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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA,  
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
TOWN HALL, LIMA PERU 25 APRIL 1975

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Thank you Mr Mayor, for the honour you have done me - and all Australians - in this ceremony today. It is surely one of the curiosities of history that while an Australian Prime Minister was born in South America, this is the first time an Australian Prime Minister has paid a visit to the continent. Those events are separated by 108 years. For the benefit of Australians who may have forgotten their history, I remind them that John Watson, the youngest Prime Minister to take office in Australia, and the first Labor Prime Minister, was born in Valparaiso. So I'm delighted that this is the first visit by an Australian Head of Government to South America. I'm delighted that my visit should begin in your historic and beautiful city - a city roughly the size of Sydney, from which I departed three days ago. It is fitting that these two cities, Sydney and Lima, and our two countries - countries with similar populations and with many similar hopes and aspirations - should be participants in the first attempt by an Australian Head of Government to establish direct and personal links between continents and peoples on opposite shores of the Pacific ocean.

This morning I laid a wreath at your national shrine. Some of you may know that today is also the anniversary of a battle with historic, indeed sacred, significance in the minds of the Australian people. Of course our military annals have little in common, but I was reminded by this concurrence of events of just how closely the histories of our two countries are linked with Europe. Australia and Peru were colonized by great European powers. Both retain, in their languages, their customs, their histories, the marks of their former but still continuing links with European civilization. At the same time both are the homes of much older indigenous cultures. During my visit to your city, in particular, to your archaeological museum and its magnificent collection, I have seen evidence of the remarkable ancient civilizations which flourished on the Peruvian coast. In no city, in no region of the world, is there a richer and more diverse conjunction of Christian European and Pre-Christian cultures. It has been an unforgettable experience to see the architecture, and many of the artifacts, of cultures as varied as the Moche and the Mazca, the Paracas and the Inca the Brillians and the splendour of whose works have been rarely surpassed.

Like Sydney, Lima is a great Pacific port, and yesterday, as we flew over the ocean that both joins and divides us, I was reminded of the important part the Pacific has played in our histories. It was from this coast - from here, from Callao, and a little later from further north, from Acapulco - that man first set out on his conquest of the Pacific. From here the search for the great southern continent, Australia Del Espiritu Santo, began nearly 400 years ago. The Spanish mariners, of course, despite their courageous voyages, were not the ones to find Australia, but they went remarkably close. Torres passed the northern tip of the continent in 1606 and sailed through the strait which now bears his name. Forty years earlier, Mendana embarked on a course which would almost certainly have brought him to the east coast of Australia in the vicinity of Rockhampton. He changed course, however, on the advice of his pilot Gallego - a decision which eventually led him to the Solomon Islands and deprived him of the opportunity of anticipating by some 200 years, Captain Cook's discovery of Australia.

We might well speculate - as indeed, many have done - on what would have happened if the Spanish explorers from Peru had found Australia first. As things turned out, our histories and development have proceeded in almost total isolation from each other during the intervening centuries. I believe the time has come, the occasion has arrived, to explore once again the opportunities which lie across the Pacific, on both sides of the Pacific. It is that belief, that confidence, which has brought me to your city. Lima for centuries the capital of most of South America, is now the capital of a nation with an important contemporary role, not only in Latin America but in world affairs. The second general conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation was held in Lima this year. I congratulate your Government on the success of that conference and the significant contribution made by Peru. It is appropriate that the outcome of the conference - the declaration and plan of action on industrial development and cooperation - the Lima Declaration - bears the name of this city.

For two nations so long and so far apart, it is remarkable how many attitudes we share and how closely we have worked together. Peru is a member of the organisation of American states and the Andean group, to both of which Australia has observer status. We share an active concern for the Third World and in particular the non-aligned movement. We are both rich in natural resources and our economies depend greatly on the development and sale of those resources.

We were founding members of APEF, The organisation of iron ore exporters. Australia has observer status at CIPEF, the group of copper producing states and there is a prospect of further cooperation in silver. Australia and Peru have almost identical views, as coastal states, on the law of the sea. We were members together of the Security Council in 1973 and 1974. We are both signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Having flown to your city across the South Pacific and experienced once again the serene beauty of that vast ocean, I recall with pride the efforts of Australia and other Pacific border states to resist the poisoning of our seas and skies by nuclear tests.

Some twenty years ago, Mr Mayor, an important street in Sydney was named General San Martin Drive to commemorate one of the heroes of your independence struggle. Your country asserted her political independence one and a half centuries ago. In the past decade, and in the same sturdy spirit, she has asserted her economic independence as well. Australia's political independence was achieved more recently and certainly more peacefully, but our quest for economic independence, for the ownership and control of our basic industries and resources, is still going forward. Much has been achieved by Peru in working towards this goal.

Widely separated as we are - from each other and from many of the scenes of world conflict and tension - Australia and Peru can profit from each other's example. As medium powers it is very much in our interests to associate more often and more closely to help shape a world whose future belongs to us as much as it does to the mightiest of nations. That is the true significance of our meeting - the conviction that smaller states, by winning new friends, by developing new ideas and challenging old assumptions, by promoting new alliances and new perspectives in foreign relations, can be a force for hope and progress in these dangerous and uncertain times.

I am deeply grateful for the hospitality and warmth shown to me in your country and particularly in Lima. In sealing, by this ceremony, the friendship of the peoples of Peru and Australia, I believe we have laid the basis for a productive and enduring association between our countries, one that will lead to many opportunities for useful cooperation and better understanding in the promotion of a just and peaceful world.

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