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PRIME MINISTER'S CONFERENCE - BELGRADE  
10 JANUARY 1975

The following is the text of the Prime Minister's press conference held in Belgrade on 10 January 1975.

Vitorovic, Radio Belgrade

Q. Would you like to comment on the talks with President Tito this morning. We didn't have a chance to read the toast yet.

A. You are referring to the fact that a recording was made of the President's speech in proposing a toast at the lunch he gave us and also I suppose there was a recording taken of my response. But we did spend an hour and a half before the lunch discussing a wide range of matters. It was naturally a matter of the greatest interest to the Australians to have such a full and free discussion with so eminent a leader of his country and, I think I can say, inspiration to the world in war and peace as your President. The President showed a great interest in Australia and also a very great appreciation of the attitudes that my Government has demonstrated over the two years that we have been in office. He is one of the world's great men and has been for a generation. We thought it a great occasion.

(Name Indistinguishable)

Q. Mr Prime Minister I am from Nova Macedonia near Macedonia. I have two questions. The first question refers - We would like to have your ideas and views. How do you look upon the fact that you have 250 thousand Yugoslavs in Australia? What do you think of their contribution and their work towards the prosperity and the development of your country, especially with respect to their contribution to the promotion of friendship between Australia and Yugoslavia. The second question we would appreciate having your views with respect to the efforts that are being made at present to have the Indian Ocean become a Zone of Peace and security.

A. Australia has been interested in Yugoslavia for two full generations. We were allies throughout the First World War. At one period during the Second World War, Yugoslavia was the only country in the whole of the continent of Europe which was fighting for the same cause as Australia. Accordingly the quarter of a million Yugoslavs who have come to Australia have come to a country which was disposed to regard them highly indeed. They have proved very sturdy citizens in Australia. I can testify to that myself because there are a very great number of Yugoslavs who live in my constituency out of Sydney. Any Yugoslavs who come to Australia can be assured that they will find friendship and prosperity in Australia.

You asked also about the Indian Ocean. Like every country round the Indian Ocean Australia deplors any prospect of a confrontation in the ocean between the United States and the Soviet Union. We do not want the Indian Ocean, which has been the freest of all the world's oceans from this rivalry between the two superpowers, to become infected by it. I have put this point through diplomatic channels and also directly to Washington. I have put it through diplomatic channels to Moscow and will do so directly in Moscow next week. Our concept is one which has the support of the President and the Government of Yugoslavia.

Malcolm Browne, New York Times

Q. Mr Prime Minister in your toast to Prime Minister Bijedic the other day you mentioned that your country had a growing similarity in position to that of the non-aligned countries of the world and certainly your administration has demonstrated that. Do you feel that at some point that a non-aligned Australia could have problems of conflict with the ANZUS Treaty arrangement?

A. Also in my speech last night I pointed out that we were an ally of the United States. There has never been any question of that. We are not a non-aligned country. Nevertheless we have supported, whereas the preceding Government of Australia did not support, many of those concepts for which the non-aligned countries have fought for very many years. For instance the non-aligned countries have fought against colonialism: they have fought against racism: they have fought for development. The Australian Government now takes the same attitude on all those three matters. It would be astonishing if an Australian Government were to act hereafter otherwise since Australia is surrounded by countries to which the question of development, racism and colonialism are crucial. I would not believe that there is any real interest of the United States adversely affected by any of those policies. If ANZUS doesn't stand for the three attitudes I have expressed then ANZUS is not as wholesome as we believe it is.

Stana Zivkovic, Radio Belgrade

Q. (Inaudible)

A. We can best contribute to this by understanding each other's attitudes in preparing for those wider gatherings where these subjects arise. There have been many occasions in the last two years and one a month for the last three United Nations General Assemblies where, for instance, Yugoslavia and Australia have clearly shown that they have each other's attitudes in mind. There was a completely new matter in the economic deal where we cooperated quite closely, namely, the International Bauxite Association. I think that is the answer. It is not that we would do so many things, just the two of us, but that we should be aware of each other's attitudes at wider gatherings where we are each present.

