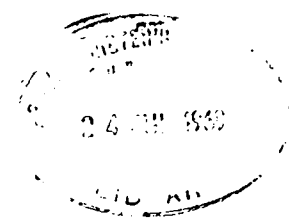


EMBARGO: 9.30 p.m. Sunday 6 July



"THIS WEEK"

TELEVISION INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRIME
MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON, AT HSV-7,
MELBOURNE

(Recorded on 4 July for replay on 6 July 1969)

Interviewers: Geoff Raymond
John Boland

- Q. Well, Mr. Prime Minister, we will be dividing our questions into more or less two parts. I will be starting off with foreign affairs and then John will come in, particularly on domestic affairs. But first of all, I would like to make one broad-based question on Asia. How do you see our role in Asia today?
- PM. Asia is an awfully large geographical conception which embraces Pakistan, India and Vietnam and Thailand and the Philippines - a terrifically wide variety of countries and I think that is rather too wide a question, but perhaps you mean our near North?
- Q. I was perhaps making it too broad. I will narrow it down. First of all, Malaysia.....
- PM. Yes, Malaysia/Singapore, the area to our near north....
- Q. Malaysia/Singapore, definitely there in view of Britain's withdrawal and our increasing involvement in Singapore.....perhaps Malaysia's attitude towards us?
- PM. Well, I would answer that question as to how I saw our role there. And I see it this way. I see it in the need to show a real involvement in the area and a willingness to participate and help in all kinds of ways - to give economic help, to give technical help, to assist with development, to try and open trade channels and also to be prepared to show that we are interested in helping to counter any military attack which may be launched on the area. Up until the present - and perhaps still for a short time - Britain has been responsible for the defence of Malaysia and Singapore and has accepted fully that responsibility herself as a major power and has looked to assistance from Malaysia, from Singapore, from ourselves, from New Zealand. Now, we can't accept responsibility for the defence of the area and look for assistance. Rather must the area defend itself and look to assistance from us and from New Zealand. There is a change in emphasis there.

Q. In specific terms, Sir, how would you see Malaysia helping itself. You once made reference very recently to Malaya - was that deliberate?

PM. Oh yes, that was quite deliberate. There were two references that were made, one was that our troops were stationed in Malaya and in Singapore. In fact the reason for saying that was our troops are stationed in Malaya and Singapore.

Q. In the peninsula of Malaya as distinct from Malaysia, the divided nation geographically?

PM. Yes, that's right. One could get into kind of semantic problems over this but I am sure that if anybody said - which we didn't and won't - our troops are stationed in Sabah, nobody would have been under any misapprehension as to the geographical area they were in. But they aren't. They are in Malaya. Or, if you prefer to put it in another way - they are in the Malayan Peninsula, which is made up of nine states, which is called West Malaysia, but which in fact is a geographical area which everybody knows to be a geographical area.

Q. Do you think the Asian leaders, Prime Minister, were upset by that division that you made?

PM. I think that perhaps the Malaysians themselves saw a distinction between the use of the word "Malaya" or the use of the words "the peninsula of Malaya" which I made in the February statement in Parliament, and took the view that Malaysia is a country and an entity and why should one use "Malaya" or the "peninsula of Malaya" or the "nine states which make up the peninsula of Malaya". But I was talking about the nine states which make up the peninsula of Malaya.

Q. You don't think it fractured our relationships in any way with....

PM. I don't think it has fractured our relationships in any way. I think it has made our position clearer, or as clear as it should be.

Q. The possibility of continuing racial riots and conflict in Malaya - once again, most of it has been confined to the Malayan Peninsula - do they complicate our relations there?

PM. I don't think they complicate our relations but I think they must be a worry to all concerned. I don't see them at this stage being a threat to the Peninsula of Malaya or to the Malaysian Government, but the fact that they can take place, after a period of time when there appeared to be multi-racialism accepted on all sides, does I think -

PM. - raise a question mark in one's mind. Because if this
(contd.) country of Malaysia is to be for the future viable, strong, growing, happy, getting more prosperous, getting more capacity to defend itself, then I think all the people in that area need to be working together for a common purpose. And if racial or communal - not communist but communal - strife comes into that, then this must cause disturbances one would much prefer not to have.

Q. Well, with our continuing involvement in the area, can we remain divorced or are we intended to remain divorced from this internal conflict?

PM. We are going to remain divorced from it - period.

Q. And this refers, of course, to Singapore as well?

PM. Yes, but.....

Q. In the event of conflict between Malaysia and Singapore which is not a real possibility at this moment?

PM. I wouldn't regard that as being something which arises at all.

