

SINGAPORE

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PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON, AT AIRPORT

6 JUNE 1968

Q. (Question on reaction of Senator Kennedy's death.)

PM. I can only say what I said at home, that I was absolutely sickened when I heard that this attack had been made upon him. I do not see how a democratic country can run, if people who put a point of view with which you disagree are subject to assassination. I do not see how a democratic country can run if a minority resorts to force and violence to try and overthrow a point of view with which they disagree. I find this quite shocking, not only personally from the point of view of Robert Kennedy and his family but from the point of view of the proper conduct of public affairs. Although I have never met him, I find it completely devastating that this could have happened, particularly to two brothers, two brothers of the one family in so short a time. Both really because they had points of view with which others did not agree.

Q. Tell us something of the purpose of your visit. Is it a visit of friendship to see other Prime Ministers?

PM. Well, the major purpose is to meet the people who are in charge of the countries in our region and to demonstrate that that policy which my predecessor, Mr. Holt, furthered, of interest in and close co-operation with our neighbours, was a continuing policy as far as I am concerned.

Q. Prime Minister, how do you feel about going in to Vietnam tomorrow morning?

PM. What do you mean how do I feel about it?

Q. Are you scared?

PM. No. Look there is an old Italian proverb - "Che Sera, Sera" - and I have no doubt it is in other languages also. So that's your answer.

Q. Sir, when Mrs. Gandhi was in your country she said she was interested in international guarantees for the security of South East Asia. How do you feel about it?

PM. We had a most delightful visit from Mrs. Gandhi. I think that she enjoyed her stay and we certainly enjoyed having her with us. A guarantee is a word and I don't think anything was spelt out during Mrs. Gandhi's visit, nor were any particular proposals put forward. But I do believe if all of us together in this region can do what we can to see that military force is not used, that aggression does not take place, that there is co-operation and development, then that can do nothing but good to all of us in this region.

Q. Do you think that Peking will react to any such proposal?

PM. I wouldn't attempt to try and think of reactions in Peking to any proposal, whatever.

Q. Would you like Australia to have a dialogue with communist China?

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PM. What precisely do you mean by a dialogue?

Q. Would you have diplomatic relations with communist China?

PM. The Government's policy is not to have diplomatic relations with communist China.
