



PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE IN GOA - 27 NOVEMBER 1983

PM: Well, you're aware of the resolution on Cyprus which ...

JOURNALIST: I don't think we've got the actual working on it ..

PM: I don't think I'm actually entitled to give the working of it, but I can give you the essence of it. It involved a condemnation of the attempts to create a secessionist state and endorsement of Security Council resolution 541 and we .. support of the independence of sovereignty and territorial integrity unity and non-alignment for the Republic of Cyprus. We agreed to establish a special Commonwealth action group on Cyprus at a high level and this is to assist in security ... Security Council resolution 541.

JOURNALIST: What does high level mean, Prime Minister?

PM: Well, I was just going to say I would come back to that. It's deliberately left open because it's anticipated that it might at different times consist of different levels. For instance, probably before we leave Delhi ... (inaudible) the Prime Ministers of the five countries - Australia, Guyana, India, Nigeria and Zambia - will have the first meeting and then it will be taken up subsequently at different levels, perhaps by Prime Ministers at certain times, perhaps by officials high officials.

JOURNALIST: Were you approached to go ahead or did you volunteer?

PM: No, I didn't volunteer.

JOURNALIST: INAUDIBLE

PM: would be a very good member of such a committee and we were more than pleased to be involved for three reasons. One - the general importance of it. Two - because of our large community, the Cypriot community in Australia. Three - we have had a continuing presence there in Cyprus with the police contingency force. So when we were nominated for it I was quite happy to accept.

PM: That's Cyprus.

JOURNALIST: ... clarification of .. You just talked about the word "in association" with the United Nations. What does that mean precisely? How will it operate at the United Nations?

PM: Well, let me go backwards and it may give you some indication. Before the CHOGM conference, Ramphal, the Secretary-General had been in discussions with the ... and it was indicated that it would be helpful if the Commonwealth would involve itself and so under the Security Council resolution 541 the Secretary-General is required to use his good offices for the purpose of trying to bring the resolution and he clearly believes that the Commonwealth - Cyprus being a member of the Commonwealth - may be able to have some influence in assisting him in the exercise of his good offices, so it would be a matter of judgement between the Commonwealth and the UN Secretary-General as to just how it would operate.

JOURNALIST: You can't say anything more than that at this stage?

PM: They had a drafting group. The officers came back with a draft and in the draft there was work. And it was accepted.

Anything further on Cyprus?

Because a lot of time has been taken up on Grenada. It has been interesting to me to see the processes of the Commonwealth in action here. The debate, as you know, started in New Delhi on the late morning, Thursday morning and went through to the Thursday afternoon session. It was a very tense, dramatic thing and to me one of the most interesting discussions I have ever been involved in. Essentially you have the African states expressing a grave concern about the invasion and taking the view that the United States exercise, the Caribbean states who got involved saying very strongly that it was their initiative and they were basically apprehensive about the threat that was posed to the rest of the East Caribbean by the events that had been taking place prior to the invasion. You would have thought by the end of the day in New Delhi that it would have been ... to get any sort of common position. We came down here and had a further lengthy debate and then there was a drafting committee which consisted of representatives of the Caribbean including those who hadn't supported - hadn't been involved in the debate and others that were and Zimbabwe. They came back with a draft which we commenced to consider last night at about quarter past seven. It was thought that it might be capable of being fixed up quite quickly and in fact it went on till about 9 o'clock. We were supposed to finish at 8. By 9 in fact agreement was reached and I can say quite seriously that I think it was a fairly impressive achievement at the end to get ... again I really can't go into the ... in Delhi, but I can say that it did involve the Commonwealth leaders saying that - it referred to our readiness to give sympathetic consideration to requests for assistance from Grenada in the context of the the civilian administration is operating and

it is operating free from outside pressures and the presence of foreign troops. In that situation if they want assistance at all the Commonwealth would ... be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to that.

JOURNALIST: That depends on ... on Thursday

PM: Yes, well, the wording .. to the administration operating free of external interference, pressure or the presence of foreign forces. And there is reference to the readiness of the Caribbean states or countries in the East Caribbean community to assist in the maintenance of order so what you're essentially looking at is a gradual transition of the emergence of this, the Grenadan administration, perhaps assisted by forces from the actual Caribbean states to help maintain order, withdrawal of foreign troops and in that sort of context some sort of assistance.

JOURNALIST: Does it avoid condemning the United States specifically?

PM: Yes, the United States doesn't get named.

JOURNALIST: What sort of assistance is envisaged? What sort of people would ...

PM: Well, what you can say is that there would be no troops, no forces. We said from the beginning we weren't interested in that and that is not contemplated. Now, you could conceivably have some people involved in ... of police forces. That is a possibility. Or you could conceivably have some small supervisory body to oversee an election. The important thing to say is no troops.

JOURNALIST: In terms of the Australian Government's position on this issue, have you changed your assessment of the whole Grenada invasion as a result of these talks?