Perhaps I could give another instance. There has been a serious economic affect to one of our industries and also the same industry in Yugoslavia through the precipitate, inconsiderate action of some of our trading partners, namely, our cattle industry. Now here is something that we can't solve just the two of us but we have discussed dealing with it in a wider context and that is something which was mentioned today.

Zivkovic

Q. My second question is what are other spheres in which Yugoslav/Australian relations can be most successful, i.e., in the bilateral field.

A. I am not sure I can answer that question satisfactorily. I think you have good instances in your first question and I don't know offhand what other fields I would add to those that you mentioned.

Zivkovic

Q. My third question. Being twice in this country you know this country better than most. May we therefore ask you for your impressions of this country.

A. Well I can't really claim to have any wide knowledge of Yugoslavia. I know something of Belgrade and of the Dalmatian Coast so all I can say is that I am impressed by the growth and modernity of the Capital and the beauty of the coast.

Mr Jost, Melbourne Age

Q. Since you last went to the United States has anything occurred to make you believe that ANZUS is not as wholesome as you thought it was?

A. No.

Dusko Doder, Washington Post

Q. Mr Prime Minister as you know, the Ustashi is a very active organisation in Australia.

A. Not as active as it was believe me.

Q. I want to ask if the question of Ustashi has come up in your talks with Mr Tito and Mr Bijedic.

A. Well let me say as you will understand, the Washington Post is my favourite newspaper.

In the discussions that we had this morning with Mr Bijedic and his colleagues and with the President I don't think the word was mentioned. There was reference from the Yugoslav side of appreciation for the way that my Government had been vigilant in this matter. It is clear that the Yugoslav Government appreciates the fact that there have been no outrages from this quarter in Australia since the Government of Australia changed.

Mr McKendry, Australian Broadcasting Commission

Q. My question follows that of my colleague from the Washington Post.

A. You don't expect me to name my favourite station.

Mr Highfield, A.B.C.

Q. Prime Minister, during your discussions with Mr Bijedic did you raise the question Sir of alleged activities of the Yugoslav Secret Police and, secondly Sir, could I ask you what progress has been made on the question of dual nationality.

A. Neither of these matters arose in my discussions with Mr Bijedic last night or this morning, nor in the discussions with the President. Now I want to make it plain that in giving that answer I am not in any way confirming any impression you may have that Yugoslav Secret Police do operate in Australia. I am not making any reference to that matter at all.

Now on the second matter you raised. There has been for some time discussions through the normal diplomatic channels of one of the consequences of dual nationality. It was not discussed in my discussions with Mr Bijedic or with the President. I think the officials accompanying me might have discussed this aspect to which I refer of the question of dual nationality, the matter for which we are concerned is the right of persons in Yugoslavia who hold Australian passports to have access to the Australian Consular services. Now progress has been made on this question. I don't think that one ought to express it in the

wider question of dual nationality because this is obviously a very complex legal matter which affects any countries which have different legal systems. Australia has the English Common Law where in effect your citizenship depends on your choice of country. Yugoslavia and most European countries have the IUS SANGUINIS that is your citizenship depends on your ancestry. So there is inevitable conflict between the IUS LOCI and the IUS SANGUINIS. Now we can't really solve this for the whole world. What we are concerned with is that Australians who have passports should be able to have access to Australian Consuls.

Roy Gutman, Reuters

Q. I am wondering in your speech and also in articles in the International Review in Yugoslavia you said you would like Australia to be a representative at the next non-aligned conference. I am wondering has Yugoslavia agreed to back the Australian desire to be an observer or have they told you that there is some criteria that you must first meet and if so do you think you will be able to meet them. The second question on the Consular International area is do you expect that there might be a Consular agreement in the near future and could you give an outline of what it might be like.

A. Australia would welcome an invitation to attend the next non-aligned conference as an observer or as a guest. We discussed this matter both with Mr Bijedic and his Ministers and with the President. I think I can say they were sympathetic in the matter.