Q. Are you satisfied with our relationship with Indonesia and the particular situation there? Do you think they are well disposed towards us now?

PM. I am quite sure that they are well disposed towards us and I believe that the present government is really trying to successfully accomplish the first task before them and which they see as the first task before them. And that is to increase their economic growth, increase their efficiency in production and try to see that the results of that economic growth and that efficiency are enjoyed by the peasants and the people and the workmen, the people down the line. I am sure they are trying to do that. I am sure they are well disposed towards us.

Q. Can we afford to do more for these countries in aid, do you feel? I think you referred during the week to them helping themselves. Now isn't this the best way for them to help themselves to get as much aid as they can? Do you think we are giving them enough?

PM. I think without doubt that the answer in the long term to any problems that might arise there is the economic answer. The answer is providing prosperity for the peoples that are living there and work opportunities and so forth, and that aid provides this. Having said that, I think that it is necessary that there should be, in the confused conditions of the world, that there should be a military shield to allow

PM. this development to take place behind it, and we are providing aid. It
(contd.) must always be a point of argument as to whether we are providing
enough or could provide a little more. I think our aid to that area has
gone up by 50 per cent in the last five years and certainly it has been
doubled - our aid to Indonesia itself has been doubled. It is still not an
enormous amount but it is moving up.

Q. Can we afford more?

PM. Well, it depends on your judgments of priorities as
between what we.....as to how our resources should be apportioned
because there are many calls on them. There is this call for aid.
There is the great drain for New Guinea's development, for example,
which is taking \$100 million a year from Australian taxpayers. There
is our requirement for roads and schools and hospitals and defence
and all the other matters. So it is a matter of apportionment.

Q. How long can self-government for New Guinea remain
delayed? And also, perhaps we can go on to what are the views of the
Government on New Guinea as an eighth State of Australia or complete
self-government without the Commonwealth of Australia?

PM. Which was the seventh State?

Q. Sorry! We'll leave the Northern Territory out of it.

PM. All right. No, I don't see New Guinea and Papua becoming
an eighth State of Australia and I think in the Governor-General's speech
at the Opening of the first Parliament in which I was Prime Minister, this
was made perfectly clear and spelt out that we do not see this as one of
the possibilities. We see Papua/New Guinea as an independent self-
governing state in its own right, and we are seeking to develop it towards
that end. At the moment, they are greatly dependent on us economically.
For every three dollars of public money spent in New Guinea, Australian
taxpayers provide two. But you also asked me how long before they
become self-governing and independent. We have made it clear that
they can become self-governing and independent as soon as a method is
devised of finding out that they do want to become self-governing and
independent; and when they do that they can.

Q. What do you think is holding this back?

PM. Well, I think that it is partly that a very great number
of peoples in Papua and New Guinea, particularly in the inland areas
and in the highland areas, do not at this stage want to be completely
self-governing and independent, but steps, of course, have been taken.
There has been the House of Assembly up there, which is elected.

PM. There are seven Ministers who are not Ministers in our own sense -
(contd.) it's no use pretending they are - but who are associated with the various arms of government and getting experience in government and in public service procedures and how to run a country. And when there is a real demand throughout the whole of the area for self-government, then as far as we are concerned, we would be quite happy for them to have it.

Q. Getting closer to Australia now, Mr. Prime Minister, what is the....how do you see Australia's defence looming up? From this week it would look very clearly that we seem to be getting closer to this original concept which I think you were interested in twelve months ago - in Fortress Australia-type defence. Now, how can we help ourselves in this field and do you think we are ultimately getting back to that concept?

PM. I have never used.....I have never ever publicly used the term "Fortress Australia". I just wanted to make that clear. But I think it would be true to say that we would need to think of how the mainland of Australia itself would be defended, what forces were needed to defend it, what allies were needed to make that defence without question successful. But we also need, as I said in the beginning, to show a preparedness and a readiness to try and help, particularly in Malaysia and Singapore, against external attack should that come. So our defence thinking would be that we should demonstrate our willingness to help - not to take over the defence - but to help and assist in the defence of these areas. We think this is best shown by stationing forces in the area (rather than by some alternate scheme of popping them in and out on a sort of now-you-see-them-now-you-don't jack-in-the-box approach which is logistically absurd and psychologically stupid), and at the same time build up our own defence forces in Australia.

Q. How much do you think we can still rely on our allies?

PM. I believe that we can rely on the ANZUS Treaty completely for the defence of the Australian mainland, or for New Zealand for that matter - but I am speaking of Australia now - and I have no doubt that Great Britain too, should we be subject to attack (I don't see this looming) but should we be subject to attack, that Great Britain would also without question have forces out here to help us.

