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Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Now, I thought I would just like to say a little to you about an aspect or perhaps two aspects, of relationships between our countries.

It is far more than a post-prandial flourish to say that the United States and Australia are devoted friends - that's elementary.

We all know that, we know that this relationship has come about in war and in peace, that it is now, I venture to say, one of those things we hardly need to discuss. We understand each other. In the intervals of a little lively recrimination, we like each other, we have great interests in common.

There are cynics, as I said the other day at the White House, who think that we have a sort of cupboard love because we look to you, the United States of America, to protect us - to be our friend in times of need. I suppose, technically, that that is perfectly true, but it is much more true to say that we regard ourselves as concerned in common both in military terms and in civil terms with the United States because we do happen to be the same kind of people - and we do happen, if that's not too weak a word, to believe passionately in the same thing - the same values.

And when two friendly nations - one great and one small - happen to have this robust faith in common, I don't think we need to argue about how much bigger one is than the other - or what contribution one makes to this or the other makes to that.

The truth is that in our relations with you, not only are they wonderful from our point of view, but they are reciprocal, they import obligations on our part, obligations which we will at all times honourably discharge and therefore we are friends.

I know of no circumstance that could conceivably arise in the world that would make us enemies. But do let me repeat something I have said before today. You are the greatest power in the world and sometimes in fact, perhaps reasonably frequently, you admit it. But you are the greatest power in the world - the greatest in physical resources - the greatest, when it comes to the point, in that moral force that can be exercised by a great and civilised people.

And like all great powers in the history of the world, you have made rather more critics than friends. I was going to say enemies, maybe. You have been able to help scores of nations - a lot of people don't like being helped. They take help, they see the intrinsic merit of the help, but at the back of their minds there is a sort of feeling of resentment. Why does he have all those things when I don't? This is the oldest thing in the world.

Now, Sir, this is part of the law of life and the main thing is that we are not to be discouraged in well-doing because the amount of gratitude that is to be produced is inadequate. There are good things to be done and there are good things that ought to be done and as good things, in the long run, they will pay

their dividends in world progress and in world peace.

In the second place, of course, we are right down there off the South-East of Asia and we have immediate problems, almost on our doorstep. And it is to the great credit of the United States that it has assumed a role in the solution of those problems which is historically of tremendous importance. But we are there - and we are a long way away.

We have next to us Indonesia, 80 or 90 million people; a lovely country, a country which has a form of government which is no doubt one of those interim forms of government in which power tends to be concentrated in one hand or one set of hands. We have one ambition as far as Indonesia is concerned, and that is that we should be good neighbours and friendly neighbours and live in peace and occasionally make some contribution to the much-needed economic improvement of that country.

Further north there is Malaysia - and at this very moment, Indonesia, through the head of its government, breathes threatenings and slaughter against Malaysia. The world can't be indifferent to this state of affairs because - let me remind everybody, if you need to be reminded - Malaysia is a country which has grown out of Malaya, has grown out of the British colony of Malaya and the British colonies in Borneo - Sabah in the north and Sarawak farther south. This form of government, this national entity, Malaysia, represents one of the frequent triumphs of British policy in this century, for Britain, the greatest colonial power in the nineteenth century, has been the greatest decolonising power since the Second World War.

Malaya represents the classical example of how a colony achieves its independence and self-government, with reasonably trained people to take a hand in the administration, with a healthy economy. Malaya is a museum piece, except that it is very much alive in this field and now, of course - voluntarily as the United Nations has found - the two Borneo Territories and Singapore have been added and we have Malaysia. Malaysia, a member of the United Nations.... Malaysia which, being challenged to the validity of its creation, persuaded the Secretary-General of the United Nations to send a mission and to make an investigation and to make a report.... Malaysia enjoying a guarantee from Great Britain of her military security against military aggression.... Malaysia, enjoying a guarantee given by Australia, through my own mouth in the Australian Parliament, that should there be attempts made to overthrow her independence or her integrity, we will ourselves come to the assistance of Great Britain in her defence.

Now, these are very large, very large matters, and I sometimes wonder whether people understand them or what it is all about. Why shouldn't Malaysia be free and independent, just as much as Indonesia? Why shouldn't she? Why should we have to listen to all these silly words like "neo-colonialism" which is the last invention of the polysyllabic attackers of the world? Neo-colonialism!

