

VISIT TO SOUTH EAST ASIA 1968

SAIGON

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

9 JUNE 1968

At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Rt. Hon. J. G. Gorton, M. P., Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, accompanied by Mrs. Gorton visited the Republic from 7 to 9 June, 1968. In Saigon, the Prime Minister was received by His Excellency, the President, and had conversations with the Prime Minister of the Republic, the Cabinet and the Presiding Officers of both Houses of the National Assembly. Mrs. Gorton visited a refugee centre and saw something of the work being done to rehabilitate the victims of communist attacks.

The Prime Minister of Australia and the leaders of the Republic thoroughly reviewed the present situation. They agreed that regular consultation, as to which the Prime Minister's visit formed a part, was particularly important now since, at the same time as preliminary talks were taking place in Paris, North Vietnamese attacks on civilian centres were continuing and the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into South Vietnam was being increased. They reaffirmed their determination, expressed by all the allies at the Manila Conference, that the South Vietnamese should not be conquered by subversion, terrorism, murder, and the use of organized aggressive force, but should retain the right to choose their own form of Government and their own way of life.

Mr. Gorton paid tribute to the steadfastness of the Vietnamese Government, armed forces and people in the face of recent enemy offensives and attacks on civilians in population centres. He said that Australia and the Republic's other allies had noted with admiration the achievements of the Vietnamese people who, in spite of a campaign of systematic terror and destruction had adopted a constitution, elected a representative Government and were laying the foundations of national reconciliation and reconstruction.

The Vietnamese leaders expressed their appreciation and gratitude for the continuous support and assistance extended by Australia to their fight against communist aggression. They reasserted their position that the Republic of Vietnam should be a full participant and play a major role in any negotiations to settle the conflict. The Prime Minister and the leaders of the Republic agreed that the allied nations which have helped to defend the Republic of Vietnam should participate in any final settlement of the conflict.

The Prime Minister and his party visited Nui Dat, Vung Tau, Phan Rang and Bien Hoa. These visits enabled the Prime Minister to meet Australians fighting and working in the Republic - the soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Australian Force Vietnam, aid experts, and members of the medical teams whose humanitarian work exemplifies the breadth of the co-operation established between the two countries.

The Prime Minister expressed his warm appreciation for the Vietnamese Government's invitation and for the arrangements that had been made to enable him to deepen his understanding of the problems and aspirations of the country.

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