PM: No, we said that if we had been consulted in advance we would have counselled against invasion before the exhaustion of other possibilities and that would remain our position. What we have to say is that when you listen to the ... persons for Antigua, Barbados and Dominica, St Lucia, when you listen to those countries who were involved and I think that this is a comment fairly generally ... I mean I'm not .. myself. You couldn't help but be impressed by the integrity and intensity of their feelings and I think that is their concern, what was involved, and not only what had happened to Grenada, but the possible ... to some of their own countries. And I think that the fact that you are able to get a communique in the terms which you have got, is a reflection of how widely that was felt around the table. There is no doubt that they wanted it to happen. And putting it the other way, you could not sustain the conclusion that this was some United States plan forced upon some unwilling countries in the area.

JOURNALIST: In terms of our own interpretation of this communiqué on Grenada, it seems fairly clear that in fact the Caribbean nations have prevailed against the African criticism, if you go back to the start of the debate. I mean, do you think that is a fair comment?

PM: Well, you know, there is more emphasis in the communiqué on the understanding of the position put by the Caribbeans and what they are now saying is - and I think the phrase is used there - well this is a time now for reconstruction and not recrimination. I think that phrase is actually used. .. I'm not going to give you the whole document but the emphasis should be on reconstruction and not recrimination. So, what they are saying is OK we've got our views and in the first part of the document there is a resolution - you'll see reference to the fact that the individuals put their view, their own view, in the Security Council. They have said that and so they can refer back to that if they want to. They are now saying well, what do we do about the future. And I think it is fair enough to say that the Caribbean states would obviously not have agreed to this unless they were satisfied with the position they put ... be adequately taken into account and I think it has.

JOURNALIST: I'd really like to check on - just a bit of a tangent - we understand some of the West Indian leaders may have gone off to the cricket. Now do you know if they've gone?

PM: Today? Well, they did raise the question in New Delhi and then again yesterday as to whether in fact they could go. They had indicated that it would be regarded as some sort of insult by people to have been so close if they didn't in fact go. It was not a point of view which received widespread sympathy and I would think, particularly when it was pointed out that it would take an hour to fly. I was not interested at any stage, but I would have thought that for them the attractiveness of it started to diminish a bit when it was pointed out that it would take an hour to fly from Goa to Bombay and then it would take at least an hour and a half from the airport at Bombay to the ground. Whether in fact some of them have gone off early or not, I don't know.

JOURNALIST: Do you think that these CHOGM meetings are excessively long? ... cut down - to be out of the country for nine days for CHOGM alone?

PM: Yes, fair question. I'd like to see them shorter. I can say that because you are quite right. It is a long time to be out of the country. You've got to take the example we've had particularly in this CHOGM of Grenada. It is not a thing which would have lent itself to an easy resolution. If you consider how it has been spread out. The preliminary discussion formally came on Thursday and you get down here and all of a sudden ... we then had further formal discussions and then a working committee and then coming back. When you've got an item like Grenada that is probably going to take a fair spread of time and it would be difficult to see how it could have been handled any more expeditiously than it was, I guess. If you didn't have Grenada type situations I think you probably could

shorten them somewhat. It would be desirable, I think.

JOURNALIST: Would that be getting rid of the retreat or reducing executive sessions?

PM: I think there is an argument for keeping the retreat. I have had the opportunity here of having a number of interesting bilateral discussions which quite obviously are easy to be done in an environment like this. So I would see some case not for abolishing the retreat. But, even perhaps lengthening the retreat, but making sure that in the retreat structure you had, as we have had, quite a bit of formal meeting. I have heard expressions from a number of people that they thought it was a case for shortening of it and, you know, that is my sort of prima facie view.

JOURNALIST: Can we just ask you on the basis of the experience you have had so far at your first CHOGM, just what sort of utility you think there is in the Commonwealth as a forum - to put it bluntly, what extent you have wasted your time as opposed to having the capacity to do something constructive?

PM: I certainly it is not a waste of time. I think, if you just look at this CHOGM, that you see evidence of its effectiveness in a number of ways. Take Grenada, for instance. I think that the international and domestic discussion, by which I mean in each country the domestic discussion can be changed. I think in the international apprehension can be changed by the fact that here you have had the Caribbean countries - the majority of whom supported the actions - those who didn't ... and African groups who were obviously very critical of the United States. Now, all the groups sat down together, listened to the exposition of what was involved and have come up with an agreed position. It seems to me that it must affect the understanding and debate about the issue. It is very difficult to see how you could have got that in anything out of the Commonwealth context. Cyprus - again it seems to me that the fact that you've got a pretty diverse group of people - again a document condemning the UBI, giving support to Kyprianou, but then importantly going on to establish a group which will work with the United Nations and may have a better chance of operating the United Nations and trying to resolve that issue. That seems to me to be very much a plus. So, there's two examples. In respect of the more general issues, like international security and disarmament, we've got to wait and see what sort of a document we can come up with on that. Although there is one point specifically that I referred to which is going to be mentioned in that and is also mentioned in the Grenada document, and that is the question of the security of small states and the Commonwealth is going to set up a study group to look at this question of the security of small states to see whether in the Commonwealth context there are some things that may be able to be done which addresses that problem. Now, it's too early to say whether anything will come out of it, but it's obviously a genuine area of concern and the Commonwealth does seem to be a body which consistently looks at that issue and it may be able to come up with something.

