



VISIT TO U.S., CANADA AND U.K.

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ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT
TO THE FAR-EAST AMERICA COUNCIL AT THE ALDORF HOTEL

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"We are, in Australia, a community with a strong European tradition and history but we find ourselves increasingly involved in Asia, and whether we are classed by the geographer as part of Asia or not, we increasingly think of ourselves as involved in its problems and concerned with its potentialities. And so I want to speak particularly about the region of Asia in general.

It is misleading, in a sense, to speak of the problems of Asia as if Asians are one set of people. There are wider differences of appearance, habits of life, historical background and culture to be found in Asia than is to be found in any other area of the world. I have just come back from a tour - not the first by any means - but my first to the four countries, Cambodia, Laos, Taiwan and Korea.

I was particularly struck with these differences which existed in countries with adjoining boundaries or which were located close to each other. The dissimilarities were more obvious than the similarities. Yet, I suppose, it is not so surprising when one thinks of the history of the British Isles and the marked differences in language, in approach, in temperament, in physique, habits of life of the people of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

The differences are even more manifest in the countries of Asia. We do well to bear this in mind, because so many of those who speak about the region adopt broad descriptions which I think could be quite misleading and dangerous if they are to form the basis for policy-making. Even the people of the area, themselves, talk about settling things the Asian way, repudiating, at times, the efforts being made by others outside the region to deal with their problems as though settling things the Asian way meant that all Asians tried to settle things in the same way.

I would be very surprised to learn that the people of South Korea settle things the same way as the people in India, or the Indonesians the same way as the Burmese, or the Chinese even the same way as the Vietnamese, and so on. Therefore we do well to remember that we are speaking of a very diverse range of peoples with different problems and often different aspirations, and certainly different attitudes to the problems of life.

Then, we get the other sort of cliché which is popularised in some of the left wing and more doctrinaire journals such as the New Statesman, which occasionally is taken up by the politicians who hold that it is wrong - something immoral - to have white faces either in uniform or in industry on the mainland of Asia.

Many of you represented here today are on the

mainland of Asia in industry, and you will find to varying degrees that your presence is welcome there - that you can do a great deal to assist in the prosperous growth of the people of this region.

But more particularly I speak today about the question of having white faces in uniform on the mainland of Asia, and to challenge the proposition that this is either in some way immoral or unwelcome to the people of the region. I would go so far as to say that the contemporary trend is entirely in the opposite direction. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the recent experience of the United States of America. Even some Americans, I think, would be surprised to learn how many security commitments your country has gladly accepted in the countries of Asia and around the periphery of Asia. Those commitments cover South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines and now actively in South Vietnam.

In Australia and New Zealand we have our associations with you of a security kind in the ANZUS Pact and the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation, where again we co-operate on a multilateral basis to combating communist infiltration and aggression in the region.

But that is not the end of the story. Your military participation has not only been welcomed by these countries, in some instances it has preserved them from being overrun by the forces of communism. This is particularly true, of course, in South Korea. We, I am proud to say, were the first country to declare ourselves alongside you when you made that historic decision to intervene and help in checking communist aggression there.

I think of this as one of the two critical and historic policy decisions made by the people of the United States in contemporary times. The other was the Marshall Plan, which for the first time that I can recall in human history, set out in a disinterested way to assist other nations to build up their economic strength, reconstruct after the devastation of war and build again a secure place in the expanding world.

The lesson of the Marshall Plan should have been taken up by those countries who were assisted as a result of it to establish themselves again in economic strength. I find myself dissatisfied with the extent to which they have taken up their share of the burden of helping to improve the lot of the rest of mankind, less fortunately placed. The United States continues to set a fine example in this particular direction.

The other historic decision which I believe opens up a new watershed of human history, a new phase in the history of man, was the decision, and all that has since flowed from it, to intervene in the crisis which developed in South Korea. Had you not decided that way at that time, South Korea would, of course, have been overrun and been part of the Chinese Communist dominion. There would have been no South Vietnam conflict because, not having chosen to intervene at one point, it would not have seemed worth the cost and the struggle to intervene at the other.

I question whether Taiwan could have been held from communist incursion. Down through that whole region of South-East Asia there would have been no effective

check on communist penetration. I know there is a school of thought which believes that because these people have strong national sentiments they would not have welcomed the Chinese. That may be so. But they would have proved incapable of resisting the incursion of the communist philosophy and the so-called wars of national liberation, which are not national in sentiment and certainly do not liberate.

As far as the national aspect was concerned that would have been submerged by the general Peking-oriented philosophy of communism. So far as liberation was concerned, they would not have been free.

We would have been faced with a very different kind of world from that which, with reasonable fortune, and by our own endeavours, we can sustain in the future.

It is my conviction that we would not have had the favourable turn of events in Indonesia had the United States not been present in strength in South Vietnam. There in Indonesia, you not only had a very strong communist party but the administration was leaning increasingly towards it, and I question whether there would have been the encouragement for resistance to these forces in Indonesia had they not seen that America was in strength in South Vietnam, determined to resist communist penetration and further communist expansion through the area of South-East Asia.

That gave them heart to take up the struggle themselves, and you have now a reasonable prospect that Indonesia, a potentially rich country of more than 100,000,000 people will be, if not part of the free world camp, at least a co-operating member of the international community developing its resources for its own benefit and that of international trade generally in the years ahead.

