

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION - 15 DECEMBER 1974

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: INTERVIEW WITH SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION.

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION HELD IN COLOMBO AT 0815 HOURS SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER 1974.

1. QUESTION: MR PRIME MINISTER, SRI LANKA HAS CLOSE LINKS WITH AUSTRALIA. WHAT ARE THE MEASURES THAT BOTH NATIONS COULD TAKE TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THESE TIES , PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION?

ANSWER: I LOOK FORWARD TO THE STRENGTHENING OF THE LONG-STANDING TIES BETWEEN SRI LANKA AND AUSTRALIA. APART FROM OUR CONTINUING CO-OPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS LIKE THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE UNITED NATIONS, I WOULD HOPE THAT OUR TIES WILL BE FURTHER CONSOLIDATED THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THE GROWING NETWORK OF CULTURAL AND OTHER CONTACTS.

2. QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL EFFECTS OF THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY ON THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY? AND WHAT STEPS IS AUSTRALIA TAKING TO COPE WITH ANY PROBLEMS ARISING IN THIS CONTEXT?

ANSWER: THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY HAS NOT HAD MUCH EFFECT ON THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY IN TOTAL. IT HAS MEANT SOME RE-DIRECTION OF AUSTRALIAN EXPORT TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AWAY FROM EUROPE TO OTHER, AND PRINCIPALLY ASIAN, MARKETS. THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD HAS BEEN MADE EASIER FOR

AUSTRALIA BY THE STRONG WORLD DEMAND FOR FOODSTUFFS OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS.

A NOTABLE EXCEPTION TO ALL THIS HAS BEEN MEAT - MORE ESPECIALLY BEEF.

BRITAIN WAS ONCE A VALUED MARKET FOR AUSTRALIAN BEEF, BUT WITH THE CLOSING OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY MARKET TO IMPORTS OF BEEF, THE BRITISH MARKET HAS OF COURSE ALSO BEEN CLOSED TO AUSTRALIA..

AT THE SAME TIME, THE JAPANESE HAVE CLOSED OFF THEIR MEAT IMPORTS. -

SO WE HAVE SOME VERY GREAT PROBLEMS WITH BEEF.

I SHALL TAKE THIS UP IN BRUSSELS AND THE OTHER E. E. C. CAPITALS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, BRITAIN HAS SOUGHT TO CONTINUE TO IMPORT SUGAR FROM AUSTRALIA AS IN THE PAST. THE EEC RULES WILL NOT PERMIT THIS.

BUT IN THE CASE OF SUGAR, THE BRITISH HOUSEWIVES ARE THE LOSERS AS AUSTRALIA HAS NO DIFFICULTY IN FINDING ALTERNATE LONG-TERM MARKETS FOR SUGAR.

IN GENERAL, AUSTRALIA WELCOMES THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, AND APART FROM THE EVIDENT POLITICAL BENEFITS WHICH WILL FLOW FROM PROGRESSIVE MOVES TOWARDS GREATER POLITICAL UNION IN EUROPE, AUSTRALIA SEES THE EMERGENCE OF AN ECONOMICALLY STRONG EUROPE AS ADVANTAGEOUS TO AUSTRALIA'S LONG-TERM TRADE INTERESTS.

NO DOUBT PROBLEMS WILL ARISE FROM TIME TO TIME AND WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO SIT DOWN WITH THE EUROPEANS TO TALK THEM THROUGH, AS WE HAVE FOR SOME YEARS, AND THIS I'LL BE DOING IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

3. QUESTION: ON THE SUBJECT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE PROPOSAL, WHAT ROLE DOES AUSTRALIA EXPECT TO PLAY IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION?

ANSWER: AUSTRALIA WANTS TO HELP REDUCE TENSIONS IN THE ASIAN REGION.

SHORTLY AFTER MY GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IT ANNOUNCED THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD SUPPORT SRI LANKA'S INITIATIVE FOR A ZONE OF PEACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

WE SHALL CONTINUE TO CO-OPERATE IN THE UNITED NATIONS WITH

SRI LANKA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL STATES ON THIS QUESTION. WE HAVE MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GREAT POWERS - BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION - URGING ON THEM MUTUAL RESTRAINT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

WE SHALL CONTINUE TO TAKE WHAT STEPS WE CAN TO REDUCE THE PROSPECTS OF GREAT POWER CONFRONTATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

4. QUESTION: WOULD YOU AGREE WITH THE VIEW THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR WORLD PEACE ARE BETTER NOW THAN THEY HAVE EVER BEEN SINCE THE LAST WORLD WAR?

ANSWER: YES, I WOULD. I DON'T DENY THAT THERE CAN BE AN OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES IN INDIVIDUAL REGIONS. I THINK IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL SPREAD ROUND THE WORLD. PEACE DOES NOT COME SIMPLY BECAUSE WE WANT IT.

IT HAS TO BE CONSOLIDATED PATIENTLY THROUGH CONTACTS BETWEEN LEADERS, ACCOMMODATIONS AND THE RECONCILIATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS.

DETENTE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION MUST BE MADE TO WORK AND THE MIDDLE AND SMALLER POWERS OR THE POWERS WHICH ARE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED - COUNTRIES LIKE AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA - MUST CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE LARGER COUNTRIES TO GRASP THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PEACE AND THIS STRUCTURE, I BELIEVE, IS BETTER NOW THAN IT HAS BEEN SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

5. QUESTION: ONE FINAL QUESTION. HOW DO YOU ENVISAGE AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE ROLE IN ASIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASIA ... ASIAN COUNTRIES?

ANSWER:

THIS IS A VAST SUBJECT OF COURSE. BRIEFLY, AUSTRALIA SEEKS TO ESTABLISH HER OWN IDENTITY IN ASIA. OUR HISTORY AND OUR GEOGRAPHY HAVE AFFORDED US AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD LASTING FRIENDSHIP WITH THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC NOTWITHSTANDING OUR ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL DIFFERENCES.

ONE MEDIUM FOR DOING THIS OF COURSE IS THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS.

MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS LIE

AROUND OR IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC.  
MY GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED THAT AUSTRALIA SHALL PLAY A  
CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN DEVELOPING REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN ASIA  
AND IN STRENGTHENING OUR TIES BILATERALLY WITH THE COUNTRIES  
OF THE REGION.

WE ALSO HOPE TO PLAY A ROLE IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TRADING ARRANGEMENTS AND THROUGH OUR  
AID PROGRAMS.

I'VE ANNOUNCED WHILE I'VE BEEN IN SRI LANKA THAT WE ARE  
MAKING A GRANT OF 30,000 TONNES OF WHEAT.

WE DON'T WISH TO BE REGARDED AS SOME TRANSPLANTED EUROPEAN  
OUTPOST.

RATHER WE WANT TO BE ACCEPTED AS A HELPFUL AND CO-OPERATIVE  
MEMBER OF AN ASIAN REGION WHICH IS GROWING IN ECONOMIC  
STRENGTH AND STABILITY.

INTERVIEWER: WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH MR PRIME MINISTER  
FOR THIS INTERVIEW.