

PRESS CONFERENCE WITH PRIME MINISTER, SIR

ROBERT MENZIES, AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY -

WASHINGTON, D.C., U.S.A.

JUNE 25th, 1964

Correspondents present : Mr. John Moses, Sydney Morning Herald
Mr. Alan Reid, Sydney Daily Telegraph
Mr. John Atherton, Melbourne Herald Org.
Mr. David Matthew, Australian Associated Press.
Mr. Bruce Grant, Melbourne Age
Mr. Jan Moffitt, News Ltd. of Australia.
Mr. Henry Keys, U.P.I. Correspondent for Australian clients.

- Q. There has been a lot of discussion in the Administration in recent days about the question of allied trade with Communist China. There has also been discussion particularly about sales by Australia, Canada and New Zealand to Communist China. Did this come up in your talks?
- A. No, it wasn't raised.
- Q. The point of view that has been expressed here is that this is giving aid and comfort to a potential enemy which Washington is positive may one day go to war in the Pacific. What is your feeling?
- A. You want me now to make a statement about the general position in the Pacific. Of course we have dangers in South-East Asia. We have been dreadfully exercised by some of them already. But this problem now of trade with Communist countries and what ought to be the limits of the commodities which you deal with. Well, this is a very old one. I have nothing to add to it. As I say, it hasn't been raised with me here.
- Q. Would you characterise your meeting with the President and other officials as working sessions or a means of getting personally acquainted with them.
- A. Oh, much more in the second category. Yes, Oh, I had met the President before, but only just in a most formal way, and I wanted to get to know him in an individual sense, and that I think succeeded very well.
- Q. It seems to me that the toasts that were exchanged yesterday at the luncheon, even reading them in the printed form, were unusually cordial and warm.
- A. Yes, I think that that is quite true, that was the feeling that we both had. Oh, from that point of view it was extremely useful. Then of course there were other people. Dean Rusk, of course, is by way of being a very old friend of mine now, and when we meet we just conduct a tour of the relevant portions of the world and exchange our ideas, and if he has some more information he gives it to me. But it's not a working session. Each of these has been purely private conversations. For a start when you are going to add to the supply of paper in the Chanceries, there is always somebody there writing it down. But there's nobody there writing it down this time. So we haven't added to any of the files. Merely brought ourselves up to date. But that was the main purpose here, purely personal one. Then I'm going through to London too. It's a very good thing to have some fresh individual picture of your own of the people here who are engaged in matters jointly with the United Kingdom and ourselves.

Q. Sir, is the U.S. Administration satisfied with what Australia is doing in South East Asia?

A. I believe so, and everything that was said to me suggested that, and suggested it with a great deal of enthusiasm. I mean it was unsolicited and they were particularly pleased of course with what we have been able to do, admittedly not very much in South Vietnam, because very naturally they sometimes feel that everything is being left to them, and these little bits of assistance showing the flag in a practical way, accepting some of the risks in common, this has had a very big effect. I found not a hint of complaint, and a good deal of satisfaction. There was a time not so long ago when if you listened to the unspoken words you could detect criticism about the size of our own defence effort in Australia. Nothing of that this time - on the contrary, there has been very great satisfaction at what we have been doing.

Q. Sir, when you say that our contribution there is not very great, is there any likelihood of it being increased?

A. Oh, there is no suggestion at present about that. No. It has only recently been stepped up, as you know.

Q. Do you detect any change in the American line on Indonesia, a slightly firmer line than before? It seemed to me that some time ago there was a rather ambivalent attitude towards Soekarno?

A. I think that that might fairly have been said. I was alert to any signs of that, but I didn't find them. Mind you, I was dealing with the people like Mr. Rusk, Mr. McNamara and so on, who have never been singularly ambiguous on this matter themselves. But I found in them and the President quite a clear-cut realistic view as to what was going on.

