



125<sup>23</sup>

## PRIME MINISTER

### SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT A BANQUET GIVEN BY JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER.

17th June, 1976.

"Mr. Prime Minister - let me begin by saying that I and My Government place very great value on this visit to one of the truly significant countries in the world.

Japan is, in many important respects, a unique country. In the last quarter century its economy has expanded at a rate unprecedented in human history. While becoming one of the two most technologically advanced countries in the world, Japan has, to a remarkable extent, preserved its distinct cultural heritage.

Living in one of the world's most tense international situations - in North East Asia - Japan has renounced nuclear weapons. It has renounced them, although it is as well equipped to produce them as anyone else, and though the other three great powers involved have them.

Mr. Prime Minister - Australian contacts with Japan stretch back over a century, from the time of the entry of modern Japan into the outside world. It has to be conceded that these contacts were of a limited and simple kind.

In the 1860's for example, two enterprising gentlemen arrived in Japan from Australia. After a successful entry into the publishing business, one of them became the recognised father of the vernacular press in Japan.

The first Japanese arrivals in Australia came somewhat later, but by the end of the 19th century some thousands of Japanese were engaged in the pearl, bêche-de-mer and sugar industries in Australia's north.

Things have moved on a long way since those days, Mr. Prime Minister. The occasion which brings us together here tonight - the signature of a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between our two countries - testifies to this.

Mr. Prime Minister, to speak in terms of celebrating an end or of welcoming a beginning has a pleasantly dramatic ring. Yet this treaty also represents neither an end nor a beginning, but a most significant step forward in a continuing relationship. It did not spring suddenly out of the ground, but emerged naturally from a relationship which has grown and prospered over the last two decades. It was brought into being by the mutual recognition

that the relationship has now reached the stage where certain things need to be formally recognised and other dimensions need to be added to that relationship.

Today, Mr. Prime Minister, our two countries have become, by very different routes, two of the very few stable and prosperous democracies in the world.

Our prosperity owes more than a little to the mutually beneficial trade which has developed between us. We know that you are concerned, as we certainly are, to create the conditions of dependability and predictability which will allow this trade to develop and thrive further. These conditions have not always been present in the past, and it is one of the main purposes of the treaty to put this right and to keep it right. I believe we both clearly recognise that the mutual benefits accruing from the steady growth of this relationship, on an equitable basis, far outweigh any short-term unilateral advantage.

Mr. Prime Minister, both our societies are free societies, committed to democratic institutions and the rule of law. We both believe in the efficacy of private enterprise. We both live by trade. We both have a common concern to promote and maintain the stability which trade requires.

For all these reasons, both our countries have found alliance with the United States, the world's major democratic power, to be natural and congenial. The Australian Government believes that a continuation of the American role in our region is a key element in the maintenance of peace and stability. We also believe that the best way of ensuring that continuation is for us to demonstrate that we ourselves take the security and stability of the region seriously. We are acting on, and we shall continue to act on, that belief.

Mr. Prime Minister - the dimension of our relationship which usually receives the greatest attention is, quite understandably, the economic one. We shall be discussing that at length during the next day or so, and I shall be speaking about it publicly. So I would like to spend the remainder of my time tonight looking at the cultural aspect of our relationship.

I know that you will agree with me that if our relationship is to deepen and our co-operation to extend, we must take steps to understand each other better - not merely at the level of government but at every level. There are real differences of cultural, and, unfortunately, real areas of mutual ignorance to be overcome.

Yours is a very ancient culture. One of your great sources of strength has been your capacity to maintain its continuity and vitality while experiencing one of the most remarkable transitions in recorded history. Your success in moving from a feudal and self-absorbed society to a modern and outward-turning one with unprecedented pace and purpose was largely due to it.

Our culture is also a vital and, I believe, a creative one. But it is much younger and has had to struggle to emerge from the shadow of a great European culture, to establish its own identity.

It is not easy for two such societies to understand each other fully. But until we break down the national stereotypes which exist and replace them with genuine understanding, our relationship will not achieve its full potential. Our recognition of this truth is embodied in the Australia-Japan Agreement which was signed in 1974.

It is also the premise underlying the establishment of the Australia-Japan Foundation by my Government this year. The Foundation's activities will focus on personal contact spanning the whole spectrum of society - language, history, social and political ideas and institutions, the arts, economic and industrial organisations.

It would be a mistake to expect quick, spectacular results from these ventures. But their long term benefits will, I am sure, be of very great importance.

Greater understanding cannot guarantee agreement, but it can remove many unnecessary disagreements and make existing agreement more meaningful.

These new initiatives by my Government will go hand in hand with the fast growing interest of Australia's younger generation in Japan and Japanese culture. Australia already has a higher percentage of students learning Japanese than other countries. I have long believed that there was great value to us both in encouraging the learning of the Japanese language in Australia.

While I was Minister for Education I took an interest in the establishment of a committee to prepare proposals for the development of the teaching of Asian languages in Australian schools. I am pleased to say that there are now over 6,000 students studying the Japanese language in Australian schools - a six-fold increase since 1969.

Mr. Prime Minister - you have been generous in your time. We will be having ample discussions on these and other matters during my visit. Let me therefore conclude by again thanking you and your Government most warmly for your hospitality and again stressing the very great importance we attach to our friendship with you and the Japanese people".

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