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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DEPARTURE STATEMENTS BY PRIME MINISTERS HAWKE
AND THATCHER, 10 DOWNING STREET, LONDON, 21 JUNE 1989

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HAWKE: Mrs Thatcher has invited me to make the initial comments. The first thing I say is to express to Mrs Thatcher the appreciation of the Australian Government for the catalytic role which she's taken to put a new vigour into the Australian/United Kingdom relationship. I think it commenced with a visit to Australia last year and upon her return she has ensured that the preparations for our visit have left nothing at all to be desired. We are now participating in an historic meeting by which I mean that never before has there been a delegation at a level of Prime Minister and so many Ministers, reciprocated on your side. That of course will be followed up tomorrow by the meeting of more than 300 high level businessmen from my country and from the United Kingdom. So we are engaged at this time in as I say an historic enterprise to increase the level of economic and trading relationship between our two countries but it would be a misapprehension if it were to be taken that it is merely bilateral matters with which we are concerned. As important as they are, the United Kingdom and Australia share common perceptions on matters of international and regional importance. I think it's fair to say Margaret, that tragically at this time an issue which has taken up a fair bit of the discussion between yourself and myself and between our Ministers is what has been happening in China. We are at one in expressing a sense of almost immeasurable tragedy as to what has happened there and what has been further compounded by the most recent evidence now of the execution of the Chinese who were involved in the train incident in Shanghai. We both deplore the decision of the Chinese authorities in taking that sort of action which is out of all sort of relevance to what those people were involved in. So we have talked about the issue of China. We've talked about regional issues. We've talked together about the challenges that confront us in a world now where Europe is moving closer together after 1992, where in our part of the world the region is developing at an enormously rapid rate offering for us and British

(HAWKE cont): companies who come to operate out of Australia, enormous opportunities. We are also living in a time where the changes within the Soviet Union led by President Gorbachev are also presenting their own opportunities and challenges and I think that Mrs Thatcher and I share a fundamental perception about those developments. That is that we welcome them. We believe that it is appropriate that the West should, with caution, assist in those changes that are happening but, as I say, that that should be done with an appropriate sense of caution. So you can see that I think we have covered a wide range of subjects and our discussions will continue now over what I think will be a useful working lunch Margaret. But I conclude as I began by expressing my appreciation to you and your Government for the thought and the preparation that has gone into this meeting, which I believe can properly be described as historic.

THATCHER: Just a few words because Mr Hawke has said almost everything that there is to say about this. We give him a very warm welcome to the United Kingdom. The invitation was extended when I was over there for the bicentennial last year, when I think we all realised that we were entering on a new era of contacts. We must have more consultation about global matters and much more consultation between Ministers so that we may work for better on things like defence matters, on things like trading matters, on things which affect the whole world. Australia's position is very prominent and the very thing about talking to her and her Ministers is that our approach is the same. It starts on human rights, the desire to extend those the world over and as we now have great problems to face in the Pacific and things happening which we never thought to see, it is very good that we and Australia should have the time to talk about those and other matters that Australia's very keen on, such as the environment. I may say it is very easy to talk with Australia, with all her Ministers, because of this similarity of approach which is not just a one off meeting, it is the beginning of a course of meetings which we'll pursue regularly. There is a special one tomorrow between trading ministers. While we have a conference at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre to enhance the trading contacts and to enhance investment both ways. We have long been high investors in the United States. The United States is also a very high investor in Britain, which we welcome. There has been a very, very successful start and I'm sure that that atmosphere will continue through the rest of the visit. Thank you.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister can I ask you what your reaction is to the first reported executions of people involved in the unrest in China?

THATCHER: Utterley appalled. Just exactly as Bob Hawke pointed out, the punishment is totally out of proportion to the crime and we are calling on them not to persecute those who are merely trying to have better arrangements for democracy. It just shows you that the depth of what has happened in China is something which we hoped would never happen and which we still can't quite believe has to the extent that they are repressing anyone who merely wants to enlarge human relations.

