

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA, MR. E. G. WHITLAM AT MANILA INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL FEBRUARY 12, 1974.

The Prime Minister began by explaining the reason for the delayed start to the conference.

Q: As you know, the scheme whereby Leyland's are seeking to encourage Filipino migrants and mechanics to Australia has aroused a great deal of interest in the Philippines as has your strong statements about White Australia throughout this trip to South-East Asia but when this scheme was first mooted in the Australian press a few weeks ago it was noticeable that there was a very considerable degree of continuing opposition even to a scheme like this. I wonder if you could give us some idea then of the continuing opposition that you have to face in your stand against racism in Australia and perhaps a little analysis of what do you think the reasons for these are?

*Leyland
- Philippine
Workers*

A: The policy of the Australian Government and of the Australian Labor Party which composes the Australian Government is quite clear. Our immigration policy depends principally on family reunion. We want to see that people who already live in Australia are helped to have their relatives -- their brothers or sisters or their sons and daughters -- their mothers or fathers, their fiancées -- come to Australia to join them. Subsidiary to this is the admission of skilled persons whose skills are undersupplied in Australia. and for whom employment is available in Australia and in that last respect there is no discrimination as regards geographic, religious or racial origin. Now, the application by Leyland's for skilled workers whom they can't find in Australia whom they believe they can find in the Philippines. Officials from Australia are coming to the Philippines to interview and counsel the persons who are willing to come to Australia. The presentation of this issue by the company concerned caused some initial misunderstanding or concern because it appeared to be based on a form of employment common in Europe of guest workers. The Australian migration program does not provide for guest workers. It provides for people coming to Australia who wish to settle in Australia.

*Immigration
- Policy*

*Leyland
Project*

Q: I believe you discussed the Asia Pacific grouping or forum with President Marcos. Can you say what degree of common ground you found with him on your proposal for a wider grouping of Asia-Pacific powers and his for an Asia-Pacific Forum?

*Asia Pacific
Forum*

A: We are in complete agreement as to the objectives here. We do realise, however, that there are some current aspects which mean that it cannot be fulfilled immediately and they are the fact that some countries - in fact all the Asean countries, - I believe only the Asean countries - do not have at this stage normal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. There is also the impediment that there has been no peace settlement in Cambodia and at this stage the peace settlement in Vietnam is not very effective.

*and
Vietnam
Place*

Q: We understand that you've been asked for supplies of natural gas - could you give us some details of that?

*Natural
Gas*

A: This is a commercial matter which a Filipino citizen, Mr. Borrromeo, has been discussing with Ampol. The present Australian Government has introduced and is pursuing the policy of permitting the export of resources in two circumstances. The first is where those resources are surplus to Australian needs ; the other is that they are being sold at appropriate prices considering the prices being paid for such resources in the world generally. Mr. Borrromeo has discussed this matter not only with Ampol but with the Australian Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr. Connor. I, myself, will be discussing it with Mr. Connor in the next few days.

Q: With the overtures that your Government is making toward Asia, what do you anticipate as the future of your country toward the West, Europe and more particularly, to Britain?

A: Australia has a political system and very largely, an economic and industrial and social system derived from Britain. Obviously, there would always be very close ties between Australia and Britain. Nevertheless, those ties are no longer exclusive of ties with other countries, particularly countries which are closer to Australia geographically and which are now more important to Australia economically. Britain herself realises this because Britain has chosen to - as she is entitled to chose - the European Economic Community rather than the Commonwealth of Nations as the focus of her economic thrust. Secondly, Britain has taken steps to equate Australian citizens, who used to be British subjects, with citizens of other foreign countries.

Just ties with Britain.

Q: Can you tell me is your Government concerned at the continuation of martial law in the Philippines and did you discuss this matter with President Marcos?

Martial Law.

A: I think you have been told by President Marcos that it was discussed - there is no need for me to go over the ground again - it was discussed in the context that this is one of the matters in the Philippines which arouses great interest in Australia and therefore, is an ingredient in relations between the countries.

Philippines relations with Aust.

Q: (Indistinct) what are the plans of Australia and the Philippines for the expanded Asia-Pacific Forum?

Asia Pacific Forum

China

A: I would think it is inevitable that all the countries of Asean will establish normal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. The Philippines is one of the two Asean nations which recognises the Government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Chek as the Government of China. Australia did so until December 1972 when my Government was elected. As I said before the elections we would transfer Australia's Embassy to China from Taipei to Peking. We did so. Within a couple of weeks. It was easier for Australia to do it than it is for the Philippines but nevertheless - I am not making a statement concerning internal politics of any country; I am merely acknowledging a historic inevitability - every country in this region will acknowledge that the Government in Peking is the Government of China and the Government in Taipei is not the Government of China. One has to recognise either of those contending Governments as the Government of China. Each of them asserts that it is the sole, legitimate Government of the whole of China, including the province of Taiwan. So one just has to chose one or the other. It is inevitable that it will be recognised. Now the Philippines has been involved in a great number of regional associations, many of them expired, others are in their death throes.... there was ASA, there was Maphilindo, there was the old SEATO based on the Manila pact, there was ASPAC, and now there is Asean. And of all of them Asean is the only one which has a proper regional relevance, the only one which has a thriving future. None of the Asean countries suggests, Australia does not suggest, that Australia should join Asean. But the Asean Secretary-Generals have agreed with the Australian Government that there should be consultations on economic projects between Australia and Asean collectively. That was arranged in Bangkok a fortnight ago and there will be representatives of the Asean countries coming to Australia to pursue these arrangements within the next few weeks. No country has done more than the Philippines to recognise, to promote, the idea of regional arrangements. You have in the capital of the Philippines one of the most valuable organs for regional co-operation - the Asian Development Bank which I visited this afternoon. Nevertheless, it is quite clear we ought to have some arrangements as I said in my speech in the University of the Philippines yesterday.

