

Dutch West New Guinea
World situation -
Summit - United Nations
Mr. Khrushchev
Mr. Nehru at U.N.
P.M. at U.N.
Mr. K. - Four power Conference?
P.M. as "fall guy"
Summit Meeting

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES AT KINGSFORD SMITH
AIRPORT ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 1960.

PRIME MINISTER: I'd like to put you on warning that I'm supposed to make a long statement in the House tomorrow night on my deeds and misdeeds abroad, stated with proper reticence, so I'd better not try to make it now. I think perhaps we might try to concentrate on a few points. Now which ones, from the newspaper point of view or television point of view would you like me to say a little about?

QUESTION: Inaudible ... Could you tell us anything about the Malayan proposal .. for Dutch West New Guinea?

PRIME MINISTER: That is not one of the matters that I've been discussing.

QUESTION: That's why I asked you, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes I thought so. Oh, I know a little about it, but I don't think that any comment about it will be useful at this stage. I'll find out what the developments have been over the last couple of days.

QUESTION: Could you tell us Sir, whether you think as a result of the proceedings at the time you were in New York the world situation has improved or worsened?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I think it would be very difficult to say whether the state of the world was easier or more tense. I suppose that depends on what you think about whether Khrushchev's tactics were designed to ease tension or to increase it. Frankly I thought that he came there to increase tension though he's a strong advocate, judging by what he tells me, of a Summit Conference.

But it's very difficult with a man like that who's a mixture - a dictator with a strong earthy sense of humour, a certain notion of the ridiculous, a fellow who thoroughly enjoys beating his shoe on the desk and hopes that somebody will take it seriously. I mean he's a mixture. (Aside - This is a nice sound-proof room).

But I think - going back to that - I think that one thing he arrived there to do was to weaken the present United Nations, primarily by an attack on the Secretary-General. Because he repeatedly made very savage attacks, usually of course saying that Hammarskjöld was a tool of the capitalists, and such like original phrases that one becomes familiar with, that he represented the western powers, that no good could come out of him, that what Khrushchev calls the Socialist power ought to be in the picture and that instead of one Secretary-General there ought to be three.

A remarkable proposal! Because it meant disuniting the United Nations. It meant having one Communist Secretary-General, one neutralist Secretary-General, - whatever that word means - and one from the democratic western world, each of them presumably, so far as one could understand it, with a veto over the other two.

It would, of course, have reduced the whole executive arm of the United Nations to futility and therefore would have been a deadly blow at the United Nations.

It was taken very seriously by the United States, very seriously indeed. And if the outcome had been anything other than it was there might have been serious consequences.

However, in the result, of course, he failed hopelessly in his attack on the Secretary-General.

QUESTION: (Inaudible):

PRIME MINISTER: I think that he sees himself as the focus of another kind of world organisation. After all, if he's to get the better of the western powers in the long run, it's very desirable for him to make a play for the support of people who are as yet uncommitted - the African powers for example, who are very numerous now, and most of them very new. And Asian powers not to be overlooked in this connection.

When he said two or three times the United Nations ought to be established in Moscow, this wasn't merely a joke on his part. It did, I thought, represent something that was half-seriously formed at the back of his mind.

QUESTION: Have you any comment to make Sir, about your interview with Mr. Khrushchev?

PRIME MINISTER: I found it extremely interesting. I thought that it would be rather foolish to come back to Australia not having had a private talk with him and so I got my office to put in a bid through the usual channels, indicating, with my usual modesty, that 10 minutes would be very satisfactory if I could get them. And in the result I had 70 minutes. Indeed, so far as I know, we might still have been talking but for the fact that other engagements emerged. But it was very interesting, very interesting. He's still something of a mystery to me, but perhaps not quite so much as before, because he has undoubtedly an earthy sort of humour.

QUESTION: Did he thump the table, Sir, while he spoke to you?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, no. Everything was quite relaxed and easy. He even looked me up and down and said for an Imperialist I wasn't a bad specimen. (Laughter). And I told him that as a Communist he improved on closer inspection. (Laughter).

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies did you get the impression from him that he was quite serious about wanting a Summit Meeting?