As you turn around the periphery of Asia you find a receptiveness to people from beyond the mainland. I could instance country after country. In Thailand there are protective forces of the United States and even a small representation from my own country. In Malaysia we are more strongly represented with the British and other Commonwealth forces. In Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan there has been substantial assistance, military and economic, by the United States.

There is an increasing tendency to co-operate in such institutions as the Asian and Pacific Council, in the Asian Development Bank, in ECAFE, in SEATO and in the Colombo Plan.

I feel that, in view of the conjecture going on about the British position East of Suez in future years acknowledgement should be made of the contribution of the United Kingdom, first in combating the communist inspired guerillas for many years in what was Malaya, and then in more recent times, with considerably expanded forces helping to resist, and successfully doing so over a period of three years, the confrontation of Malaysia by Indonesia. This underlines, I believe, the importance of a continuing British presence in the area. Around the whole arc of South-East Asia, the only area in which the United States has not taken up a defensive obligation has been in relation to Malaysia and Singapore. This area they have regarded - not unreasonably as a Commonwealth and primarily a British

responsibility. But on that matter there will be further discussions before the final British decisions are taken.

We can all sympathise with the United Kingdom's view at a time when the country is under very heavy economic pressure. But over recent weeks, there have been - in two areas East of Suez - in Hong Kong and in the Gulf of Aqaba dramatic illustrations to the British Government of its involvement, in a world role whether it wishes it or not. The rioting in Hong Kong and the short war in the Middle East have shown that Britain is directly concerned in a significant way.

There are, I know, some in this great and powerful country who would like to leave the problems of the world where they are. Just as in the long, long ago there were many who felt you should stay out of Europe. But you didn't stay out of Europe, because you responded to the call of free men for help in desperate days, and now as the new area of crisis has moved to Asia, you are committed again in strength and to a different type of war. The undeclared war. But war nevertheless.

I was in South Korea very recently, and was heartened by what I found there. There is a tendency to think of these countries as small countries, weak countries, not very much worth bothering about. But most of the world is made up of relatively small countries.

There are great powers, of course, and their aggregate populations are a very substantial portion of the world as a whole. But if you examine the membership of the United Nations, there are many countries which are not all that large but which do have a significance in the scheme of things. South Korea has 30,000,000 fine, vigorous, tough, industrious people, and it was heartening to me to see how they had taken on the problems of industrial development.

Whether you look there, whether you look at Taiwan, whether you look at Malaysia, Thailand or even at neutral Cambodia, where Prince Sihanouk has personally directed himself to the task of economic development you will see progress being made. I was shown with some pride the new port of Sihanoukville. There the Cambodians are trying to secure, for the first time, an outlet to the sea instead of having all their goods come through what has in the past proved dangerous territory along the Mekong River.

In each of these countries there is something to see of growth and progress. In Malaysia Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister, outlined to me the developmental objectives of his country. In Thailand you can hear the same story. In Taiwan, which like Korea can point to one of the highest rates of increase in gross national product to be found anywhere in the world, there is much to see which most of the western world knows little about.

Unfortunately most of the countries of Western Europe know very little about the developments which are occurring in this area. I cannot recall, for example, any senior member of the British Cabinet going through this area over recent years. Some may have touched in Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. But none has made a run of an instructive

kind. If you were to speak of most of the countries of Western Europe, you would get the same kind of result.

Yet, east of Suez, there are currently nearly three fifths of humankind, and they are stirring as they shake off the shackles of the past, as they find themselves capable of resisting the aggression of the past. These are the things that have held them back, not lack of abilities, not lack of skills, not lack of culture. Most of them have cultures and skills older than those of your country and mine. But, for the first time in centuries they are getting a chance to express themselves in a constructive and positive way.

This holds tremendous promise for us all. I was canvassing this with the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Pearson. Canada has a Pacific border, but that nation has been oriented for most of its history to the North Atlantic and North America. The Canadians are pretty capable international traders, and when they see the potentialities in Asia I do not think they will long persist in that kind of orientation. At least they will devote some of their view to what can happen across the Pacific.

I give full credit to your own administration for their recognition of Asia. The first senior American representatives I can recall passing through my country, who had made their own personal assessment of what was happening in this area of the world, were Governor Dewey and John Foster Dulles. These men paved the way.

Your own President made the first historic visit of a United States President to the region and to Australia, and his recognition of the area's potentialities has been shared by the administration.

There is hope in this for mankind as a whole. My own country since the 1950's has built up its export trade east of Suez from 15 percent of our exports to more than 40 percent of our exports. Japan, with whom we had virtually no trade right into the late 1940's now ranks as the largest purchaser of Australian goods in value in the world and it is rapidly rising.

The potentialities may be better understood by some comparisons. India, with forty-two times our population, only possessed twice our gross national product in value. Indonesia, with nine times our population, only rates one third the value of our gross national product. As these countries build their economies, with assistance from the stronger countries of the world, they will in the years ahead show tremendous growth.

My country is committed to growth. We believe we are favourably placed - with those of you who have already come to help and share - to serve as a springboard to the burgeoning economies of Asia. We hope more of you will come. Those of you who do will, I am sure, stay happily with us and build the greater Australia of the future. But this prospect, can only be secured if we are firm in our resolution to resist aggression where we find it in that area of the world and help the Asian people to be free. These people aspire to a better order of life and are prepared to work for it and give their skills to it.

The United States, with its imaginative, realistic appreciation of the problems and potentialities of the region, is contributing to the hopes expressed by us in our declarations for freedom at Manila.

CAMERA.