

# OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR AUSTRALIA IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



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ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA,  
THE RIGHT HON. R. G. MENZIES, C.H., P.C., M.P.,  
TO THE PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY  
AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH MAY, 1960.

Addressing a luncheon gathering of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, at which he was the guest of honour, Mr. Menzies said, in part:-

"I want to say a few words to you about two matters. The first is the one that is most in our minds today. I can't help thinking, after all this bogus argument that's been going on about spies, all this humbug, this pious horror at the discovery of the spy over Russian soil, that I seem to remember hundreds and thousands of them from there over our soil, or on it, or in it!..... But when this Summit meeting had at long last been arranged, I venture to say that all of us, not being too starry-eyed, hoped for some result; not for the pacification of the world by one single stroke - that is not possible, you can't reconcile the differences of a decade, or perhaps in some respects a century, by a single master stroke of statesmanship - but we did all hope in our own simple fashion that when the great leaders met, they would earnestly direct their attention to one or two problems, hoping that by disposing of even one, there might be a prospect held out to the world that common sense and true co-existence, tolerant co-existence, might come about.

"And therefore it's been a very grievous blow to us if, as the latest news suggests, this conference has ended before it began. That I think is a shocking thing. It's useless for somebody to tell me that Khrushchev has scored a great propaganda success. I have a firm belief that most of the people in the world - ordinary, sensible, honest, honourable people, regard this manoeuvre with contempt. It's a very great mistake to think that this clever stuff really lodges in the minds of millions of people in the world who honestly want peace. This has been a shabby thing.

"How much we expected that when they met they would be able to begin with say, a discussion about nuclear tests, - a matter on which so much progress, not enough but so much, had been made at Geneva. This is the kind of thing about which one felt that the catalyst could be provided by a meeting at the Summit; some simple, broad direction which would at any rate have produced a moratorium in that field and perhaps a moratorium in the field of the Berlin problem.

"And then the incident of the flying man in the sky occurred. It was seized on. I repeat, one would almost have thought that there never had been a Soviet spy in the history of modern times. We've had a few in Australia. I daresay you've had hundreds here. And for a man under those circumstances to prefer a manoeuvre of propaganda to the pacification of the world is, I think, a shocking thing. I hope that everybody, every sensible honest person around the world, will be shocked by it.

"We're accustomed to the move and counter move of political tactics, but we despise them when the issue is the issue of the safety of the nation. We have enough proportion to put aside the manoeuvres under those circumstances. There is a time for debating points. I've used a few myself in my time, and enjoyable enough they are when the opportunity presents itself. But when the whole world is waiting for the first breaking of the tension that has existed for the last ten years, a debating point is a contemptible thing.

"I've been asking myself why this was done. When I first read about the alleged shooting down by a rocket of an aircraft flying at a vast height - the remarkable result of the shooting down being that the pilot is held safely and that the contents appear to have come down very neatly in an ascertainable form, and in an ascertainable place - I thought, 'Well, of course, Khrushchev will have a bit of fun over this; he will recognise that there were poor tactics on one side and he will respond by what he regards to be good tactics.' But little did I believe.....that this would be used as a means of defeating a conference - of preventing a conference from ever occurring. I'm still not without hope, I would not be surprised if I were rung up at dinnertime and told that, by some accident, they had met again. I don't know - I've had no information - but one always hangs on to some hope about this matter. I thought, 'Well, as a tactical exercise this is understandable though it's silly', until I realised that on their own story the plane had travelled, before it was intercepted, for the better part of a thousand miles over Soviet territory. That perhaps is the most interesting feature of the whole thing. That, I would venture to believe, must have created great feeling in Moscow and great feeling among such people as knew of it, because, you see, if a plane capable of delivering a nuclear bomb can fly for the better part of a thousand miles over Soviet territory, then the vulnerability of Soviet territory becomes demonstrated and the efficacy of the deterrent is thereby increased. And if we look at it in that way then of course we can begin to understand why this was not perhaps just a manoeuvre but the genuine expression of a passion and perhaps of a fear. Otherwise the whole thing is beyond comprehension.

"Now, going back to the propaganda aspect of this matter, I have most staunchly supported the idea of a Summit meeting. I pay great tribute to the Prime Minister of this country for having done so much - I think more than anybody else to bring it about; and I hope that we won't fall into the error of saying - 'Well, you wanted it, you made a great point of it - and it's failed,' and then sit back in our corners and become critical. Because it still remains true that unless these leaders meet at the Summit, and that right early, the world may pass into a more terrible phase of existence in the next ten or twenty years than it has known before. And so we must maintain hope, we must keep our ideas up, we must still be for the Summit, we must still be for personal contacts. And if I'm right in my own guess, the leader of the Soviet Union will very soon become aware that right around the world there is a feeling of bitter disappointment and a critical feeling about the attitude that he's taken. And, if that's so, well, we may meet again another day. And so long as the heads of the governments of the world will meet and be prepared to talk as if they were human beings, and not mere advocates hired by some established interest, then there is hope for the world.

"I would like to make a comparison between these astonishing events - or non-events - in Paris, and the meeting of Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth. There are still people who think that a Prime Ministers' Conference in the Commonwealth is a species of committee of the United Nations; that it has the shape and character of an international conference. It has nothing of the kind. We don't meet to judge; we don't meet to have all the tiresome machinery and motions and amendments and people running up and down in the lobbies. We don't go in for that kind of thing. We meet. We've had, this time, some matters to commune about - full of explosive material - and we concluded our meeting with a spirit of complete good temper, with our knowledge expanded, with, I think a high degree of mutual tolerance; nobody looking for some spectacular triumph at the expense of somebody else, but all of us looking to be able to establish that this Commonwealth of ours is one in which you're not thinking of tactics, but in which you talk quietly in a friendly way, you learn more, you're able to disagree at the table, and then go out and have a drink together afterwards. This is in the highest possible tradition. And I am delighted to say that the new members of the Commonwealth respond to this traditional idea as rapidly as anybody else at the table.

"What a contrast that is to the other business! Taking a trick! Trying to humiliate your opponents! I little thought the day would come when, on the greatest platform in the world, with the greatest powers in the world, assembled through their 'number one' people, I would find the state of affairs in which the leader of one government accepted, what might be thought to have been the humiliation of saying, 'Well, we won't do this again', and that he should then find himself called on to apologise - 'Unless you

apologise I can't talk to you any longer'.

"Really, I think that in the place of the President, being less wise and perhaps less guarded in my remarks, I might have offered to exchange apologies - 'Yes, I'll apologise for this one, if you'll apologise for all yours'. And in this atmosphere of mutual apology, they might have got to work on the real thing.

"But we must remain optimistic, we must hope; we must not allow ourselves - and this is all important - to become divided under the jeers of the other man who will say, 'Ah, I scored the point; I scored the point; I made you look silly. Good afternoon to you'. That's the very state of affairs in which France, the United States, Great Britain, could easily be persuaded to have a post-mortem and to say, 'Well, you shouldn't have done this, or you shouldn't have said that'. Divide and conquer is just as modern now as it was in the days of the Romans.

"If there's one lesson to be got from all this, it is that so far as the other three great Powers are concerned - the United States, and Great Britain and France - they must instantly and persistently keep together, evolve their own ideas, exhibit their own united strength, improve their united strength; not by way of threat but in order to make it clear that the people who believe in a free life are not easily driven into fragments by a shabby Soviet manoeuvre."

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