Q. In time do you think? It's a long way away.

PM. Oh, I think so. If we haven't of our own resources sufficient defence capacity to defend an island....invading armies have to cross a sea to get here, they have to land at particular points such as Sydney or Melbourne. It's not much good them landing on some mangrove-covered coast in the Gulf of Carpentaria or somewhere that achieves nothing. If we haven't got the capacity to do that - and I think

PM. we have and will have - then we are not providing sufficient defences
(contd.) for ourselves. But I believe we are. As far as the United States forces under ANZUS are concerned, their fleets are close and their naval capacity to help us would take very little time to get here indeed, and their air capacity to help us would also be almost immediately available.

Q. This is still getting pretty close to the Fortress Australia-type concept, isn't it?

PM. No, it's not. I don't think it is because the Fortress Australia-type concept as it has been interpreted by people is - Don't do anything at all outside Australia. You are asking me and I have been talking to you about what one does in the event of an attack on Australia itself and I am not saying - indeed I have said the reverse - I am not saying that we should do nothing outside Australia, that we should not station our Air Force units at Butterworth, which is in Malaya, or that we should not station our troops in Singapore or that we should not engage in exercises with the British and the Malaysian and the Singaporean troops.

Q. Would we still have the capacity to buy the time we would need, Sir, without the F-111?

PM. Well, I think so. The F-111 was conceived as a comparatively long-range strike bomber. I don't think that is really relevant to.....

Q. It hasn't changed the defence thinking at all, the fact that it looks as though there is going to be a great delay if ever F-111s will be helping us?

PM. No, I think.....of course, it's nice if you have bombers in being but insofar as defence is concerned, I don't believe this would affect the time that would be required, and this was what you asked me - for us to be able to defend ourselves should we be attacked.

Q. Will we ever have these F-111s?

PM. We will have them if they meet our specifications and last as long as we expected them to last when we bought them and will meet the tests that we expected them to meet when we bought them.

Q. On this very question, you mentioned tests. You have, particularly, quite a personal part in seeing that this 16,000 hours test takes place with the F-111. Now, in view of the fact that up to date 8,000 hours have been achieved and it has shown very big flaws, can we take the attitude that at 16,000 hours the aircraft is not going to completely break up, but is it necessary to persist, to go ahead with the 16,000 hours test when half-way through it has shown flaws?

PM. Well, we think it is necessary for it to be tested to 16,000 hours before we would be prepared to take it.

Q. Are you happy with the test to date?

PM. Well, it hasn't reached 16,000 hours or anywhere near it.

Q. It hasn't reached 8,000 hours without failing so far, so how could it possibly reach.....

PM. Well, I suppose it would be possible to imagine it reaching 16,000 hours if they discovered the cause of the break-ups earlier and remedied them or if they had some other wing carry-through box or if they down-graded the actual performance of the plane in the air. There are a great number of permutations and combinations on this. But the original understanding when we entered into the arrangements for buying these planes many years ago was they would be tested to 16,000 hours. Now, on my last visit to Washington, it was confirmed that it was reasonable and right for us to expect them to be tested to that level before we took delivery.

Q. Have you looked at an alternative aircraft if this F-111 is not successful?

PM. I know that the Air Force as a matter of ordinary prudence and natural routine have for quite some time been assessing a variety of aircraft for a variety of purposes.

Q. Have you got any idea at this stage what type of aircraft they are looking at?

PM. Oh, they are looking at a lot of different types.

Q. American?

PM. Yes.

Q. Would you say that the cost.....already I think we have spent \$50 million on this project.....

PM. Which project - the F-111?

Q. Yes.

PM. Oh, rather more than that!

Q. Well, I was conservative! Whatever we have spent in excess of that..... is there any way in your talks with the American Defence chiefs and the American Government that we can recoup some of that on say, another aircraft, or can that be used to.....

PM. What we would need to do before talking about that at all would be to get much more detailed technical assessments from our own people who are over there as to the course of the tests and what happened at the tests. We would want much more technical advice from the engineering side of our air force as to the way the plane would operate, and what we could expect before we reached a situation where we would be in a position to start talking about what might happen if we didn't take the aeroplane.

Q. Do you think they are amenable to the suggestion that this \$50 million or in excess of that can be used?

PM. I don't think I can add anything to what I have just said in answer to your last question.

Q. Before we leave the subject of defence, Sir, we would have to at this stage bring Vietnam in. The possibility of 200,000 American troops being home in time for Christmas. Is it envisaged that Australia will scale down or phase out her commitments in the Phuoc Tuy province or in Vietnam generally on par with the American effort?