JOURNALIST: Will Australia be represented on that ...

PM: There is no decision yet about - that would be done, at least initially, within the Commonwealth Secretariat, I would think and then ...

JOURNALIST: ... chairing the economic discussions on the retreat, continuing on from your Friday ...

PM: I've had - well, this is an item of news interest, I suppose, what I'm going to go through now. Specifically I have indicated to Mr. Mugabe of Zimbabwe, to Kenneth Kuanda of Zambia and .. Nyere of Tanzania that Australia will make available additional wheat aid. The details of that will be worked out. I'll get those three together to have some preliminary discussions with officials in New Delhi, then we'll take it up and try to finalise that quite quickly because they are suffering from a very significant drought in their area. Their crops have been substantially reduced and each of those three leaders have expressed their gratitude to us for that action. I had quite a long discussion with Nyere about the problems in their economy, as I have with others, and it is that sort of discussion rather than going onto the global type of things that I addressed in the meeting in Delhi on Friday. It has been very interesting to have those sort of talks.

JOURNALIST: Have you spoken to Mrs. Thatcher since your contribution on Friday?

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Who have you had the bilateral meetings with specifically?

PM: Well, I've had three that I've just mentioned. I've had talks with President Kyprianou of Cyprus. I've had talks with ... from Western Samoa on talks we had at the Pacific Forum in Canberra and talks with Michael Somare and Pierre Trudeau said he wanted to have a yarn to me. I'll take the opportunity of doing that today.

JOURNALIST: Have you decided what is going to happen with CHOGRM ...

PM. That is still to come up.

JOURNALIST: Where is the next CHOGM? Have they decided that yet?

PM: No, that hasn't come up for discussion yet and there is nothing definite about any of these, but there are possibilities that are being floated around. Trinidad was mentioned as one of the possibilities wasn't it?

?: Bahamas.

PM: Bahamas and Trinidad and Canada and then just yesterday there was some mention vaguely that Fiji could be. Now, that will be picked up obviously before we leave.

JOURNALIST: What has happened to the suggestion of Trudeau going to Peking? Is that on or not on?

PM: ?

JOURNALIST: There was a suggestion last night that Trudeau was going to Peking.

PM: Well, he said to me at the opening meeting that he, as it stood now, he was going to be meeting the Premier in Canada in middle to late January and he indicated that he would go there before then if he could and I believe he is assuming that possibility and I think he may be going before.

interjections

PM: Has it been ...

?: Well, yes, I think he's going next week.

JOURNALIST: He's going tonight.

PM: Well, I knew that, but I just didn't want to say it if he hadn't ...

JOURNALIST: Can we ask you what is your reaction to Trudeau's trip to Peking? Do you think it can be useful in this sort of thing he is trying to pursue?

PM: Yes, obviously it has the possibility of being useful. ... of CHOGM and for hours now we've got to get them all to agree and I just don't know what the chances of that are, but I wish him well.

JOURNALIST: ... foreign policy. After this meeting with Commonwealth leaders, do you think you might shift the focus a little bit more towards Africa as a result?

PM: No, I wouldn't think. No, we wouldn't. And in saying, no, we wouldn't, we emphasise that we in no sense have said we didn't maintain a very real interest in what was happening in Africa and from what I've just said now, there is proof of that with the additional aid we are going to give to those three countries. We have made clear from the beginning that we see a major thrust of our policy as being in the region and nothing has happened here to change that. But, I repeat, don't carry the implication that we don't maintain our interest in other areas. Of course we do and it won't be just a formal thing. When we think we can be of some assistance, we will and that is evidenced by the fact that Bill Hayden is in January and February going to the Middle East and then to visit the East African countries as well. So we've got a proper balance in these things. I must say in respect of our region, probably the person I've spent more time with throughout the conference, not just here but in Delhi, has been Lee Kuan Yew. We've had a number of continuing talks and I believe that - we've got to finalise it - but when I go to South Korea, Japan, China and Hong Kong, we will be going into Singapore on the way.

JOURNALIST: On the way there or on the way back?

PM: On the way, I would think.

JOURNALIST: Just on that point. In these talks you've had with Lee, has there been any discussion about the resumption of the official dialogue between Australia and ASEAN?

PM: No, what we-- it was referred to and we just both expect it will flow normally ... they should have their next meeting in January and we just assume that the talks will pick up after that.
