

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, SIR ROBERT MENZIES  
30th December, 1965

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NEW YEAR MESSAGE

I extend New Year greetings to all of my fellow Australians.

We wish for, and expect, a continuation of prosperity at home; but at the same time we recognise that our domestic prosperity can be substantially influenced by events abroad.

So, in this New Year greeting, I would like to take a quick, but not, I hope, a superficial look, at three immediate problems which affect peace, and therefore have some relationship to our own security and progress, and the kind of New Year we may expect.

I take our neighbouring problems first.

Indonesia's "confrontation" of Malaysia and Singapore continues. This is an unhappy state of affairs. Australia is directly involved because of our commitments to aid the defence of Malaysia, whose right to independent existence we firmly uphold.

I hope that in 1966 Indonesia, with which country we desire to live at peace and with mutual understanding, will not pursue policies which create quite unnecessary hostilities and which are inconsistent with the great principles of non-aggression and the mutual recognition of the sovereignty of lawfully established government. The major interests of both Indonesia and Australia are in peace, a common understanding, mutual aid, and the raising of living standards.

In South Vietnam we are supporting the resistance of the Government and of the United States and other nations to what is, quite clearly, armed aggression from Communist North Vietnam and subversive action inspired and directed and supplied from the North.

The Vietnam campaign is complex, difficult and costly in both lives and money. I warmly share the feelings of those who would like to see it brought to an end by genuine negotiations for peace.

But negotiations must be conducted in good faith on both sides. The only statements that have been made by the Government of North Vietnam show clearly and consistently that it will not negotiate for peace except on conditions the most important of which are that "foreign" troops in South Vietnam should be withdrawn, thus abandoning the South Vietnamese Government and people, and that the future government and institutions of South Vietnam should be decided by the so-called "Liberation Front", a creature of the Communist Government of North Vietnam. In short, they wish the future of South Vietnam to be decided only by the Communists.

We believe, as do the U.S.A. and other non-Communist nations, that these conditions are unacceptable. So far as Australia is concerned, a Communist victory in South Vietnam would strike a deadly blow at every now free nation in South-East Asia, and bring international Communist aggression ever nearer to our own shores.

While passionately desiring peace based upon the abandonment of aggression, we in Australia must therefore, in 1966, stand firm in our alliances, while always hoping that there may be a genuine recourse to the conference table.

Our third problem, though we are geographically remote from it, and are in no sense a party principal, is that of Rhodesia.

On behalf of the Australian Government, and I believe on your behalf also, I have stated these principles.

The first is that the declaration of Independence by the then Government of Rhodesia was an unlawful act, and cannot be legally recognised by us.

The second is that we think it proper, by economic and financial means, to support the Government of Britain in its attempts to persuade Rhodesia to abandon its course of action and return to proper negotiations for a steady progress towards general adult suffrage, with a proper educational programme to ensure that before too long the ultimate majority will be reasonably qualified to assume the powers and responsibilities of self-government.

The third is that a new constitutional settlement should be sought without the employment of armed force.

A good future for Rhodesia, whose people have worked hard for the growth and prosperity of their own country, cannot be built upon a foundation of hatred and bloodshed. Racial differences can always, among sensible people, be settled by negotiation and co-operation. But racial hatreds, expressed in acts of war, could write a terrible chapter in the history of Africa: could bring dissolution to a multi-racial Commonwealth; and could serve to destroy that international understanding which, since the Second War, a hundred nations have been struggling to achieve.

This is a much longer New Year message than I have issued before.

But my desire is to make it clear that while we wish each other the greatest possible happiness, we would not want to have it at the expense of the unhappiness of millions of other human beings.

We Australians are not war-mongers. We love peace, and desire it for all. But what we believe in, we will help to defend.

I have referred to three problems. My New Year wish, and yours, is that 1966 will see those problems solved in an atmosphere of peace, justice and goodwill.