

CAMBODIA

DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRINCE SIHANOUK GIVEN BY THE  
PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT, AT PHNOM PENH

31ST MARCH, 1967

FOLLOWING ARE THE MAIN POINTS FROM A SPEECH  
MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT:

We near the end of our visit to Cambodia. It is a visit from which we have learned much, a visit we have greatly enjoyed. We are all better informed about Cambodia, its country and its people, its aspiration and its problems. I hope we are all wiser also in our understanding of its policies.

A visit of only three days but thoughtfully planned from Head of State and his administration to good team work with our own distinguished Ambassador and his staff which has enabled us to absorb a widely representative series of features of your national life.

Some conclusions stand out in the mind. I had an awareness previously that substantial national progress was being made under the leadership of Head of State. What I had not fully appreciated was the centuries old Khmer culture and tradition so graphically demonstrated at Angkor and reflected with remarkable fidelity back to early centuries in the classical royal ballet.

This deep sense of national pride, fierce spirit of independence associated with the tradition of early civilizations have clearly influenced your national policy of neutrality and non alignment. It has also been reflected in features of your life which have a special Cambodian flavour, your capacity to marry happily the practical with the aesthetic the ability to maintain a zestful way of life whilst applying your energy to the development of a modern economically advancing state.

This has been a highly educational visit because education builds knowledge, builds understanding and understanding builds friendship. Our relations were warm and friendly before my visit but I feel that they will be even warmer and deeper as a consequence of it.

Your ministers and officials have made it possible for me to see some of the striking and imaginatively conceived architectural features of your capital city, to see something of your proud cultural heritage both past and present.

Mrs. Holt and I greatly appreciated our audience with Her Majesty the Queen Mother and I found our own long talk together both informative and most valuable as well for the understanding of the Cambodian situation as for a better understanding of the problems of this region.

We have noted the encouragement given to such cultural activities as your Royal Ballet, your choral and instrumental music by the Queen Mother and your Head of State. We have seen convincing evidence of Cambodia's purposeful efforts to achieve under your leadership the full stature of a modern state. Industrial developments here in Phnom Penh, harbour development at Sihanoukville and the many examples graphically presented at the State Exhibition where His Excellency Mr. Son Sann conducted us. This was also seen and enjoyed by a great many of my fellow countrymen.

There is a firm basis to our friendship. It is founded on mutual respect, a recognition of national identity and integrity, a mutually helpful and trustful relationship. We like you wish to be left undisturbed to develop our nation. We are both small nations in terms of population. Australia has a vast territory and is rich in resources but these are not easily gained. We have to contend to an extent unknown to you with drought, flood and bushfire. We have large tracts of arid desert. We are neither a belligerent nor militaristic people but we have contributed where we have thought called for to goals of security and economic advancement for others.

Since becoming Head of Australian Government it has been my purpose to become familiar with Australian neighbours countries in Asia, to meet and talk with their leaders and to learn at first hand something of their way of life, their peoples accomplishments, ideas and problems. This process has been richly rewarded in Cambodia, I hope the value I have found in such a visit will encourage your Head of State to make a visit when he can to Australia. He has the warm invitation of my Government to do so. We both believe our countries have a contribution to make to a peaceful and more prosperous world. May our friendship contribute usefully to this.

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