I was not wanting to give the impression that there would be anything so formal as a Consular agreement between Australia and Yugoslavia to deal with the question of Australian Consuls having access to bearers of Australian passports in countries where those passport bearers were still regarded as citizens by birth. I expect that this matter can be settled by an arrangement following an exchange of notes. It is a matter which may in due course come within a wider international convention. It concerns a great number of Common Law countries, i.e., countries which have derived their basic laws from England such as not only Australia but also Canada, the United States and New Zealand since each of those countries have accepted hundreds and thousands of migrants from countries which have the IUS SANGUINIS - the old Napoleonic Roman system of law.

Peter Barron, Sydney Daily Mirror

Q. When you go to Moscow from Yugoslavia will you raise with the Russian leaders your attitude to political prisoners in Russia and if so what will you say.

A. Well I have already answered that in the affirmative on several previous occasions.

R. Schneider, Australian

Q. Are you able to say with confidence that training of anti-Yugoslav terrorist on Australian soil has ceased.

A. I can't be absolutely confident that I believe that the practice is very much less likely to be carried on in Australia now than was previously the case. The fact is that since the change of government in Australia there have been no further acts of overt terrorism from Ustashi quarters in Australia - before that there had been every year around the 10th April for about 10 years. Perhaps I could add that there may be still in Australia some clubs where the portraits of Ante Pavelic and the Croatia Republic flag with the letter "U" are still displayed. This of course causes as much resentment among Australians, both those who were born in Australia and those who have come to Australia from other countries including Yugoslavia, as would the display of Hitler's portrait or the Swastika flag. This is not illegal in Australia but it is greatly offensive.

John Jost, Melbourne Age

Q. You left me in doubt with respect to your answer on the non-aligned conference as to any conditions being placed.

A. There has been no discussion among the members of the non-aligned movement on this question. Accordingly one can't say that there would be any conditions laid down. All I can say is that in discussions in Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia which are leading members of the movement and have been since its foundation that no such conditions were suggested.

Roy Gutman, Reuters

Q. There were reports that while you were in Paris and Rome you received assurances from the governments of the countries that they would soon sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Pact and that this was one of the conditions which Australia would sell uranium oxide. Could you say whether this is true or not.

A. If there have been such reports they are not based on anything that I have said. So I have no comment to make on such reports if there have been such.

Waters, U.P.I.

Q. The balance of trade is very heavily weighted between Yugoslavia and Australia in favour of Yugoslavia. Was there any agreement reached today to try to adjust that balance and in relation to that was there any decision to try and coordinate the Yugoslav and Australian positions with regard to meat exports to the EEC.

A. Both matters were probably discussed by the officials of both sides in the Working Party on Economics which met while I was with the President. There was some discussion as I indicated earlier during the discussions with Mr Bijedic and his colleagues this morning concerning the sudden closure of EEC meat markets to our two countries. I am not sure that

whether you suggested that this matter should be discussed in the EEC context but if you were suggesting that, that wouldn't be adequate because to take Australia's position, it has been similarly affected by a similarly precipitate and inconsiderate closure of the Japanese market to Australian meat and one of the repeated inconsiderate threats by the United States to Australia. It is rather in the GATT context, in the discussions with Mr Bjedic, it was suggested that this be handled. It is unfortunate that such instances do occur at the expense of countries which have developed a capacity to export products which other countries themselves also produce but not in sufficient quantity, and it is deplorable that such affluent countries as the European Economic Community, Japan and the United States should be such bad internationalists when local political pressures from primary producers become uncomfortable for them. They all adopt a very moralistic and patronizing tone when their own manufacturing exports are affected. One can imagine the howls of outrage from Western Europe, Japan or the United States if Yugoslavia or Australia would dare to cut off manufactured exports in the way that each of them has cut off or is threatening to cut off meat exports from Australia.

There was in the discussions between Ministers some brief reference to the imbalance of trade between Australia and Yugoslavia. This is another matter which was probably discussed in the Economic Working Party. Australia does give Yugoslavia special status as a developing country Australia is very likely to agree to the Yugoslav suggestion for a double taxation agreement. I did myself make a passing reference in conversation with the President that most of Australia's exports to Yugoslavia are wool and hides. These are the basis of highly esteemed and I trust thriving Yugoslavian industries and crafts. I believe that much of Yugoslavia's export income comes from products based upon imports of Australian wool and leather into Yugoslavia.

Well, we meet in Moscow.