

ANZAC DAY SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
MR. HAROLD HOLT TO AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND FORCES  
AT BIEN HOA, SOUTH VIETNAM.

25TH APRIL, 1966

It is 51 years today since Australian, New Zealand, other British and allied forces stormed the heights of Gallipoli and together wrote an imperishable chapter in the history of our two countries.

It wasn't a military success in that the objectives, the military objectives, were not achieved, but it was a victory of the spirit it revealed in young countries which had not been tested in a national strife of this kind before.

It tested qualities of character, of mateship of manhood and the resolution to go on with the military task, and because it developed so much significance for Australia and New Zealand and because it marked our comradeship together in arms and it carried with it the lessons for our countrymen of what the cause of freedom can mean to a liberty-loving people.

We have, from that time on, celebrated Anzac Day as perhaps the most significant commemoration in our national calendar, and wherever Australians and New Zealanders are to be found around the world today, they will be pausing and commemorating this Anzac Day observance.

They will be commemorating the fallen, those who gave their lives that we, in our turn, could know the blessings of liberty.

But they will also be commemorating the national progress that we have made, the progress that has been largely influenced by the inspirations that flowed out of the Gallipoli tradition.

And for you and for our own people in our countries, and those that are in other parts of the world, Anzac Day today will be taking on a deeper significance in that here gathered again on a field of battle remote from their own countries the Anzacs are together again, fighting again, for the cause of freedom.

It is characteristic of this precious boon of freedom that the battle for it is never finally won at any time or by any generation of people: each generation in their turn have to take up the challenge, the price of liberty is still eternal vigilance, and our two peoples have never waited for the battles to come to them.

They have clearly recognised the threat to liberty when it has emerged and they have quickly responded to the need to come in resistance to it and again here today we see the evidence that our two countries have recognised clearly in this struggle in South Viet Nam a challenge to liberty - not merely the liberty of the South Vietnamese people, but to the liberty of free peoples everywhere.

That is one of the factors which makes this, in my judgment, an historic struggle because if success can be achieved here then that will influence the lives of literally hundreds of millions of people throughout Asia and, perhaps, less directly but importantly, it will influence what occurs around the rest of the world.

So you may feel that you are engaged in an historic struggle and it is historic for one other good reason: that is that, on few occasions, can it have been said in earlier military history that those who were actively engaged in the military tasks have at the same time regarded as vital to complete success, that they should engage in the constructive, positive task of assisting the people of the threatened country to build a better order of life for themselves.

What you have been doing in your helpful, friendly positive and constructive way to assist the people of the area in which you've served towards a better life, itself becomes a model on which we would hope there can be build a very much greater structure.

It has been an inspiration to me to find that in the Government of South Viet Nam, in the forces of the United States and other friendly forces and in our own ranks, there is this determination to make the military victory a supplement to the victory of peace in building a better standard for the people.

You in your own way have added another bright chapter to the story of Anzac.

You have conducted yourselves in the finest Anzac tradition.

I have heard nothing but commendation wherever I have turned for the contribution that the Australian and New Zealand Forces have made.

We may be small in number but it is the quality and character of manhood that makes its impact upon the people who observe what we are doing and you have measured up to those tests and have come through splendidly.

Your fellow countrymen feel a pride in you that will make for them this Anzac Day one of the brightest in our celebration of that long series.

They will wish that you come successfully through your engagements and that you will in due course return to your two countries which we can treasure as countries of liberty - countries which rank amongst the most splendid in the world - for what they can give to their people.

So good luck to you all and on behalf, not merely of the Government and people of Australia, but on behalf of the Government and people of New Zealand as well, we congratulate you, we thank you and we are proud of you.

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