PM. I think that the suggestion of phasing down the Australian contribution of infantrymen and artillerymen and people driving tanks which is somewhere around 8,000 - not quite 8,000 men - I think the suggestion of phasing that down is scarcely tenable. The force was built up to three battalions with its artillery and with its tanks because that was a viable force. You could have two battalions in the field and one resting and that gave you much much more capacity than if you only had two battalions there because you could only have one in the field and one resting. Although it may mathematically sound as if it is only twice as good, in fact it is better than twice as good. So you would be very very much cutting down the military capacity of the force there and of course, I would think you would be increasing the danger to the ones that remained there if you didn't have a self-contained viable force. So the question would rather be, if it arose, whether we should have troops - ground troops - there or whether we should not. You are asking me hypothetical questions of - if the Americans do this or get down that far, would we.....

Q. Would we scale down comparably, that was really the question.

PM. I think not scale down. I think a time would have to come - I don't foresee it - but it would have to come when if there was a great and continuing American withdrawal, we would have to decide whether we left troops there or not. But that hasn't arrived and I don't know where the idea of withdrawal of 200,000 American troops by Christmas came about.....

Q. It has been mentioned, Sir, in some quarters. If the Australians were to be withdrawn, it seemed to me - I was over there fairly recently - it might be somewhat of a vacuum left, more so than the Americans because there are no South Vietnamese units working with the Australians at all. In fact at Nui Dat and environs there, South Vietnamese - the ARVN - the Army of the Republic of Vietnam - was completely absent. This would pose a difficulty, surely, in us withdrawing from that area. We are not involved with the South Vietnamese.

PM. Yes, but that wouldn't prevent the South Vietnamese units relieving, presumably. I know they are not there. They are not working now, but if the theory is - and it is a theory - that the South Vietnamese will take over where a battalion of American Marines were, and if it is withdrawn, then a South Vietnamese battalion will take that over, then again it would be possible for this to happen in Phuoc Tuy. But we are talking about something which is entirely hypothetical at the moment.

Q. It is possible, though, that there could be a lessening-down of our commitment there. If the American commitment is as big as 200,000, is it possible to see some Australian troops coming home by Christmas time?

PM. I don't see that happening for the reasons which I gave in the House and I think on a television interview somewhere else. All I would say would be that clearly if there ever was a stage reached where there was an American withdrawal which was going to go on and on and on, then at some stage it would be necessary for us to see whether we could stay there. But that hasn't arisen and I don't see it arising in the time you are talking of.

Q. Sir, of the British Commonwealth troops in Vietnam - we have only got the Australians and New Zealanders, the rest have not come to the party, if one could use the expression - there are racial tensions through the Commonwealth, a great divisive element it seems to me - is the Commonwealth a tenable and viable proposition?

PM. Yes, I think it's a tenable proposition - I'm just trying to work out what you have in your mind when you ask me if it is a viable proposition.

Q. As a power in world politics.....

PM. It's not a power in world politics now. I don't think you could regard the Commonwealth as a power in world politics. I'm sure nobody would take the attitude for instance, that Stalin took about the Pope - "How many divisions has a Pope got?" - I'm sure nobody says "How many divisions has a Commonwealth got?". I wouldn't regard it as a military power in world politics nor, really, as a cohesive power in influencing matters which might be discussed in the United Nations or somewhere, because people from the Commonwealth take different attitudes and different points of view. It is not cohesive in that way. I think it has advantages but they are not advantages which could be described as making it a power in any sense.

Q. Are there any advantages to Australia's continuing to belong to it?

PM. I think there are advantages which are difficult to describe in a finite way. I think there are advantages for opportunities to have some kind of a link say, with India or with Malaysia or with other countries which are within the Commonwealth, but it is not something you can spell out. It is not something you can put your finger on. I think there are advantages. I think it is useful, for example - I think it was useful at the last Prime Minister's Conference in London for so many Prime Ministers from so many different countries and so many different races to be able to sit down around a table and discuss matters and pull no punches, be polite to each other but have different points of view quite clearly put in an atmosphere which is sui generis. I think it has got that kind of advantage. I couldn't ever say "This is the value of it" or "That is the value of it". I think there is something there.

Q. This raises a very interesting point, Prime Minister. What is its future? What is the future for the Commonwealth? How do you see that?

PM. I think I would like to wait and see what the future brings.

Q. To get back to Australia again.....you have often been - it has often been suggested that you sort of indicate a Presidential-type Prime Ministership. Do you think that Australia will ever become a republic and do you think that the Prime Ministership is ever likely to become more of a Presidential operation?