Q. Did you find anything, Sir, to detract from the interpretation of the ANZUS Treaty applied to the Malaysian area?

A. Well, you remember, there having been some argument, I made a speech in the House on this matter, very carefully, and explained step by step what the position was. I enquired yesterday, I knew that they had had the full text of it and I just confirmed what I had previously been told by saying to them - "May I take it that what I said received the complete agreement of your people", and the answer was "Yes." They regard that statement as accurate, and I suppose, in a sense, definitive. There it is. (I was delighted to find that a tape recording typed back admits of errors even here in the city of efficiency, because I see that I am on the record as having said that Dean Rusk was "persona gratissimo") (Laughter)

Q. Sir, did you hear of Mr. Mikoyan's statement today in Djakarta pledging support to Indonesia against Malaysia and suggesting the possibility of Indonesia obtaining weapons more powerful than those the British would have in the area?

A. Whose statement?

Q. Mr. Mikoyan's.

A. No, No, I'm sorry. I have neither seen it nor heard it.

Q. Sir, did the subject of the TFX concern you during your talks with Secretary McNamara?

A. No.

Q. Australia is taking a late delivery of these aircraft now. It is a year late.

A. Yes. When these aircraft come in, they are always liable to have adjustments made to them, in the first twelve months particularly. We could take the first deliveries and make any adjustments ourselves that we wanted to make in the light of experience, or by waiting for twelve months we could have the benefit of all the adjustment work that was done here - the experience that would take place here. All our experts were unanimously of the opinion that it was worth the twelve months' difference in time to get the superior quality in the results and that was the unanimous view. There was no argument about it in Australia, and I think it has been announced, hasn't it, that that's what we are going to do. It didn't affect the timetable otherwise - the life of the Canberras and so on - all that was adequately provided for, they thought, even on the year's later delivery. In substance it was a question of doing our experimenting, doing our adjustment well. In a small supply country like our own that's not as satisfactory as waiting for a year and getting the benefit of everything that occurs here. So that we'll have a slight delay but greater efficiency in the results.

Q. Sir, did the question of Cyprus come up at all in conversation with the President? He's very much exercised by it at the moment. I wondered if he discussed it with you as a Commonwealth statesman about what was once a Commonwealth problem.

A. No, no, no. I'm glad they didn't. I think that a few arguments are going on between other parties - I know when to keep out of those arguments. If the time comes that the Commonwealth has to say or do something about it - that's a different matter. But I've kept out of it here.

Q. In the exchange of Toasts, Mr. Prime Minister, there was mention of the possibility of a Presidential visit to Australia. Did you extend any specific invitation to the President?

A. Well, I told him that we would be delighted if he could come. And that if he did come, we would be delighted to make every conceivable arrangement. In fact, I said that if the House were not sitting, I would convene it for the purpose of his visit, because I think it would be tremendously important. He can't put a date to it; he genuinely would like to come. I'm sure that he's contemplating the possibility in 1965, when he's got through his present discontent. But nothing like the fixation of a date. I told him that I thought the best season of the year to come to Australia on a quick visit was in our Autumn, or in other words, in the Spring here. But I wouldn't be holding him to a firm promise to come or any firm date, but I'm sure that he would like to and I regard it as a strong possibility that he will.

Q. How are you feeling, Sir Robert, if I may ask you?

A. Well, I'm..... well, I haven't my normal supply of nervous energy. I'm flat, but apart from that I'm improving. I'm limiting my engagements as much as I can because I'm.... because as I said, I wasn't supposed to come for another ten days. I'm supposed to be convalescing.

Q. Sir, can you reveal the name of the lovely lady that was also mentioned in the toast yesterday?

A. No, I can't. I can't. It's very curious. I'm pretty certain I identified her. But perhaps on the sketchy information that the President gave me, I might have been wrong. It would be a little embarrassing to quote a name, and then have somebody rush along and say, "The first I've ever heard of it". But I'll check up on this, and if it turns out to be right, I'll let you know, but I won't take the risk of embarrassing anybody at this stage. It's very amusing.
