



FOR PRESS

CORAL SEA ANNIVERSARY

P.M. NO. 50/1967.

Message from the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

The following message, to mark the start of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the Battle of the Coral Sea, was broadcast by the Prime Minister today over the A.B.C.'s national network :-

THIS WEEK WE ARE CELEBRATING THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA.

THOSE OF US WHO LIVED THROUGH THE SOMBRE DAYS OF MAY, 1942, REMEMBER THAT WEEK. THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE YOUNGER MAY NOT. BUT TO YOU I SAY "YOU TOO, WILL WANT TO REMEMBER, FOR THIS IS PART OF YOUR HISTORY".

THE BATTLE WAS UNIQUE IN A MODERN WAR BECAUSE IT WAS AN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN. NO SHIPS EXCHANGED SHOTS, NOR DID THEY EVEN SIGHT EACH OTHER. IT WAS FOUGHT BELOW THEIR HORIZONS - CARRIER AGAINST AIRCRAFT, AIRCRAFT AGAINST CARRIER.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS THE OUTCOME WAS OBSCURE. THEN THE MEANING BECAME CLEAR. A THREATENED INVASION OF PORT MORESBY HAD BEEN TURNED BACK. THE RISK OF AIR RAIDS ON THE AUSTRALIAN MAINLAND HAD BEEN REDUCED.

AND MORE THAN THAT. A FORMIDABLE THRUST TO THE HEART OF THE WHOLE ALLIED CAUSE IN THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC HAD BEEN BROKEN. THIS WAS THE FIRST MAJOR VICTORY, AND A TURNING POINT IN THE WAR.

SO WE PAY A NATION'S TRIBUTE ONCE AGAIN TO THE NAVAL AIRMEN OF THE UNITED STATES, WHO CARRIED THE MAIN BURDEN OF THE BATTLE AND HAMMERED HOME THE VICTORY. AND TO OUR OWN SAILORS AND AIRMEN WHO GAVE THEIR SUPPORT.

TODAY OUR FIGHTING MEN AGAIN STAND ALONGSIDE THE UNITED STATES IN VIETNAM. THE BONDS FORGED IN THE CORAL SEA AND OVER THE SCATTERED BATTLE LINES OF THE PACIFIC A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO HAVE ENDURED.

ASIA IS NOW THE WORLD'S WORST TROUBLE SPOT - BUT ITS PEOPLE ARE UNDERGOING AN EXCITING REVOLUTION OF HOPE AND ARE LOOKING TO A BETTER FUTURE. FOLLOWING MY RECENT VISIT TO ASIA, I AM CONVINCED THAT, IF WE IN THE REGION CAN WORK TOGETHER, HELPED BY FRIENDLY COUNTRIES OUTSIDE IT, WE CAN MOVE QUICKLY TOWARDS AN ERA OF EVER GREATER PROGRESS.

THE TRADE LANES OF THE CORAL SEA HAVE BEEN OPEN AND FREE NOW FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. JAPAN AND WE ARE FRIENDS, AND TOGETHER WE ARE DEVELOPING TRADE AND COMMERCE FOR THE BENEFIT NOT ONLY OF OUR TWO NATIONS BUT FOR THE REGION AS A WHOLE. I HOPE THESE GROWING LINKS CAN BE AN EXAMPLE FOR RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE AREA. WE HAVE FAITH IN OURSELVES. WE BELIEVE THAT WITH FIRMLINESS OF PURPOSE AND FRIENDLY CO-OPERATION, STABILITY CAN BE MAINTAINED IN THE AREA AND ITS PROGRESS ASSURED. THIS IS THE CHALLENGE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW WHICH CORAL SEA WEEK BRINGS TO US AS AUSTRALIANS, AND AS MEMBERS OF THE DEVELOPING ASIAN REGION.

CANBERRA.

30TH APRIL, 1967.