Here is Malaysia, an independent country, free, entitled to be free, entitled to all the protection that can be given by the United Nations and the United Nations Charter, and yet every few weeks you read that another threat is made, that a few more troops are put in across the border, that there is an infiltration that goes on and on, and threats to "crush" Malaysia.

Malaysia has made no threats against Indonesia - none at all. The only threatening party, I regret to say, is Indonesia itself. And in that state of affairs - and this is the real point I want to put to you - in that state of affairs, you will constantly find pressures for more and more conferences.

Might I with great submission offer a slight warning about conferences? I know that a conference every now and again is vital - tremendously important. I know that many of the procedures of the United Nations represents a high form of conference between nations. I know that every now and then some great nations will induce a conference between two squabbling nations in order to see whether it cannot lend its good offices in producing a settlement. Cyprus is a recent example.

But when energies are diverted to bring two nations together in conference over a matter like Malaysia, I just want to say to you, that unless there is the utmost good faith on both sides, then that conference will hurt one and help the other - that such a conference may turn out to be, in itself, an appeasing process which gives an advantage to the aggressor.

Now I know that it was no less a man than the great Winston Churchill himself, who said in that homely and splendid fashion of his: "It's better to jaw-jaw, than war-war." And a lot of us have seized on this. All I want to say to you is that remark did not mean that Winston thought that under all circumstances, "jaw-jaw" should prevail, because if he had, all the views I ever heard expressed by him in relation to the pre-war years would be falsified.

Now what happens? There is a conference about Malaysia. Tunku Abdul Rahman, a splendid man, with no threat against Indonesia but with a vital interest to defend his own frontiers and the freedom of his own States, goes to a conference. The Tunku says: "Well, first of all, I won't go unless I have some assurance that your infiltration into my country with arms, with forces regular and irregular, is going to come to an end and that there is a formula devised for a phased withdrawal when the political conference begins." And then somebody is bound to heave a sigh of relief and say: "Well, isn't this good? We have now got them coming into conference and this is it."

But what happens when the conference goes on? Does anybody here really believe that Indonesian forces are not still finding their way into Borneo? Does anybody really believe that any withdrawal that might have occurred is more than merely nominal here or here or here? Does anybody doubt that on this matter time runs against the Tunku and that time runs against Malaysia? If the aggressor can have his way across the frontier, then of course the morale of the local people begins to suffer and the whole conception of Malaysia may find itself weakened.

Now that doesn't mean that you want to go and become involved in a war. It is ridiculous to think of anybody being at war with Indonesia - a country not under threat and whose orderly development everybody is willing to assist. But it does mean that before we put too much pressure on Malaysia to concede something here or there, or go into an unconditional conference, we ought to remember that there are conferences and conferences, some capable of altering the whole history of the world for the better and some regarded as a mere cover for further advance and further attack by one of the parties to the conference.

Now, I am afraid I perhaps haven't explained that to you very clearly. But the one thing that I find as I go around the world that really troubles me a little is that I think that we are a bit disposed today to say: "Well, we want a quiet life and if we can just get people to talk to each other that will dispose of that problem for the next week or two." And frankly, except on conditions of the utmost good faith on both sides, I distrust such conferences.

Then, of course, that's not the only place. We have South Vietnam in which we are very happy in a small way to be able to assist the United States in what I venture to describe as a "firm, clear policy." I know there are people who can tell you it is wrong, that it can't succeed, that the whole solution in this part of the world is - as General de Gaulle would say - "There must be a political solution." I venture to doubt it very much. I think that there must be a presentation of firmness, not of provocation, but of firmness, in relation to South Vietnam.

All we want in this world today is some smashing victory by Communist China in South-East Asia, some removal of the forces of freedom from this zone, and the whole history of the world will be altered. And what I permit myself to remember is that the whole history of Australia will be altered.

We must be together, we must be firm, we must not be provocative but above all, if I may say so, we don't want to be unduly misled by ideas that the perfect answer in what was Indo-China the perfect answer in the whole area, including South Vietnam ... is a declaration of neutrality. A country that is neutral with more than 600,000,000 Chinese on its flanks and its friends thousands of miles away, is not likely to remain neutral for very long.

Now all these are matters of great argument.

I am glad I am speaking after Governor Stevenson because he would no doubt take me apart on a great number of these matters, but I just wanted to take the opportunity of stating once more how identical our interests are, of indicating to you one or two of the dangers of which I think we might beware in our joint enterprise, and to conclude by saying, as I began, that whichever way it goes, my little country, and your great country, will be together through thick and thin.
