

INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. PEACOCK

FROM ABC'S "P.M."

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Question:

Mr. Peacock, would you concede that today's statement had a strong pro-Chinese emphasis?

Mr. Peacock:

I would not concede that at all. There is no need to concede it. We've called, in the statement, for China to withdraw from Vietnam which has been a consistent attitude of ours reflected in all our statements. To the extent that we have been able to identify common interests with China in the region, we said we want to involve ourselves with China and that shouldn't be forgotten either.

Question:

But you have made it quite clear in the statement that you see the causes for the current conflict being in the treaty between Vietnam and the Soviet Union and Vietnam's invasion, as you call it, of Kampuchea?

Mr. Peacock:

I'm saying that these, in the Chinese mind, were what incited the Chinese into Vietnam. It doesn't justify the invasion though.

Question:

How much was today's statement influenced by the future of Australia's trading relationship with China?

Mr. Peacock:

It wasn't in mind at all.

Question:

What was the intent, then of today's statement?

Mr. Peacock:

The intent was just as it has been seen, by everybody but yourself, namely, to give an appreciation of how the Australian Government saw events unfolding throughout the world. Very significant changes through the change of Government in Iran, through the events that have occurred in Africa, through the instability in areas surrounding Iran and then moving across to our region, IndoChina and what occurred in both Kampuchea and Vietnam.

Question:

How much effect do you think your statement is going to have on the two parties involved in the dispute in SouthEast Asia at the moment?

Mr. Peacock:

This is only one element of what the Government has been doing. The primary aim of the statement was not to have a direct effect, an immediate effect on the parties itself. It was to inform the Australian people. So far as our overtures to Vietnam and China are concerned, they have been carried out both in the United Nations and our discussions when the Ambassador was here and in Hanoi, and through our own missions in Hanoi and our mission in Peking.

Question:

In real terms, how much do you think we can achieve?

Mr. Peacock:

I have indicated in the statement, we can't have a pivotal role in solving this, but I have indicated because the events are occurring in our own region, we have a duty to play some forward role in trying to restrain parties from broadening the conflict and that's been the nature of the aim of the Government throughout.