PRIME MINISTER: I think so. That's one thing I do believe. I believe he would like a Summit Meeting. And that's, perhaps, one of the positive results that I always hoped would come out of this matter over the famous amendment because the other three, France, Great Britain and the United States voted for a Summit Meeting as early as practicable which of course were words designed to accommodate the exigencies of the Presidential election in America. And he himself made it quite clear to me and I asked him whether there was any mystery about it, and he said "none whatever", that he wanted a Summit meeting. He realised it couldn't occur now until after the Presidential election and the new President had established himself. But so certain am I that he does, and therefore all four do, now, clearly declared, that most of our conversation had to do with what matters could usefully be discussed at the Summit. He nominated Disarmament. He said that is something that has to be discussed in the broad and in principle between the four atomic power leaders before it can usefully be dealt with in point of detail. And therefore that's his priority No. 1. He thought that the problems of Berlin, for example, to take an example, were though important, minor compared with the problem of disarmament. But anyhow for three quarters of an hour I discussed with him what sort of things could be discussed at a Summit meeting. How usefully, what the possibilities were of getting practical results, all this didn't argue to me that he was just going through the form of saying that he wanted a Conference.

QUESTION: Do you believe he wants a four-power Conference, not two?

PRIME MINISTER: He wants a four-power. All this proposal about having a meeting between Khrushchev and Eisenhower never did have any reality in it. Bless my soul, before the thing had been tabled for 48 hours each of the supposed meeters had said "No".

Khrushchev had said "I won't" except on terms that are obviously unacceptable and Eisenhower said the same thing. I never have seen much use in an Assembly of Nations passing a resolution directed to two human beings who have both rejected it in advance. What's the sense of it? None.

QUESTION: Would you care to comment on Mr. Nehru's attitude at the United Nations, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I was surprised at his speech, deeply surprised. But beyond that I have no comment. I daresay that he himself would regret, by now, some of the things that he thought fit to say.

After all there is nothing to get heated about when somebody moves for a Conference of two and somebody else, the two having said "No" to a 2-meeting, says "Well the right thing to do is to get the four together".

That's a true amendment and a constructive one, and it's worth remembering, or worth being known, that before the great day was out, or at any rate it was one o'clock in the morning - technically it was that night - the five-power resolution had been so altered by votes that it was withdrawn completely, so that that resolution failed.

My amendment had, of course, been rejected. But not by the powers concerned in it, not by the atomic powers three of whom voted for it and the other abstained.

QUESTION: Did you make a check-up before the vote on your Amendment, Sir,

PRIME MINISTER: I didn't make any check-up. I'm a new boy at the General Assembly. There are two or three of the old hands; I see them flitting around like bats, and no doubt there is great lobbying going on.

QUESTION: (Inaudible).

PRIME MINISTER: I could quite imagine, having regard to the distribution of the five, that my amendment wouldn't be carried. That wouldn't have troubled me a bit - and didn't. What I wanted to do was to do something first of all to promote the idea of the true Summit Conference, and that could best be done by getting the votes of those who were to be parties to it and in the second place to get rid of this noxious idea - because it is - that the whole conflict in the world is between the United States and the Soviet Union, a notion which was almost enshrined in the five-power resolution.

QUESTION: Did you sound out Mr. Nehru beforehand, Sir, to see how he

PRIME MINISTER: Nobody sounded me out! The first I heard of the five-power resolution was when it was produced. And indeed it was produced in a very interesting way because Soekarno made a two-hour speech - that seems to be the minimum at the Assembly,

consistent with self-respect - and it was distributed as he began to speak - 65 pages of foolscap. So it was formidable.

And with it, at the last moment, came a page to be inserted, at page 65 headed "Vital Please insert this at page 65". And that contained the terms of the resolution. That's how much out of the blue it came.

QUESTION: There has been a suggestion here in Australia that because the amendment (noise interruption) having a very bad effect on our relations with Asia.

PRIME MINISTER: That suggestion has been made only in Australia. I'm sorry to say. Not a hint of it at New York. I've been in the closest touch for the whole time that I've been there with a dozen of the leaders in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. No, I didn't see Soekarno because he left immediately after Speech. I saw Subandrio and had discussions with him.

I didn't see Nasser because he left, I think he had actually gone the day I arrived. But I did see his Foreign Minister, Fawzik, who was present at the Suez talks that I had in 1956. I sat with him at dinner and we had a very interesting exchange of ideas.

Then there was the new Prime Minister of Nigeria, who, I thought made the best speech of the entire Assembly - a very remarkable man - and I've great expectations of Nigeria as a wise and stabilising influence in the new Africa.

Oh, I saw a lot of these people. Those are just names that occur to me.

QUESTION: What did Mr. Nehru say Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Well it's very odd. Mr. Nehru and I met after he'd made his famous speech. He seemed to be quite amiable. And thereafter I spoke. I made my main speech, which one or two people preferred not to publish in Australia. It is much nicer to try to undermine the position of the Prime Minister of Australia when he was abroad. But when I made my main speech I had occasion to make many references to what I believe to be Mr. Nehru's point of view. And so far as I know these were entirely consistent with his own mind.

You don't want to build this up as if two people had a dog fight. They didn't. This is not the way to regard these matters. I have offered no word to which anybody could take exception to the distinguished leader of India.

