I can repeat - and these are the words of the Prime Minister of Malaysia himself, referring to the Five Power Arrangements - that there are no problems between us, and I can specifically refer you to the paragraph that relates to the Asian theatre, and the ideals that the Malaysian Prime Minister has set himself and the goal he wants to achieve in the Kuala Lumpur declaration.

Have said all that, I now ask, and particularly the Malaysian Press, if there are any questions you would like to ask me.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, I read this communique and I found there is nothing said regarding the problem of the Straits of Malacca...

PM. The problem of what?

Q. The problem of the Straits of Malacca, because this is a matter of concern to the Malaysian Government. So I would like to find out from you the Australian view or opinion on the matter.

PM. The problem of the Straits of Malacca was not mentioned between myself and the Malaysian Prime Minister.

Q. Sir, in what way can your country help the countries of this region achieve the objectives of neutralisation of South East Asia? What role can your country hope to play?

PM. I have to look at this problem of neutralisation in the Asian context. And, as you know, we are not, and have not been, invited to join ASEAN but, as I see the concept, it means that the participating countries of course - and at the moment they are only the Asian countries of course - would give up their bilateral arrangements and they would join together, whether it happens to be five or ten of the South East Asian countries - or up to ten anyhow, and they would seek international guarantees by the super powers and by China.

But, as yet, the concept of neutralisation has not been defined. I said it is the statement that is here - this sets out my Government's point of view and our attitude towards it. I think you will get a complete crystallisation of how it is in the relevant paragraph there. Is that what you were seeking?

Q. What I intended to ask is, in what way can your country contribute towards neutralisation or these objectives?

PM. I don't know at the moment what can be done because that's purely a hypothetical question. The goals, or the immediate intention of the ASEAN countries is to try and get a greater number of countries to co-ordinate their effort. And when they have done that - and they don't expect this to happen for some time, probably two, probably three years - then when they have got co-operation amongst the South East Asian countries, themselves, they will ask at least the two super powers and the People's Republic of China to give effective international guarantees.

Whether they would ask us to be one of the guarantors, or to join with a group of other countries as a guarantor, is something that has not yet been raised. So I can't be any more precise on that aspect than I have been.

Q. Sir, in this context, did you discuss the future relations with China and how China would come into this strategy on this neutralisation plan. In the context of this neutralisation, did you discuss future relations with China and how to go about it?

PM. We discussed President Nixon's visit to Moscow and to Peking. We discussed the problem of effective guarantees by the Soviet, by the U.S.A. , and by the People's Republic of China. We didn't go any further than that. But the Prime Minister did mention that in time perhaps it would be accepted as a fact of life that Australia was one of those who could be regarded as a supporter of Malaysia, and our common approach to the problems of neutralisation as set out in the communique.

Q. Could you tell us about policy towards China in the future? I mean when do you hope to normalise relations with China?

PM. No. China is not one of the problems that I choose to say very much about. We've made it clear that, from our point of view, we are prepared to normalise our relationship with them and to move steadily towards recognition. But it is on two conditions. The first one is that we do not, and will not, desert Taiwan, and the second one is, of course, that Australia's national interests must be paramount in our thinking.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, speaking of defence in this area. In Canberra in June 1969, your predecessor said the defence of Malaya, not Malaysia, and Singapore was indivisible. Is that still the Australian Government's position?

PM. Let me say this. I am not going back over the past, and I've made it as a rule, as you should know, that I will not discuss statements that have been made by my predecessor in office.

The Five Power Arrangements so far as I and my Government are concerned, cover, in terms of consultation, both East, West, and East Malaysia. The obligation to consult is one that we would recognise covering Malaysia.

Q. (Inaudible - only a couple of words)

PM. Well, I'm talking now only against the Malaysian background. Of course it covers Singapore too. But you asked your question specifically relating to East and West Malaysia.

Q. Sir, paragraph nine. The words at the top of page three - "and contributed to the defence and confidence of the area". Do you regard this as a complete deviation of Prime Ministerial approval, i.e. Malaysian Prime Ministerial approval, of the official briefing given us that the Malaysians are not overly concerned about the withdrawal of the presence of land forces?

