



PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF TV INTERVIEWS, ORIENTAL HOTEL, BANGKOK, 21 NOVEMBER 1983

JOURNALIST: What happened, Prime Minister?

PM: Well, we had a most useful discussion where we had, I believe, an identity of views and complete understanding, I believe, on the part of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Thailand about Australia's position.

JOURNALIST: I was just going to say, what did General Prem say specifically about ASEAN?

PM: Well, we indicated our basic agreement with the thrust of the view of Thailand and ASEAN in regard to the position of Kampuchea and there was, as I say, an acceptance and understanding by General Prem and Foreign Minister Siddhi of the identity between us on the fundamental position. You will recall what I said before I left Australia, that I was quite relaxed about this issue, that I thought there had been an over-statement in some quarters and the extraordinarily cordial meeting that we've had with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister here has totally confirmed my expectations.

JOURNALIST: Sir, was there any discussion whatsoever about some form of peacekeeping mission, be it..

PM: No, it did not arise. We are to have a working lunch with Foreign Minister Siddhi. It is conceivable that it may be raised there. It was not raised in the discussion this morning.

JOURNALIST: Does this mean the row with ASEAN is all over?

PM: Well, I have not taken the view that there is a row with ASEAN, and I have certainly not taken the view that there has been row with Thailand. In my view, and that has been confirmed, I would feel confident, as I've said all along that the substantially sound relationship that exists between Australia and ASEAN will not only be confirmed, but will be strengthened.

JOURNALIST: Do you expect now that ASEAN will resume its dialogue with Australia?

PM: I've had no doubt that the dialogue will be resumed.

JOURNALIST: On the issue of Kampuchea, then Prime Minister, is it .. us agreeing to disagree but respecting our points of view?

PM: It's not a question of agreeing to disagree. There is fundamental agreement about the major thrust. That is the necessity for the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces, the creation of the condition where there can be an expression of the free will of the people of Kampuchea and the emergence out of that situation where you are not going to have the possibility of the imposition of the Pol Pot forces, where Kampuchea can be an independent country and where you can have resettlement of the refugees from that country. Those are the elements upon which we basically agreed. In respect to our attitude towards the Pol Pot element of the coalition group, there has been an understanding by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of our view. Indeed, they share our repugnance of the Pol Pot forces.

JOURNALIST: Do you get the impression that our ASEAN neighbours still think that we're bending over backwards to help Vietnam?

PM: No, on the contrary. There was no suggestion of that from the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister. No suggestion at all. There was a complete understanding of our attitude. I don't think that that sort of view is in fact a realistic representation of the understanding that exists of Australia's basic commitment to the general thrust of the ASEAN countries view on Kampuchea.

JOURNALIST: So do you think the attitude of the Thai Government reflects the attitude of ASEAN as a whole, or have you still got a fight on your hands with Mr. Lee Kuan Yew?

PM: Oh, I don't think I've got a fight on my hands with Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. I'm looking forward to meeting him in Delhi. I intend to have cordial and straightforward discussions with him. I would imagine that is his intention. I simply come back to the point that there has been an overblowing in some quarters of a difference in emphasis. I have been relaxed about this from the beginning. I remain relaxed totally about it. The fundamentally sound relations between Australia and ASEAN will, I repeat, not only be maintained, they will be strengthened under my Government.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, in light of the fact that you've signalled a degree of acceptance of the Malaysian initiative, some form of force to fill the vacuum of Vietnam after the Vietnamese go, certainly in light of the fact that Australia has a dialogue with Hanoi as many countries in the region don't, is there now a role for Australia as a mediator?

PM: I reject the phrase mediator, as Mr. Hayden and I have from the beginning. We don't think that that is the right expression. Now, going back to the first part of your question, that is about a Malaysian proposal, that is hypothetical. The first stages have got to be the dialogue which can produce the basic requirement. That is the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces. That is what to concentrate on, trying to achieve that situation. Now, if we move from the hypothesis that is contained in the Malaysian proposal to the position where there is going to be the withdrawal, then we can address ourselves to that. We will do that. It hasn't been raised in the discussions here so far. It may be later on with the Foreign Minister. There is no point in proceeding any further with that except to make it clear they did from the very beginning - that we are not talking about Australian troops in any belligerent sense. The proposition could conceivably be, if the preconditions were met of withdrawal, of some form of Australian involvement in helping to ensure the emergence of what is the end objective - that is the free expression of the will of the Kampuchean people.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, over recent weeks you have gone out of your way to exercise the fact that you and Mr. Hyaden have been at one over this entire issue, does he also agree that it is a good idea to send a peacekeeping force to Cambodia?

PM: Well, you're trying to get to a position which doesn't exist. That is that the agreement between Mr. Hayden and myself of a hypothetical response to a hypothetical situation and you are not taking it any further than that. What we are both committed to now is the immediate realities. I mean, there has been an enormous tendency on the part of you people with respect, to try and go down tracks which are just not there, are not realistic, and to talk about a possible hypothetical situation and then try and get involved in that. What we do is to deal with the current realities - that is discussion with ASEAN about the immediate situation. That is what I have been engaged in with the Prime Minister of Thailand and his Foreign Minister. That is what we are going to continue to do while we are here.