He's a very distinguished man. What reasons he may have had, temporarily, in his mind for saying what he did, in the way he said it, I don't know. But those things I was very tempted to reply to until I realised that to reply in that atmosphere would be a very great international header. So I refrained.

QUESTION: You would be prepared to say confidently, Sir, that our relations with Asia are as strong as ever?

PRIME MINISTER: I think so. I'm sure they are.

QUESTION: (Inaudible).

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I didn't discuss the amendment with Mr. Khrushchev because they had abstained. You don't ask a man "why did you abstain?" What I wanted to find out were what his views on the matters of importance.

There is so much talk gone on about notions and amendments. These are not the important things in life. It's the result that matters internationally.

what I wanted to discover was whether there were any real prospects of putting the four people together who happen to be the only atomic powers in the world, and therefore have the secret of peace and war in their hands.

That was the thing. That's a matter of substance. All this business about how many votes somebody got I couldn't care less. It's very important in a general election in Australia.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies could you tell if Mr. Khrushchev would have preferred to have the four powers meet rather than just himself and Eisenhower?

PRIME MINISTER: Well that's quite clear because he had already said "No" to a meeting with Mr. Eisenhower. After all there's another thing about it, you know. Khrushchev's a tough fellow, but he's nothing if not a realist.

They're having a Presidential Election in America before the month's out. Everybody's speaking with - what was it that Billy Hughes once said - with a "falling inflexion". If you're going to have a four-power discussion that really moves in the direction of settling something, you don't want to have it with a President who will have had his successor elected in a few weeks' time.

Khrushchev's a realist; he knows that. He wants to have a meeting with the President of the United States speaking with authority, and particularly after an election, as he will with fresh, and clear, authority.

QUESTION: When you were talking to Mr. Khrushchev, Sir, did you invite him to Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: I didn't discuss that matter at all.

QUESTION: You credited Mr. Khrushchev with a keen knowledge of Australian affairs, or words to that effect.

PRIME MINISTER: He has obviously taken some interest. He knows something about our geographical set up and our economic set up. Oh, yes.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies it has been suggested in some quarters that you were a kind of a "fall guy" for some power in the capitalist section.

PRIME MINISTER: You mean by that I was a poor innocent fellow and I went into the lion's den with these wicked men, Eisenhower and Macmillan, and they said, "Now we must have somebody who will put this up; we don't want to put it; we must have somebody. Here's this poor innocent colonial sap from Australia, we'll beguile him into doing it".

Really, they would both get a great kick if they read that description. Because you see as it happens, and I repeat this, I've said it before, I happen to have proposed the idea of an amendment, because I thought it much better to make a positive proposal rather than just adopt a blank negative to a proposal which I thought useless and, in some respects, dangerous.

This was, rightly or wrongly, my proposal. If I had all the time over again I would still make it. And they discussed the matter. It wasn't accepted by them: I made it first on Saturday night and it wasn't accepted by them until Sunday morning.

So the "fall guy" took an awful long time falling into the net. And finally, when I had drafted it, myself, and had it typed and discussed it with Macmillan and Herter after lunch on the Sunday, they said "Yes" they thought that was it and so there we are. I enquired what the rules were and I put it in the next day.

I have complete responsibility for initiating this matter. And all I can say is if we're going to talk in terms of substance, as sensible people should, then the substance of my proposal was that we should not try the futile task of getting two people together who said they were not willing to meet anyhow, but that we should add to the world pressure for a meeting of the four powers at the Summit.

And by the time the day was ended that second position was as substantially achieved as anything should be. So why apologise? I like that expression "fall guy". Thank you very much. That's American isn't it?

QUESTION: You would think Sir, then that the prospects, or the renewed prospects, of a Summit Meeting some time next year are worthwhile?

PRIME MINISTER: I do. I think that the new President of the United States will naturally want to establish his administration and all that sort of thing. I would have great hope myself that these people will get together by the northern spring, somewhere around April or May.

QUESTION: The New York Times, Sir, refers to you in this morning's paper as "the good Samaritan", apparently because of your.....

PRIME MINISTER: Well that shows you have to go abroad to have nice remarks made about you in a newspaper.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies both the American Presidential candidates stated that the only reason they would attend a Peace Conference, if elected, is if they had some, almost written guarantee that something (Airport noises)

PRIME MINISTER: Who was supposed to have said this?

QUESTION: Both the American Presidential candidates.

PRIME MINISTER: Not in one of those debates, in one of those television debates?

QUESTION: That's right sir.

PRIME MINISTER: Well don't ask me about those because all I want to say about Television debates is "Never, with my approval, in Australia".
