

ASIAN TOUR 1967.

CAMBODIA

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt at
Gala Dinner at Phnom Penh

29th March, 1967.

Over recent years there has been a growing awareness in Australia of our increasing involvement in developments occurring in South East Asia and the Pacific. While some of these developments have related to matters of national integrity and security, there have emerged also positive and mutually beneficial developments in the fields of trade and commerce. This is, perhaps, most strikingly demonstrated in the transformation which has occurred in Australia's relations with Japan. We fought as enemies in the Second World War, but after the peace we quickly found a basis for friendship and a rapidly growing trade between our countries began to develop. This has moved so quickly that today Japan has become the largest importer in the world in value of Australian exports while we have become the second or third largest importer of exports from Japan.

This, I believe, is illustrative of the improved relations and mutual benefits which can flow from the establishment of conditions of security and stability associated with peaceful economic progress.

Wherever we look in this general area today we find that in those countries able to enjoy the blessings of peace, rapid progress is being achieved. We find these countries absorbed in great tasks of nation building and growth, and South East Asia, which has shaken off its colonial past, is able to employ to an expanding degree the benefits of modern science and technology.

We in Australia have done our best to assist by providing materials, equipment and techniques. In Cambodia's case, for example, I understand that the irrigation pumps which we have been able to provide have been a considerable success, and more will be coming to you. We have done this gladly, feeling a genuine sense of cooperation with friendly countries in the region.

We strongly uphold the concepts of sovereignty, national self-determination and national independence. Our own history as a free democratically governed country leads us to do so.

Sixty-six years ago Australia became one nation with a vast continent to develop, and a population of only three million people. Today, as our population approaches twelve millions, we take pride in our national growth and the individual Australian identity we have established. Ours is a friendly country and Australians will, I think, be acknowledged as friendly people. We bring warmth and understanding to the national aspirations of our neighbours, we respond readily to warmth and understanding from them. We welcome the fact that national goals today are centred on the strengthening of domestic institutions, widening opportunities for our peoples, the development of national resources, and a more widely shared prosperity spread by programmes of social justice.

There is, we believe, in South East Asia, a common

acceptance of the need for a more stable environment in the region within which members can live in peace and amity and work together in harmony. Australia will participate whole-heartedly in efforts to reconcile national differences and in the fostering of cooperative relations. We see, for example, much value in such instrumentalities of mutual benefit as the Colombo Plan and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and we believe that Cambodia does also. We see great future promise in the Asian Development Bank and, as one of its largest contributors, we hope to play a full part in its activities. This is Asia's own Bank and we believe it will be for the nations of Asia to join together in making it fully effective.

The harmonious community of developing nations to which Australia looks forward in the South East Asian region must be one that is based on general acceptance and respect for differing national identities, cultures and social and political systems.

For our part Australia has chosen to be a member of various security treaties relating to the Asian and Pacific areas. These treaties are defensive in nature, and are designed to safeguard security and bring stability to the region.

In the pursuit of your national interest and the preservation of your independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Cambodia has adopted policies of neutrality. Australian adherence to the principle of respect for national independence involves recognition of the territorial integrity of the countries concerned, acceptance of the particular political and social systems prevailing within their domestic jurisdiction, and complete respect for the national policies of neutrality, and non-alignment, which countries like Cambodia have adopted. Australians believe that differences of culture, social systems and national policies can be reconciled by attitudes of mutual understanding, and active policies of friendship and cooperation.

The present relationship between Cambodia and Australia is a prime example of the success of such policies. Australia hopes that, through their application on a broader scale, diversity can become a source not of weakness, but of strength, not of discord, but of mutual advantage throughout the South East Asian area.

It is in this spirit Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I ask you to join me in the toast to the health of the Head of State of Cambodia, His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk and to Madame Sihanouk, to the Government and people of Cambodia, to the continued progress and future prosperity of Cambodia, and to an ever-closer friendship between our two countries.
