



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH TO ALP LUNCH, SEAGULLS FOOTBALL CLUB, TWEED HEADS - 17 AUGUST 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

PM: I think you would expect me perhaps to say something about the international context and I do it because, this morning for instance, ... shown on television some people who were expressing dissent, opposition to the recent decisions that we've taken. It would be useful, it seems to me, just to spend a little time sharing with you my thinking about what Australia should do in the circumstances with which we're currently confronted.

I have said that the decision that I took after consultation with some of my Ministers and with others to despatch three of our ships to the Gulf area was the most serious decision I think that I've had to take since I've been Prime Minister. Paradoxically, while it was the most serious, in the end it was not a hard decision because the principles, I believe, are clear.

For me the intellectual setting was clarified by the fact that recently I've had a rare opportunity to engage in some personal reading, because normally the official paper that floods across my desk takes virtually all my time that's available. But because I had a little bit of time in hospital in recuperation recently I had some time available to do some personal reading. I took the opportunity to read a massive two volume biography of Winston Churchill written by William Manchester - a magnificent piece of biographical writing.

It's all interesting, but for me the part of that biography which stuck most clearly in my mind was the story of the tragic events of the 1930s. After the Second World War there were the Nuremburg Trials at which the Nazis were put on trial. After you've read the biography of Churchill by Manchester you come to the conclusion I think that I did that there should have been two Nuremburg Trials. There should have been the trials of the Nazis and there should've been the trials of the appeasers. Because without both of them, without both of them you couldn't have had the Second World War.

The Second World War resulted from two things. From the evil and the tyranny of the Nazis who believed that might was right, that one nation could swallow and destroy its neighbours with impunity. That was one element of the tragedy of the Second World War. But the second was the weakness, the preparedness of other nations, and particularly those with a major responsibility, to allow it to happen. And when you read that biography, the tragedy is that you see that at the very time that Hitler made his first move into ... the General's staff, the German army had made the decision that they were going to depose Hitler, and they'd made that decision on the assumption, the belief that Britain and France were going to move against him. And if that had happened, as it should've happened, then Hitler would've been deposed and the infinite, immeasurable tragedy of the Second World War would not have occurred.

It was in the knowledge that this was the truth of history that I knew that we have now entered one of the most optimistic phases in the whole of human history. In my life I have witnessed the tragedy of the Second World War to which I've referred. I've also witnessed the ominous terror that has gripped so much of thinking men and women that we have been for so long in the post-war period on the edge of the nuclear abyss, that the threatening, turbulent relations between the super powers, Soviet Union and the United States accumulating the means for the obliteration of mankind from this planet in those massive nuclear arsenals, to threaten our very existence on the face of this planet. But we have now seen that due to intelligence and sensible commitment, within the Soviet Union and the United States, that that threat has been very very substantially diminished I think to the point of elimination.

And so, there is a very especial obligation upon the world community in this new era of the elimination of that bipolar threat, the great obligation upon the world community to make it clear to every nation that the world is not going to tolerate action where a large nation can swallow up its small neighbour and do it with impunity. Those principles are clear and if we don't as a world community accept that commitment then we will not be, as a world community, taking advantage of the great new opportunities for constructive development that have been created by the intelligence ... in the relationships between the super powers.

My friends, no-one hopes more devoutly than I do that the potential conflict in the Gulf area will be avoided because I and my colleagues in Government have spent seven and a half years devoting ourselves to stimulating the processes towards peace and disarmament. So we hope that the exhibition of the commitment of so many nations, including amongst the Arab nations, will lead to the conclusion on the part of Saddam Hussein that in the

interests of his own people, as well as the interests of the people in the region, that he should withdraw. And if in fact Iraq has concerns about its relationships with its neighbour, then let those concerns be the subject of negotiation and mediation. That's the way to settle disputes between people. It's the way to settle disputes between nations. ... in the 20th Century we have been witness too much to the insanity of war and the tragedy of war and we must understand that war has to be avoided and that the concept of acquisition of territory by naked force is unacceptable.

So my friends, I trust and hope that by the time those three ships reach the Gulf area that sanity will prevail, or will have prevailed and if it does then I believe in some small way the actions that Australians have taken will have been part of that process. Too many Australian lives have been lost in two wars in defence of the principles of the right of self-determination and the right of individual nations to live in peace without the threat of conflict. Too many Australian lives have been laid down by previous generations for this generation to forsake that principle.

I trust that our determination together with that of others and now so many other nations will mean that that conflict will be avoided. I trust that the people of Australia fully understand the commitment and the principles which have guided ... reaching that conclusion.

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