



PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - Proof Only

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, ORIENTAL HOTEL, BANGKOK,
AFTER MEETING WITH THAI PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER,
.21 NOVEMBER 1983

PM: Well Bill and I have had extremely useful and constructive morning with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister together and then lunch with the Foreign Minister.

We could not, I believe, be more satisfied than we are with the talks that have taken place. May I just go through generally the country that we've covered and then if you'd like to ask us any questions.

I repeated the Australian Government's condemnation of the invasion by Vietnam of Cambodia and the continued occupation of that country. What I emphasised is repeated because what Bill Hayden and I will have to say here, of course we've said before.

I added again in the same sense that there should be a phased withdrawal leading to total withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and that there should be an act of self-determination for the Cambodian people and that conditions should be established which would permit the return of displaced Cambodians to their country and for normal relations to be resumed between Vietnam, China, the ASEAN countries and the international community at large.

I indicated that Australia attached importance to ending Vietnam's present political and economic isolation and growing reliance on the Soviet Union which was entrenching the great power rivalry in the region.

I indicated that Australia intended offering disaster relief assistance to Vietnam, but that we had taken no decision in practical terms to resume development assistance to Vietnam.

I pointed out that while Australian aid was continuing to be directed to displaced Cambodians in the Thai/Cambodia border area, I indicated that we continued to consider that meeting the humanitarian aid needs of the internees and others inside Cambodia was necessary.

We emphasised as strongly as we could the great concern of Australia at any possible return of power of the regime as brutal as the Khmer Rouge.

As the Prime Minister of Thailand, General Prem, and I agreed, our discussions had been very useful in clarifying misunderstandings which had recently arisen. We both agreed that the Cambodian situation carried disturbing implications for peaceful relations among all the countries of the SE Asian region.

On the main issues of principle - that is the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the need for acts of self-determination by the Cambodian people there was fundamental agreement between Australia and the Thai position.

General Prem and myself, while noting that there was some room for difference of emphasis and approach in the manner in which each of our countries sought to give effect to the agreed principles, we each accepted that our countries - each of them - was directing its efforts towards objectives shared by the other and we agreed that Australian and Thailand intended to work in the closest contact, with communication on these matters of mutual interest in the future.

Now, that covers the central features of our discussion in regard to the Cambodian/ASEAN position. We, of course, have quite detailed discussions on a number of bilateral issues concerning Australia and Thailand and I would indicate that just following the luncheon Bill Hayden and Foreign Minister Siddhi have just co-signed the general co-financing agreement covering Thailand and World Bank Australia development co-operation which I think is a fairly clear indication of the position that has been reached as a result of our discussions today.

JOURNALIST: Was there any discussions about talks at the officials level between Australia and the ASEAN nations and did we get any indication that these might be re-commenced after the suspension?

PM: Well, of course, we are talking with one leader of ASEAN who will .. (inaudible) in January and, as I said before, I haven't felt that there will not be a resumption of the dialogue between ASEAN and Australia and I am confident that that will take place.

JOURNALIST: Did we get any positive sign or negative sign today, one way or the other?

PM: It's not for Bill or I to ask of Thailand or for Thailand to be able to act on behalf of the rest of the ASEAN countries. That is not the way it operates. We have conveyed our position to Thailand. They understand it and they will be having their discussions. I think I can say on behalf of Bill and myself that we feel relaxed about what the outcome will be.

JOURNALIST: Sir, the matter was not discussed at all?

PM: It's not appropriate. We didn't come here to plead with Thailand to act as an emissary for us. It's not their function and it's not our intention. We came here as previously scheduled and obviously took the opportunity of clarifying our position on these matters. Now, that's been done. ... in my judgement no need for any concern about the future course of relations between Australia and ASEAN.

JOURNALIST: Could I just clarify the situation on aid to Vietnam - we have already been giving some disaster relief have we or not, or is that a new position.

PM: There has been some relief in the past, but what we're faced with now is - Bill might be able to give more detail on this, but I understand that in this year there has been a concentrated impact of disaster in the area and through the United Nations agency there has been a request to member nations for assistance and we will, as we have indicated, respond to that.

JOURNALIST: Would that be the first aid we have put into Vietnam at all?

HAYDEN: It's the first we've put into Vietnam, but I'm not real sure. I think disaster aid probably went in before. However we discussed with the ASEAN countries before we made this announcement today and there was no opposition to the proposition - not necessarily that that would stop us, but there is none. It's \$½ million and it covers a substantial quantity of rice - I think over a thousand tons of rice. Richard Brinowski (?) is our man in Hanoi. Do you recall what the dimensions of the disaster are - the number of lives lost - I think about 300 was it.

