

BROADCAST NO. 3

BROADCAST BY THE PRIME MINISTER (THE RT. HON. R. G. MENZIES)
ON NATIONAL STATIONS AT 7.15 P.M.
24TH NOVEMBER, 1961

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

I will not take up your time by rehearsing what we have done in the field of foreign policy. In my Policy Speech I made references to the treaties to which we had become parties, such as ANZUS and SEATO, which mean so much to our own security and to the defence of South East Asia against Communist aggression.

On this occasion I will briefly say something about four current world problems - Disarmament, Berlin and Germany, Laos and South Vietnam, and Indonesia and West New Guinea.

1. DISARMAMENT

Earlier this year, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, in London, unanimously made a declaration in favour of disarmament, beginning with a suspension of nuclear tests. As you know, the Soviet Union ignored this, and quite suddenly resumed such tests on a singularly great scale.

In spite of this callous and threatening action, which cannot be ignored by the Western Nuclear Powers, we believe that negotiations should be resumed as soon as possible, indeed urgently, and that an agreement for suspension, under proper control and supervision, should once more be sought.

Meanwhile, the Western Powers must be free to look to their own defences.

The proposal, made in some quarters, that nuclear weapons should be abolished without a general disarmament agreement, is quite unrealistic. If accepted, it would be suicidal, for the free world's great deterrent against Communist aggression would disappear.

2. BERLIN AND GERMANY

This is one of the great issues in the Cold War which the Communists have maintained so long.

Khrushchev says he wants peace. His followers in Australia, and their dupes or fellow-travellers, say they want peace. So do you and I. But if Khrushchev wants peace over Berlin, his course is quite easy.

He can recognise the position of Berlin as it was established, between the Allies, at the end of the War, with the Allies entitled to be present with troops, with free access, and with freedom.

He can, through his satellite government of East Germany, permit such access.

He can permit the free movement of freedom loving people out of East Germany, as the Declaration of Human Rights, to which the Soviet Union subscribes, requires.

He can join in promoting a free election by all the German people to decide whether they want to be united or not. He will do none of these things. He prefers threat and crisis, because in such an atmosphere he thinks that Communism will make headway.

The West wants peace. It makes no threats. But it will not surrender to bullying. We agree with the West.

3. LAOS AND SOUTH VIETNAM

We, in common with our partners in SEATO, stand for a Laos which is independent, self-governing on a neutral basis, neutral, and not a satellite of either side.

Why should such an obviously just solution take so long to achieve? Why do the talks at Geneva go on indecisively? Again, the answer is that the Communists, while pretending to want peace, are essentially concerned to acquire authority and control over nations now outside their dominion.

South Vietnam, headed by a gallant fighter against Communism, is a test case in the great cause of resistance. We believe that if Communism won in South Vietnam, South East Asia could be lost to freedom, and the isolation of Australia would be ominous. That is why we will stand up to our obligations under ANZUS and SEATO.

4. INDONESIA AND WEST NEW GUINEA

The issues here need to be once more, explicitly stated. Indonesia is a near neighbour, with her own political and economic problems. We want to be on the best of terms with her. We profoundly sympathise with her desire for economic and social growth, for an assured independence, for resistance to Communist control. We receive her students, and in turn do what we can to assist her own development. There is no enmity between our people, nor should there be.

The one matter of difference between us concerns West New Guinea, over which the Netherlands exercises sovereignty. We recognise that sovereignty, just as we expect other people to recognise our sovereignty in Papua.

But we do not seek to perpetuate any form of colonialism. We have for years made it clear that we regard ourselves as holding East New Guinea in trust, aiding the development of its people (at no small cost) until the day comes when those people, having been equipped for competent decision, decide their own future for themselves. This is the principle of self-determination. We have welcomed the promotion of precisely that policy by the Dutch government in relation to West New Guinea. In the United Nations, the Netherlands have made quite clear their willingness to transfer to the people of West New Guinea full sovereignty just so soon as they are ready to assume it.

What is wrong with this? We are told that the government of Indonesia dislikes this attitude of ours, though it is one which we have voluntarily imposed upon ourselves in relation to our own section of the island.

All I can say is that Australia is a democracy, and therefore deeply attached to the principle of self-government. So far from being "colonial exploiters", as the phrase goes, we put into Papua and New Guinea, in hard cash and hard work and devoted service by many hundreds of Australians, far more than we ever hope to get out of it. Our one great ambition is that, when the day comes for these territories to determine their own destiny, their people will look on us as friends who have been faithful and just to them.

If this is how we feel and act, why should we deny the same policies to the Netherlands?

So far, Indonesia has not accepted the principle of self-determination for the people of West New Guinea. It says that the area is, or should be, part of Indonesia, and that it has no more right to self-determination than, say, Sumatra or the Celebes. We would like to see the issue of sovereignty taken to the International Court, by whose judgment all could abide.

We are not partisans in this matter, for we are not parties principal. But, while legal sovereignty resides in the Netherlands and is not legally challenged in the appropriate tribunal, we must adhere to our support of the principle of self-determination.

We deprecate talk of war over such a matter. We want peace and friendship. There is no occasion for hostility. Living as we do so close to the great island of New Guinea, we regard the interests of its people and their peaceful progress as the paramount consideration. We hope that all concerned will see it in this light.