PM. A Prime Ministership can't become a Presidential operation. The only way that we could have a President would be if we departed completely from the British type of Parliamentary government which we have, because a President is elected for a fixed term of years. It doesn't matter whether he is defeated in the Parliament or not. He still stays there and Congress - I'm taking the United States as an example - Congress can pass a law or not pass a law; it makes no difference, the President still remains there. And, of course, the great difference between that and the British system of Parliamentary government is that if a Prime Minister and his Government are defeated by the House of Representatives or the Senate or the House of Representatives particularly, then it is necessary for him to resign and have another election. So the two things are quite distinct and you couldn't have a Presidential system if you kept to the present British Parliamentary system.

Q. What about going part of the way, Sir - the Australian flag, the Australian National Anthem - Australian as such.

PM. I like the Australian flag the way it is. I see no problem in having the Union Jack in the corner. After all, it is not the British flag. It is the Australian flag. That there happens to be in the corner of it a Union Jack is perhaps a reminder of the continuing history of large numbers of our people and perhaps a reminder of history in which Australians have taken part in war and in peace. So I think we have got an Australian flag and I don't really understand those who want to take away a part of it. I don't see that it makes any difference, that it would be any more an Australian flag. While we are a constitutional monarchy, our National Anthem must be God Save The Queen, but I would like, as you know, to see a distinctive Australian song. I know some people would like it to be "Advance Australia Fair", I wouldn't particularly. I am not really enamoured of this bom-bah-bom thing....

Q. Are you still a "Waltzing Matilda" man?

PM. Yes, I'm afraid I am! I like the tune.

Q. What about Mick Jagger as Ned Kelly.....

PM. I knew you were going to ask that! I don't know Mr. Jagger or very much about him, but from the pictures of him that I have seen all I can say is that he doesn't quite match up with the mental picture I had of Ned Kelly.

Q. Would you like to subsidise a film made here in reply, Sir, perhaps with Chips Rafferty as Robin Hood, do you think?

PM. Who would you have as Maid Marian?

Q. Prime Minister, on the question of your leadership, there have been many criticisms, and some quite severe. Have any of these really hurt you? How do you feel personally about these?

PM. I don't think any of them have hurt me personally. But some of them I thought were rather odd, particularly the sort of nonsenses about being a dictator and telling the Cabinet what to do and making them do things, not putting things before them, not having Cabinet decisions. These criticisms are so way out and so stupid. The approach seems to be that if something that a critic doesn't like happens, then this is me overriding the Cabinet. If something they do like happens, then this is the Cabinet against my bitter opposition. You can't really have it both ways. As an example, there is a lot of nonsense about having dragooned the Cabinet and not told them anything about going into overseas shipping. Well, we had about five Cabinet meetings on that and sent Jack McEwen abroad with instructions from the Cabinet on the sort of agreement he should try to make.

Q. What about Mr. St. John's attacks - were you upset about those?

PM. Well mainly upset about the sort of ridiculous attacks along these lines. He began to be worried when I said I never intended to have an election. I think this was one of the things, which was something that has never appeared in the transcript of anything I have said. But you don't really mind if somebody twists facts and twists the truth in that way. As I say, none of them hurt me personally but some of them seemed to be a little odd.

Q. Sir, on a personal note, do you enjoy being Prime Minister?

PM. Yes, from time to time.

Q. What do you find the most arduous part of it?

PM. I think when the House is sitting is the most arduous time because you have your ordinary work going on, you also have to be in to answer Questions and be prepared to answer Questions, you have to make speeches in the House, and a great number of Members of Parliament want to come in to see you and talk to you about their own problems, which they should. But it all adds up to a lot of time in a working day.

Q. Just one final question. We should ask you this one. Commonwealth/State relations. Do you see them improving?

PM. Well, I see them improving in the sense that the States are getting larger amounts of money each year under the formula process and the Loan Council borrowings are also going up. But there is, and I think always will be a natural area of argument between a State government and a Commonwealth government no matter what party happens to be State or Commonwealth. There will always be areas of argument because a State can always say, "Well, we can't do this because the Commonwealth won't give us enough money", and this can be applied to anything. And a Commonwealth has always got to take account of the general call on resources in the community and whether giving more money would give more things or just lead to inflation. This is potting the thing very much; a potted answer but that is all there is time for.

Q. Well, thank you very much indeed, Mr. Prime Minister. We would like to have you for a lot more but I believe time is just about taken up now. Perhaps you will return to us sometime?

PM. Yes, thank you.