BRINOWSKI: Loss of lives is nearly 500, plus a lot more missing. That's the figure that has been confirmed from various sources.

HAYDEN: Other figures that you got from that. They may be interested.

BRINOWSKI: Many thousands of homes have been destroyed. The main damage is in the central provinces - schools, fishing boats. It's very extensive.

JOURNALIST: Are the ASEAN nations themselves putting in any aid?

HAYDEN: Wouldn't know.

JOURNALIST: When was this discussed with the ASEAN nations?

HAYDEN: Two or three weeks ago we started discussing it.

JOURNALIST: Did they put any qualification on Australia putting any aid in at all?

PM: On disaster aid, no. They've always said that disaster aid - that is in the wake of a natural disaster, was something that they could never quibble about.

JOURNALIST: After we enunciated our position on general aid to Vietnam - development aid - was that taken up at all by the Thai leaders?

PM: We expressed our position again which was not something which we just said here. Both of us had made that position clear before. That was understood by the Thai leaders. There was nothing which was new about that. It was an affirmation of what we had said. They were interested and I think pleased to hear the exposition from us.

JOURNALIST: Does this disaster aid go to - you said it came as a response to a request from the UN agency?

HAYDEN: Disaster relief organisation.

JOURNALIST: It's not bilateral?

HAYDEN: That's four times I've said that.

JOURNALIST: Did the Malaysian proposal come up at all over lunch.

PM: No.

JOURNALIST: Has it been discussed at all?

PM: No, you haven't had anything?

HAYDEN: No.

JOURNALIST: On another note, Prime Minister, I was wondering if you could tell me your reaction to a story that's floating out of Delhi today that Sonny Ramphal steps down, Malcolm Fraser will step in.

PM: Well, I found myself a little surprised. I would have thought if there was any substance in it we may have heard something before this.

JOURNALIST: I understand that Alan Griffith, Labor Member in Victoria is writing to both yourself and the Foreign Minister about this matter saying that it shouldn't ..

PM: Well, we'll be waiting with baited breath for the letter.

JOURNALIST: If it became a serious proposition would you support Mr. Fraser in seeking selection for the Secretary-Generalship?

PM: (inaudible) this chase of hypotheses is - no wonder you're all looking so fit, you're always chasing hypotheses.

JOURNALIST: It was one of our esteemed colleagues, Mr. Lombard.

PM: Oh.

JOURNALIST: Was there any discussion at all with the Thais about what Mr. Dhanabalan has been saying or any discussion about the Singaporean view expressed over the last couple of weeks?

PM: We didn't need to go to individuals. We explained our position in general terms. We, of course, recognised that there had been some problems created by statements of recent times, but the way to deal with that is not to go in an ad ... sense but to deal with the issues and that is what we did.

JOURNALIST: Was there any discussion about possible Australian involvement in Kampuchea with the event of a Vietnamese withdrawal?

PM: No, I've answered that question. That didn't - the matter wasn't raised by the Thai leaders and obviously there wasn't any point in us going to it. The thing is to talk about the present situation and try and get to an improvement from where we are. If that has some possible substance in it, it will emerge at the appropriate time.

JOURNALIST: Didn't the Malaysian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister put this in terms of the present situation in terms of one way that the Vietnamese might be induced to look at withdrawal terms?

PM: ... reports that we saw in the paper, but what I've been trying to say to you for some time, the right way to conduct your affairs .. in regard to some domestic political situation or international, you don't hear something said by someone that is maybe down the track and then go ... down there after that. If you want to guarantee inefficiency in conducting your affairs, that is it. You deal with the position as it is and if that develops into something that has been hypothecated and becomes relevant, then you address yourself to it. Otherwise it's a guarantee of inefficiency and potential insanity.

JOURNALIST: When we enunciated our position, did we specifically indicate our reservations about the coalition because of the participation and the prominent military role in it of the Khmer Rouge .

PM: Yes, we said here what we have said - both of us - in Australia - that we praise the integrity and the commitment of Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk and their forces and reiterated our ... for Pol Pot ... the coalition and in that respect I don't think there is any significant divergence between ourselves and the Thais.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Ghazali said in his interview with Michael Richardson that ASEAN Foreign Ministers in January would be looking at a series of options regarding the withdrawal of Vietnam from Kampuchea. Did the Thais give you any indication of the sorts of options that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers would be looking at?

PM: No, they have a working party looking at these sorts of things. We have no indication of what specifics they may be coming up with.