PM. I would never come into that sort of a discussion overseas, and, if I did, the ones who would resent it most bitterly would be the Australian press and media back home.

I think it is unforgiveable for any member of the Government to raise political, or to discuss political matters of this kind openly when he is the guest of another Government. But, to put it absolutely clearly and beyond any doubt, that is the arrangement I have made on behalf of Australia with the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

It is a communique issued at the top, and carries the full authority of the two Governments.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, could I ask when was it decided to issue a communique here and why there was no similar communique issued in Singapore?

PM. I wanted it issued because I thought that so much confusion has been caused in the Australian press, that it was highly desirable that our attitudes should be clarified, and they should be definitive and on paper. That was the reason why I felt it was better that it should be done.

Q. Sir, you said before that the things which.....and didn't necessarily appear in the order in which they appear here. Could you tell us when you had your discussions with the Malaysian Prime Minister concerning the Five Power defence Arrangements.

PM. I won't go into that because, quite frankly, I've talked to him each time I've met him on it. So its been running discussion since I've been here. I couldn't identify when each matter was raised. We continued the discussion when it was finalised, but it's gone on during the whole of the time I have been here.

A. Did you discuss that in your first talks?

PM. Which one is this?- Five Power. Yes, but not in the definitive sense in which it is here. But I did discuss it with him.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister. Could I just clarify that? Did you contact the Prime Minister of Malaysia on this matter of the Five Power Agreement following the briefing that was given to the Australian press here on the first day of our visit?

PM. Following which briefing?

Q. Following the briefing the Australian press was given by the Foreign Ministry. On Monday morning, the Australian press party here was given a briefing by the Foreign Ministry.

PM. By one member of the foreign office.

Q. Yes. The Deputy Secretary of the foreign office. On Monday afternoon we received word that you, through Mr. Rowland, had been in touch with the Prime Minister, and that the Prime Minister had asked that he would prefer the statement to be made from the foreign office. Did you contact the Prime Minister that afternoon on this matter?

- PM. No. I didn't contact the Prime Minister that afternoon. You ask me did I contact the Prime Minister. No, I did not.
Also the statement that is contained relating the field of defence was not in the specific terms in which it is contained here, but in general terms as discussed in my first meeting with them.
- Q. Sir, could you outline for us the premise on which the Australian military commitment to Malaysia and Singapore was based?
- P.M. The premise.
- Q. The principal premise on which the commitment was based?
- PM. If somebody could give me a copy of the memorandum issuesI would want to quote exactly.....I am sorry. What you want is what is the foundation, what is the rason d'etre. What I have said about the top of page three - that it is welcomed by the Malaysian Government and contributes to defence and confidence in that area. And I will also find out for you, because we've got about four different principles set out relating to Five Power Arrangements. I can get those for you and I can let you have them as soon as this conference is over.
- Q. What I really wanted to know, Sir, was whether the premise was still that we, Australia, has its forces in these two countries because these two countries want Australian forces there, or is it some other reason.
- PM. These are the reasons set out here as agreed to by the Prime Minister of Malaysia and myself as the reason by..... To set out the last four lines, the Prime Minister of Malaysia assured the Prime Minister of Australia that the continuing presence of Australian forces, both land and air, in Malaysia/Singapore in the context of the arrangements is welcomed by the Malaysian Government and contributes to defence and confidence in that area. That is the premise on which it is based.
- Q. Prime Minister - Meyer, ABC.
By that area do you mean Australia. To what extent does it contribute to the defence and confidence of Australia.
- PM. Well, if you read it, you will see that in Malaysia/Singapore in the context of the arrangements is welcomed and contributes to defence and confidence in that area. The words are these clear enough.
- Q. Sir, to put the question again and perhaps re-phrase it. From the Australian view the presence of Australian troops here. On what premise is that based? The question is what Mr. Reese was trying to get at.? And does this in any way contribute to the defence of Australia and the confidence in that area?
- PM. What we are aiming at in this is clear enough and so far as the Five Power Arrangements are concerned they are making for Australia's contribution to the defence and security of, using the words that are there, Malaysia/Singapore, in the context of the Five Power Arrangements. ..'8

I take it no further than that, other than that it is our objective, that happens to be the objective too of the other four countries or powers under the Five Power Arrangements, that we want peace and security. We believe that it will be a contribution to the peace and security here, and for that reason we strongly support it and are taking concrete action of a kind such as standing our forces here, giving military and civil aid as our contribution to those objectives.

