



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
TOAST AT LUNCH IN LENINGRAD
29 NOVEMBER 1987**

Mr Chairman
Distinguished Representatives of the Leningrad Soviet
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for the welcoming remarks which you have addressed to me and to the members of the Australian party.

It seems appropriate that my visit to the Soviet Union - which I have been looking forward to immensely - should begin in a city which has played so important a role in the history of relations between your country and the West.

Among the many proud traditions of your city, its achievements as a cradle of culture, humanism and modernisation are conspicuous. Peter the Great's building of the city symbolised his determination to build a modern state. Here the Decembrists struck the first blow for greater freedom and justice in Russia.

Here your literary geniuses, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky and Blok created works which crossed national boundaries to exercise a profound influence on the intellectual development of men and women throughout the world. Here Dmitri Shostakovich, whose name will always be linked with Leningrad, learned his art.

Here was assembled one of the finest collections of European painting at the Hermitage which my wife, my party and I will be visiting with great interest this afternoon. From here many of your explorers set out on voyages of discovery to distant lands, among them the great Miklukho Maclay, who visited Australia and carried out pioneering research in Papua New Guinea.

In a word, your city became not just a great cultural centre but a centre of cultural exchange - between Russia and the outside world.

I am commencing my visit to the Soviet Union within weeks of the 70th anniversary of the Russian revolution, at a time when great changes are again underway, changes that have implications not only for the peoples of the Soviet Union but potentially for the world.

Clearly one aim of perestroika and glasnost is to open wider the window to the West. As such, they contain the promise of fundamental and sustained improvement in relations between East and West. Much can be done to replace hostility with trust by promoting a freer exchange of ideas and freer contacts between peoples. The Australian Government welcomes the measures already taken by the Soviet Government in this historic process.

We are gratified that Leningrad too is playing a role in these very positive developments. The works of the Nobel prize-winning Leningrad poet, Josif Brodsky, are to be published in the Soviet Union, though he is now resident in the West. Such decisions do much to enhance the reputation of the Soviet Union, and to build that trust which is the only firm foundation for a new era in East-West relations.

This morning I laid a wreath at the cemetery where hundreds of thousands of victims of the tragic days of World War Two lie buried. I did so not only as a tribute to the enormous sacrifice of the people of Leningrad, but also to express the resolve shared by all of us that such a vast human tragedy must not be allowed to occur again.

Mr Chairman

In speaking of this splendid city Pushkin wrote of ... "Peter's creation - your severe, graceful appearance, the Neva's majestic current, the granite of her banks, the tracery of your cast-iron railings, the transparent twilight, the moonless gleam of your still nights ...". We are privileged indeed to be shown Leningrad, of which you are so justly proud, and to enjoy your generous hospitality.

I wish to thank you for this, and to propose a toast to you, Mr Chairman, and to the people of the hero-city of Leningrad.