JOURNALIST: Did you make any progress on reassurances you might offer the Hong Kong people?

THATCHER: We obviously talked about the Hong Kong people because we both feel the same way and understand how they must be feeling. We cannot go any further than that at the moment. We also have a very avid difficulty in Hong Kong which we are working together on the Vietnamese boat people and Australia has been really very, very help about that. Australia has also had a considerable number of people from Hong Kong, particularly those involved in industry and taking up residence in Australia, which has been of great comfort to the Hong Kong people and I think also of big benefit to Australia.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke what about Hong Kong. What do you think should be done about desires to have the right to come out of the country if things get worse?

HAWKE: Obviously as far as this is directly a matter for decision by the United Kingdom as to the request by those people to exercise what they may perceive as their right to come here, that is a matter for decision and judgement by Mrs Thatcher and her Government. All that we are concerned to say is these things. First, that we express our understanding of the pressures, the problems that confront the United Kingdom in a situation where they had properly thought that through detailed, unremitting negotiation with the Chinese authorities that a position of being reached in which you could have confidence for the future of the people of Hong Kong. Well that basis of confidence has gone after the 4th of June and what has transpired since then. Now I've said to Margaret that we will do what ever we can in the approach together that we will adopt towards China to try and create the basic improvement that is necessary. That is to try and create a situation whereby the time we get up towards '97 there can be a much sounder ground for saying to the people of Hong Kong, have confidence in the future. That's what constructively must be the basic approach. But in the meantime we have indicated for instance in this financial year which is just concluding, we've doubled our intake of people from Hong Kong. We will look sympathetically at any approach on this matter in terms

HAWKE (cont): of that other aspect of the question that Margaret has referred to, that is the Vietnamese refugees. Our assessment is identical. There shouldn't be any doubt about this because there are amongst our friends a reluctance to understand the realities. The realities are these, that the people that are flooding into Hong Kong now from Vietnam are not political refugees, they are economic refugees. And as that is the case, then a different approach is required and we are at one on that and I believe that as a result of the approach that we are adopting in consultation with others, and including what's happened in Geneva recently, we can have a more appropriate response to what is an unacceptable influx of these people into Hong Kong.

JOURNALIST: I just wanted to ask Prime Minister, whether you've both thought about how you ought to be reacting to China now, given that the United States are taking some measures?

THATCHER: We have in fact spent I think about an hour talking about that subject alone because it is so important and of course we also keep very closely in touch with the United States.

HAWKE: May I just add to that. It's not as though it is just the United States that's taken decisions. The Government of Mrs Thatcher has already taken decisions in the area of supply of arms and so on, they've taken decisions, so have we. It's not a question of the United States being in front. If anything they are catching up with us.

JOURNALIST: ... on the environment. Did you discuss Antarctica and what is your attitude now in light of the agreement between the French Government and the Australian Government to oppose mining there?

THATCHER: We both have the same objective in Antarctica. It is a very important environmental area. There ... of different. France did of course build a very considerable air strip there compared to ... recently which is not necessarily the best thing to do.

JOURNALIST: Can I take this opportunity about why you did so badly in the European elections?

THATCHER: Because ... insufficient of our supporters came out. The time when we did best in the European elections was in 1979 when a far bigger proportion of those supporters came out. Just exactly what I said to you the day before it happened, it's an organisational election, it depends on which side can get most of their supporters out. That's an absolutely correct judgement.

JOURNALIST: Did you get it wrong ...

THATCHER: The message we had was the bigger proportion of our people were intending to come out but it did not turn out to be the truth on a very hot, nice warm day.

JOURNALIST: Did you yourself get it wrong over Europe, do you think?

THATCHER: No, no. Not at all.

HAWKE: You ought to try the Australian system Margaret. We make them vote, it's compulsory.

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