



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS AT PETRA, JORDAN, 25 JANUARY 1987

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

PM: ... the mind boggles at the brilliance and the geometrical capacity, the architectural capacity, without any of the sorts of aids to which we have become accustomed. But to get the form in buildings like this without sorts of assistance or instruments that we are aware and the labour that had to go in this without any mechanical assistance, just boggles the mind. When you come in first and see the Treasury Building, as you come through the narrow defile - the form of that - as I say it is staggering to see that that could have been done. I think more than any other place I have ever been in this is the sort of place that makes you project your mind back and think how they lived and how they built. If you were able to go back in time and see something, be there at that time, this is where I would like to be.

JOURNALIST: Do you think more leaders should come to places like this? Do you think it is in some way humbling?

PM: It certainly makes you very much aware of your own mortality and insignificance in time.

JORDANIAN JOURNALIST: ... inaudible question ...

PM: It has just confirmed my very warm friendship towards the Jordanian Government and people. They have been extraordinarily kind to us and it was a very great thrill this morning to be able to go to Pella and to see there the cooperation between the Jordanian antiquities authorities and our archaeological team from the Sydney University. It gave me a great deal of pleasure to be able to say to them there when they told me that they could do more work if they had another \$30,000 to have 2 people there permanently to announce that I would arrange to find that money from private sources in Australia because that will enable a continuation of the work there. It was very exciting. The finds go back for 250,000 years BC. And they say that it is more exciting than any other archaeological find anywhere in the Middle East because they have got layer upon layer successive the ages, as I say, going back to 250,000 years BC - they have found material there. So it is good to have these sorts of associations between Australia and Jordan - to have work being done together which is going to help to increase the understanding of people about our history, our background.

JOURNALIST: It is back to political reality tomorrow, Mr Hawke, flying to Israel. You seem to have been embraced very warmly by Jordan since you have been here. Do you feel that perhaps Israel might be a little uncomfortable that you have been embraced too warmly.

PM: Israel is very much aware of the friendships I have had with Jordan going back for a very long period. And it is obviously the case that the Jordanians have a very committed approach to trying to get a just and reasonable and durable peace in the region and I am sure the Israelis understand that.

JOURNALIST: Have you thought any more about what approach you might adopt when you are in Israel, Mr Hawke?

PM: I am quite aware of the approach I will adopt but I don't intend to announce that publicly.

JOURNALIST: The local press has reported that you have actually endorsed King Hussein's plan for an international peace conference. Does that mean that you accept and endorse the need for the Soviet Union and the United States to be involved in such a conference?

PM: I have said that I agree with the concept of the Jordanian idea of an international conference. And as I understand the composition of that conference is something that will have to be worked out between the parties involved. I certainly understand their thinking about the composition of the conference. They say it is a matter that will have to be worked out between the parties.

JOURNALIST: Do you also understand Israel's objection to the Soviet Union being involved?

PM: Yes, I think I do, Kerry. You are learning about things now after your first boo-boo are you?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the Jordan Times was suggesting that Australia could have a very important role to play while in Israel because of the way you picked ... while in Jordan, were you pleased to read that?

PM: I haven't read it yet. I guess it will be conveyed to me. I have no reason to change what I said before and that is we don't exaggerate our roles or our capacities but simply say that if those involved think that we can be of some assistance then we are ready to do that. But I don't think anyone's interests are served by exaggerating what we may simply as a result of being. But certainly it is the case that we had a very warm cordial, constructive session yesterday with the Prime Minister then of course with His Majesty afterwards. And I am certainly very, very much better informed now about the thinking of this important party than I was before.

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