Q. Well, Sir, do you still regard the positioning of Australian forces here as being part of a forward defence concept of Australia and, if the Five Power Arrangements are no longer considered necessary by the member Governments, what will be your attitude then?

PM. If the governments.....we are up here and we have an indefinite commitment to stay here. If there were... and I would be raising now a very hypothetical question and one that frankly....because of the communique that is being issued and the precision with which it is being expressed shows the attitude of the Malaysian Government and what they feel about the presence of forces in the area. That shows the present position. If they change their minds, that is a matter for them, and we have made it clear again and again that if they said that they did not want our forces to remain of course that would terminate it. I want you to understand this, I don't want to get involved in semantics about this, but his speaks for itself. It is a document of goodwill and of intention, and if you read the words carefully, I think that you can take it that goodwill in our intentions to assist them not only in their development, not only in sustaining confidence, but in helping them to build up their own defences and to be able to develop their own sense of security and to look after themselves.

Q. Sir if I could perhaps put one last question.....

PM. No...

MR.

GAUL Just two last questions. It's already gone on for more than thirty minutes.

PM. I don't mind their going on, but I.....

Q. Sir, did you find at any times an indication on the part of Malaysians...Prime Minister that for discussing more serious issues like China and neutralisation after the elections in Australia is over so that they will know who will be in the position to....

PM. I think I have already given an answer to that. First of all I would not relate in detail what discussion took place between myself and the Malaysian Prime Minister except to the extent that it was in the communique. But what I can assure you of is this:

I think of him as a friend, and the warmth and goodwill seems to move from him to my own country and from him to the people of Australia, and I think the same goes for the Deputy Prime Minister, too.

Q. Indistinguishable.

PM. Yes. Its now a long time and I can't elaborate on that. I would refer to that in the sense as to what was said by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Singaporean Prime Minister. I can't elaborate on it other than that the objectives of his Government are the same as ours and we want South Vietnam and for that matter the other countries Laos and Cambodia, to be able to live in peace free from external aggression.

Q. Sir, do you detect that neutralisation, Malaysia's interest in neutralisation, has diminished its interest in the Five Power Arrangements?

PM. No.

Q. Sir, do you want yourself and your Government, in the event of proven substantial external assistance for Malaysia's continuing insurgency problem with the Malayan Communist party - if this were a proved fact in the future - would you consider it a reason for consultation under the Five Power Agreement if agreed and if necessary for intervention.

PM. You are putting too big a hypothetical question to me. We have our obligations under the Five Power arrangement, which we will keep, and they are an obligation to consult under certain circumstances. I can assure you and I have set this out in the communique that we will live up to our obligation and that is understood and accepted by the Malaysian Government.

Q. Sir, I don't want to quote.....but I don't want to bring in internal Australian politics... but I mean it is a matter of substance to Malaysia, when the Deputy Leader of the Labor Opposition was through here, the Shadow Minister of Defence, he ruled out all these conditions categorically. Do you make the same exemption?

PM. Again I have to inform you that I will not enter into controversy with any other person, any other Australian Member of Parliament whilst I am overseas. You have got to listen to what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said and judge him on what he says and what he has subsequently said, and I hope most of you have seen the comment that he made on the IADS and the Australian Air Force component as reported in this morning's Malaysian newspapers.

Q. Sir, this reference to the Kuala Lumpur declaration. Would this be a far more positive reaction of Australia than before?

PM. It may be a little more concrete, but it was cleared with Mr. Bowen and at least still the paragraphs have been drafted by him.....the statement he made in our own House....on the telephone about three timesthis morning, I could not give you the precise time.
