



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER EWART FOR AM,

31 January 1987

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

THE PRIME MINISTER, MR HAWKE, IS ON THE LAST STOPOVER IN HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIP. HE ARRIVED IN CAIRO EARLIER THIS MORNING. LATER TODAY HE'LL BEGIN TALKS WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENT PEOPLE FROM OUR BIGGEST TRADE CUSTOMER IN THE REGION, INCLUDING OF COURSE THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT, HOSNI MUBARAK. MR HAWKE'S MARKED SHIFT IN PERSONAL THINKING, TO THE POINT WHERE HE TOLD HIS ISRAELI HOSTS LAST WEEK THAT THEY SHOULD RECOGNISE THE PLO AND PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE INCLUDING RUSSIA, WILL NO DOUBT BE WELCOMED IN CAIRO. BUT WHY THIS DRAMATIC CHANGE IN MR HAWKE'S THINKING. JUST BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER BOARDED HIS PLANE IN GENEVA OVERNIGHT OUR REPORTER TRAVELLING WITH HIS ENTOURAGE, HEATHER EWART, EXPLORED THE RAPID CHANGE OF EMPHASIS WITH HIM.

MR HAWKE: NOW ISRAEL'S POSITION, MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY, HAS PROBABLY NEVER BEEN MORE SECURE. SO NOW THE ISRAELIS HAVE A DIFFERENT SET OF PROBLEMS. WHERE THEIR MIND WAS CONCENTRATED THEN, UNDERSTANDABLY, ON THE QUESTIONS OF VIABILITY, OF REMAINING SECURE, NOW THEY HAVE TO FACE THE QUESTIONS OF WHAT DO THEY DO WITHIN THIS MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY MORE SECURE POSITION TO MAKE THE ADJUSTMENT, MAKE THE DECISIONS, WHICH ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE MOST PRODUCTIVE FUTURE. ONE OF THOSE QUESTIONS THAT THEY HAVE TO LOOK AT IS THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THEIR SITUATION. WHILE THEY RETAIN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND WITH THE SUBSTANTIAL OVER-POPULATION WITHIN ISRAEL PROPER - WHILE THAT GOES ON, LOOKING AT A POSITION WHEREBY AT THE END OF THE CENTURY THEY COULD BE A MINORITY IN THEIR OWN LAND, AND THAT OF COURSE IS SOMETHING WHICH UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNS THEM. SO IT'S THESE SORTS OF ISSUES NOW WHICH ARE MORE IN THEIR MINDS, THAT'S IN AN ESSENTIAL SENSE WHY I SAY I SEE A DIFFERENT, A DIFFERENTLY CONCERNED ISRAEL.

QUESTION: YOU STUCK VERY FIRMLY TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S EVEN-HANDED POLICY ON THIS TRIP. THERE HAS BEEN A SHIFT IN YOUR PERSONAL ATTITUDE. HOW MUCH HAS THIS TRIP CONTRIBUTED TO THAT?

MR HAWKE: I THINK YOU ALWAYS LEARN, I MEAN A PERSON IS SILLY IF YOU DON'T LEARN FROM EVERY EXPERIENCE. AND ALL THAT'S HAPPENED ON THIS VISIT IS THROUGH VISITING JORDAN AND THE OPPORTUNITY OF TALKING WITH THE FOUR PALESTINIANS IN JERUSALEM, AND IN TALKING WITH SO MANY ISRAELIS THEMSELVES, I'VE HAD CONFIRMED THE IMPRESSION THAT I'VE ALWAYS HAD THAT A RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE ISRAELI-ARAB PROBLEM.

QUESTION: MIGHT YOU HAVE GAINED AN EVEN BETTER UNDERSTANDING THAT YOU SAY YOU HAVE REACHED ON THIS IF YOU PERHAPS HAD VISITED REFUGEE CAMPS ON THE WEST BANK AND IN THE GAZA STRIP.

MR HAWKE: I'VE ALREADY DONE IT. WHEN I WENT IN '78 AND '80 CROWN PRINCE HASSAN, A BROTHER OF KING HUSSEIN, TOOK ME INTO THE REFUGEE CAMPS.

QUESTION: BUT WHAT ABOUT AS PRIME MINISTER, GIVEN THAT YOU SAY THAT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW?

MR HAWKE: I WAS AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PALESTINIANS. WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO REMEMBER IS THAT PRIOR TO 1967 IT WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE ARAB STATES. ONE OF THE TRAGIC FEATURES OF THE WHOLE POST-WAR SITUATION HAS BEEN THAT THE ARAB STATES HAVEN'T GIVEN THE ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS THAT THEY WERE CAPABLE OF GIVING.

QUESTION: YOU'VE STRESSED THROUGHOUT THIS TRIP THAT YOU ARE NOT HERE TO MEDIATE, BUT IF ASKED AUSTRALIA WOULD OF COURSE PLAY WHATEVER ROLE IT COULD. DO YOU GET THE FEELING AT ALL THAT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO PLAY A ROLE, AND, IF SO, WHAT SORT OF ROLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY?

MR HAWKE: I DON'T WANT TO PLAY ANY ROLE OTHER THAN TO DO ANYTHING THE PARTIES PRINCIPAL MAY ASK OF ME AND AUSTRALIA TO DO. I DIDN'T GO THERE, AND NOW GO TO EGYPT AND COME AWAY FROM THE MIDDLE EAST SAYING, 'I WANT A ROLE, HERE'S WHAT I CAN DO.' I HAVE ALREADY DONE SOMETHING IN A SMALL WAY IN CONVEYING FROM THE KING, THE PRIME MINISTER OF JORDAN, TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT THE STRENGTH OF THEIR VIEWS, THE NATURE OF VIEWS, THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THEIR VIEWS. I WILL BE TAKING FROM ISRAEL TO PRESIDENT MUBARAK THE STATEMENT THAT I'VE BEEN ASKED TO TAKE ABOUT THE COMMITMENT OF ISRAEL TO WANTING TO DEVELOP CONSTRUCTIVE ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT. I CERTAINLY WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY, AS REQUESTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE QUESTION OF SOVIET JEWRY. THESE THINGS I'LL DO. IF THERE'S ANYTHING THAT PRESIDENT MUBARAK WANTS ME TO CONVEY OR TO DO, I'LL BE HAPPY TO DO IT. SO THAT'S THE WAY I LOOK AT MY ROLE.

THE PRIME MINISTER, MR HAWKE, IN GENEVA BEFORE HE FLEW DOWN TO CAIRO SPEAKING WITH OUR POLITICAL REPORTER HEATHER EWART.

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