



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PAUL LYNEHAM, 7.30 REPORT, 5 JUNE 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

LYNEHAM: Prime Minister thanks for joining us. I know you haven't had a lot of sleep lately. Did you ever expect that the old guard would react with such verocity and bloodshed?

PM: There was always an outside chance. We've been monitoring the situation continuously and closely. We have very competent people there. They said in their reporting that there was a chance that they thought it more likely that there would be an outcome which was not of this kind and speaking for myself I consistently hoped that the more moderate and intelligent line of my very good friend Zhao Ziyang, would have prevailed because this sort of process I know must be anathema to him and he's fought against it, he's obviously been shunted aside now -

LYNEHAM: There are reports that he's under house arrest.

PM: Yes he's certainly out of action. There is no certainty in the reporting as to his actual fate. Some of the suggestions were that he could even be executed but I just most profoundly hope Paul, that he survives not only for the obvious reason that I want him to, but it's only the line of Zhao Ziyang and those who think like him that can provide a lasting resolution of these issues because Deng and Li Peng may believe that what they've done has bought this issue to an end, it hasn't and it can't and it won't.

LYNEHAM: They've got so much blood now. Are they going to be responsive to international reaction do you think?

PM: They won't be, in my judgement, immediately responsive to international action. Deng for instance some time back said specifically that they would not be and I think he speaks accurately in terms of immediate responses. But I don't believe that in the longer term that they'll be able to be unresponsive either to the pressure of international opinion but more particularly to the weight of opinion within China. The nonsense that's being spoken now by the authorities about them putting down a minority section of renegades is patently false on its face.

LYNEHAM: When they talk of the dregs of society.

PM: The dregs of society. It's not the dregs of society. It's very hard to talk about your students, not only in Beijing but around the country, as the dregs of society. This is patently a nonsense and there is also evidence available to us of a degree of hesitancy and indeed revulsion in sections of the People's Liberation Army which is not surprising. You imagine the feelings of these young men in uniform being asked now and required to shoot down their fellow citizens, citizens who have been acting peaceably and not making unreasonable demands. Students and people who are not questioning, in a sense, certain fundamentals about Chinese society but expressing simply a fundamental human desire for the freedom of expression and the opportunity to participate. Now those things are not going to be able to be put down in any permanent sense so it will be a combination in my judgement of the pressure of international opinion and the intrinsic impossibility within China of holding this position.

LYNEHAM: Very quickly Prime Minister, there are about 1500 Australians in China tonight. Are they safe?

PM: There are more than that. Our best count is that there is approximately 500 Australians in a sense who are permanently there. That's a combination of those in the Embassy and in other posts in China. Students and business people, approximately 500 in that category and anything up to 1500 tourists. So we're probably looking at about 2000. Are they safe? I believe so. They obviously shouldn't take risks in going out and exposing themselves to danger but we have confidence in the capacity of our Embassy people there to protect them.

LYNEHAM: Prime Minister, thanks for speaking with us.

PM: Thank you very much indeed.

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