

PRESS INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
MR JOHN GORTON AT BRISBANE AIRPORT

3 MARCH 1969

Russian Embassy  
bombing ✓  
Q.

Mr Prime Minister, this morning's bombing of the Russian Embassy in Canberra. Can you tell us a little bit about that and what happened?

PM: I can't tell you about that. I left Canberra quite early and I haven't had anything which I can significantly say about that at all.

ASIO ✓  
& Hoffman ✓  
Q.

Mr Prime Minister, the Japanese document affair which is going on at the moment. Do you feel the Australian Security Service should lose a little bit of its autonomy and have to answer to the Government?

PM: No. The Australian Security Service does answer to the Government. Of course it answers to the Government. But this appears to me to be an attempt to denigrate the Australian Security Service by the Left Wing of the Australian Labor Party because you will notice that there is a whole series of questions by Left Wingers on the Notice Paper. . . . Is there poison gas in the Security Service? Did they follow somebody who came here from some other country. . . . questions of this kind, all without foundation. Now, they ask these knowing that the policy of all governments since Chifley's time has been neither to confirm nor to deny allegations that are made - for obvious reasons. If you say somebody was or wasn't working for Security, they ask about somebody else, and then they ask about somebody else, and negative information is just as good as positive, so the policy is to say nothing in these matters. But it does seem to me to have overtones of an organised attempt by Left Wingers to try and denigrate the Australian Security Service.

Q. Is it pure politicking at this stage?

PM: I believe it is.

Q. When can we expect an election - can you give us an idea?

PM: No, but I am not expecting one next month.

Mr Prime Minister, the alleged American Base near Alice Springs has been denied by a lot of people in high places. Would you care to comment on it now that it has apparently been proved to exist there?

Election ✓

US Base near Alice Springs ✓  
Q.

US Bases ✓

PM: I would refer you to the comment made in the House of Representatives by the Minister for Defence in reply to a question by the Opposition. They asked him about military affairs and other things, and the Minister for Defence said, quite properly, that there must be information which is not to be publicly provided.

Russian Embassy bombing ✓ Q.

Mr Gorton, do you mind if I re-ask the question concerning the Russian Embassy. How much damage was caused there and what do you know about it?

PM: Well, I know very little about it at all yet. I don't know what damage was caused there or any of the circumstances about it whatever. We left quite early this morning, and I have had nothing which I would call a report worth anything to me.

On the home front in Queensland. Most of the State is covered with drought at present. The Premier has said he has made or is making approaches to you for special drought aid or more drought aid. What consideration have you given to this at this stage?

QLD DROUGHT. Q.

PM: I don't recollect any special approaches made by the Premier. They will have come in and been passed on to the Treasurer, but in detail I can't give you any answer to that.

This portion omitted from the made available to Press

Russian Embassy Bombing

Reverting to this bombing of the Russian Embassy this morning. Any reports would have come in to my own Department, but I have nothing at all except the most sketchy information. For all I know it didn't even happen, I have just very sketchy.....

Q. Should it prove to be true, Sir, do you see this as an upsurge of violence in this country?

PM: I would most certainly hope not. Should it prove to be true and prove to be serious --- well, it is serious even if it is on a minor scale, of course. It is thoroughly and utterly reprehensible. I would certainly hope that there is not an upsurge of violence in this country from any quarter.

Q. Mr Prime Minister, another question on the home front. Queensland has applied for special aid for the Central Queensland Powerhouse. Is there anything you can tell us about this?

PM: No.

Central Queensland Powerhouse Q.