ASEAN

Asian Development Bank

Q: I met you before, sir, when I was in Australia in 1972 and I asked your views about SEATO.....

Shing

A: We were right, weren't we - Romulo and I....

Q: Is it the view of the Government of Australia that the membership of Peking is necessary for any form of a loose Asian forum to be valid?

A: Any organisation covering the western Pacific would be incomplete - grievously inadequate - if China were omitted from it.

Q: What do you see would be the role of Australia in relation to Asian affairs in the future?

A: Historically, politically, socially Australia is European Economically, however, and geographically it is increasingly - or already - part of Asian. Certainly of east Asia and the western Pacific. Now, already, the relations between Australia and all the countries of that region are expanding. The country that buys more from Australia than any other country buys is Japan; the country to which Japan sells more than any other country except the United States is Australia. Therefore Japan is Australia's largest trading partner. But our trade with all countries of the region is growing and inevitably it is going to grow more. There are many other things, such as tourism, cultural exchanges, education (one of the greatest forms of exchange it is quite seminal to our activities in this region). All these things inevitably mean that the relations between Australia and the countries of the western Pacific are going to grow. We need each other. We are all there.

*Trade
ills
Regional
Neighbors*

*Withdrawal
of American
- affect on Australia's role*

Q: What about the political aspects, sir, considering the fact that right now there seems to be some withdrawal of American presence in the Asian area. I wonder can Australia exert some influence in this matter?

— Just.

A: Australia has quite a considerable influence with most of the countries in the area. It has quite a considerable influence. I expect, with the United States. America's interest in the area is changing in so far as she would no longer feel it appropriate to have armed forces on the mainland of Asia. America, however, is clearly the greatest naval and air power in the world.

Detention of Senator Aquino

Q: I believe, Prime Minister, that you raised with President Marcos the question of the continued detention of Senator Aquino. Are you encouraged by this exchange to expect or hope that you will look forward to a just and fair trial in due course?

A: I raised this matter in the same context, for the same purpose as I raised the matter of the emergency. You have thoroughly questioned the President on this matter. I have got nothing more to say on it.

Q: As the prime advocate of an Asian-Pacific Forum will your Government mount a diplomatic offensive to facilitate the recognition by the nations of the region of the People's Republic of China thereby hastening the formation of an Asian-Pacific Forum?

Diplomatic offensive to force recognition of China

A: You said I was the prime person; President Marcos was in fact the first. It is not my country's role to launch a diplomatic offensive in these matters. But my views, and the views of my Government, are well known in all the countries of the region. There has been exchange of views during the last 16 days on the subject between me and heads of Government in Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Burma, Singapore and now the Philippines. There had been, of course, exchanges of views on this subject with all of those men other than the new Prime Minister of Thailand and the Chairman of the Burmese Government neither of whom I had met before. My Government showed its attitude very early by switching its recognition from one of the rival Governments to the other. New Zealand did so at exactly the same time. Japan did so a few months before. It is quite clear that the move is on. It was started by Canada three years ago.

Q: You have spent time today in Corregidor and Bataan; I wonder could you comment on your observations of the trip with the President as your tour guide.

Comment
on trip
with
President

A: The first time I came here after the War - I was here in the last few months of the War - at that time it was not yet safe to go to Corregidor and besides I did not have the transport at my individual disposal. But ten years ago when I first came here as a Parliamentarian I went over in the hydrofoil - the first time I had ever been in one - to Corregidor to see it. It is of very great significance in this region. The delay that the Filipino and American forces put up along Bataan and Corregidor was quite crucial to the preservation of Australia, in the early months of the Pacific War before we could get under way and play our considerable role in turning the tide. It would be, therefore, incomplete for an Australian Prime Minister to visit Manila without visiting Corregidor. On this occasion I appreciated very much that the President, the most decorated Filipino ex-serviceman, accompanied me. He also, of course, had several of his Ministers with him. The Secretaries of Finance, Defence, Communications and the Executive Secretary. It was a pleasant occasion, a nostalgic one, but also one in which a considerable amount of business was discussed between us - between his Ministers and the President himself and me and my senior advisers who have accompanied me. I have with me not only our Ambassador in the Philippines but also the Deputy Secretaries of the Prime Minister's Department, Foreign Office, Overseas Trade and Defence Departments.

Q: What are your impressions of the Philippines? What has impressed you most about the country and the people?

A: There are some personal feelings I have about the Philippines. Of course, Manila was the first foreign capital I ever visited and before that I had been in Leyte for a couple of months. Accordingly I have had ever since some interest in the political and economic developments in this country. There are some other matters which make the Philippines of particular interest to Australia because it is one of the countries - the only one which is not in the Commonwealth - where English is spoken everywhere. Also, I don't stress this matter, but it is the only country in the region other than New Zealand which is professedly Christian. The other thing I would point out, as I did at the university yesterday, is that it is high time there were more direct links between these countries which have significant links in common than have hitherto obtained passing, as those have hitherto, principally through the United States.
