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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, ANZAC COVE, GALLIPOLI, 25
APRIL 1990

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JOURNALIST: How do you think the day has gone?

PM: I think it has been a day which everyone will remember - right from the very beginning we had the moving Dawn Service and then right through the breakfast it was good to see the, the old veterans together again then and I think we had a very moving service at Lone Pine and I think one of the most moving parts of the day, of course, was at lunch time when we had the two old veterans exchanging uniforms, boots, kisses, hugs, shakes and then embracing one another here. After 75 years the enemies of yesterday, they culminated it today. It's been altogether a most moving day and I'd like to express my appreciation to the Turkish authorities, to our own armed forces, to everyone in any way who's been associated with organising the day. I think it's something that will live in the minds of everyone who's been here I'm sure.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you think people back in Australia who still think about the spirit of Anzac still regard it as part of Australia's character?

PM: I think so. As I tried to say in the address, brief address I gave at Lone Pine, I think it's the duty, the responsibility of each new generation to reinterpret the spirit and the meaning of Anzac and I hope that today, through the contribution of the return of these great old veterans and the association with it of so many people - the non political nature of it, we have our friends here from the Opposition. I hope that all Australians can see that, this is not just rhetoric, but that we are really in what is sacred ground for Australians because here was the, here was the forging place of the Australian character where men gave their lives to express their commitment to one another, to their dependency upon each other, to the concept of mateship. It was a military defeat, but it was a great victory for the Australian spirit I believe.

JOURNALIST: This battlefield where we're standing now epitomises what you were talking about at Lone Pine doesn't it?

PM: This is, I think, the saddest part of a tragic campaign because here, as we know, four successive lines of 150 men went over the top here up to heavily fortified Turkish lines and they knew, when they went over the top what their fate was. The first line of 150 was mown down, second line went and the same thing. Questions were raised about whether the third or fourth line were going, but they went and each man involved knew what awaited him. As Peter was saying, they took their wedding rings off and hung them on the nails in the trenches and left their messages behind because they knew that they were going to almost certain death. Out of the 600 that went across, as I recall, something only like 50 to 60 of them emerged not either killed or wounded and to no avail.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, can you talk to us about how the Thatcher talks went?

PM: No, we covered the globe really. Very interested to share her thinking and her meeting with George Bush about the situation in Eastern Europe, the pressures upon the Soviet Union, particularly in regard to the Baltic States. I don't want to go to the, the details, but I was very pleased to hear what she had to say and there was congruence of thinking as far as we were concerned on that issue.

JOURNALIST: What about South Africa ...

PM: Yes, we did talk about that and we agreed that the changes that were, had been made by President de Klerk were significant, but more had to be done and we had a serious discussion about that.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, was Gallipoli a wasted exercise that Australia ... better off without it?

PM: Well countries would always, in a sense, be better off without war and the death that goes with war. But given the fact that we were at war, the decision had been taken to have the Dardanelles campaign, a decision as so often in those early days, was made not within Australia but in England. Given that that decision was taken and that Australian troops were committed to it, it was a campaign that from the beginning had no chance of victory. Very interesting if you read the history. I've had access through a number of articles I've read to the minutes of the imperial war cabinet, it's quite clear that Kitchener believed that it was a futile exercise. He was against it from the beginning and he said that if it were to be undertaken you would need at least 200,000 troops and of course all that they were given was 70,000, so it was mission impossible, in that sense, from the

beginning. And you must remember that the furthest point of entry into the Peninsula was made on the first day, they never got further than they did on the first day. It was an heroic containment exercise with no chance of achieving the objective. Now within that rather hopeless strategic framework it was nevertheless a glorious chapter in Australia's nationhood because, as I've said, if you read the, what was written at the time by the men themselves, and they were prolific writers, fascinating to see how much they did write and they themselves said that no longer were they just West Australians or Queenslanders, they regarded this exercise as the making of Australia and the making of Australians. And we, we pride ourselves on the concept of mateship in Australia and there is no doubt that here in Gallipoli where eight and a half thousand Australians laid down their lives, the concept of mateship was transfigured from just a concept into a flesh and blood reality. Now how do you measure those things? You can't say those things are all waste. Waste of life was shocking but given the inevitability of the exercise in which they were engaged, great, great things came out of it for our country I believe.

JOURNALIST: Is there any one moment or incident in the day that will stand out in your memory do you think?

PM: There are many. I think perhaps in a sense the most moving was seeing those two old veterans, the Turkish veteran, I think, was 102 I think he was the one I was told was 102 years of age and old Jack the man who has been kissing Hazel around Australia, in Perth, in Sydney and wherever he could in Turkey, he was there and here were these two old enemies exchanging uniforms, embracing one another. As I say to see the enemies of yesterday become the comrades of today that was a very moving experience. But in another sense I find it difficult to have a more meaning experience to be here and to have General Peterson going over with me the events of the Necks. As I said, I think here we are standing on what was really the most tragic part of a tragic campaign, those 600 young Australians had no chance and they knew they had no chance but over they went.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, 75 ago ... maybe think about where we would be in another seventy five years ... a Republican system?

PM: Should we what?

JOURNALIST: Should we look toward a Republic ...?

PM: Those thoughts didn't come into my mind. The one thing that I am certain of is that we should be the masters of our own destiny. We went through two world wars in which for too many important parts of those two world wars we were the masters of our own destiny. But now we must realise that while we have friends and allies

we must both develop the capacity to defend ourselves but also make sure that in the conduct of our affairs that we are the masters of our own destiny, that where we commit ourselves that it's by our own decision and not by the decision of others.

JOURNALIST: We have this remarkable relationship between Australia and Turkey, Prime Minister, I imagine you would like to see the same sort of relationship between Australia and Japan?

PM: Well the relationship between Australia and Japan doesn't come as easily now because the time of conflict is closer, but it is very important that we do as far as we can put those events behind us too because we live in a world now in 1990, 45 years after the end of the Second World War which is a world unrecognisably different from that of the end of the Second World War and the future of Australia is very much a future bound up with Asia and is a very important part of that future. And while we will never forget the tragedy of war and the involvement of the Japanese in that war, what is certain, as we can be of anything, is that the future of our children and their children is going to be very much determined by the quality of our relationship with Asia in general, and to an extent with Japan in particular, so we must learn how to work with them and live with them as friends and not as enemies.

JOURNALIST: Another question on South Africa, Prime Minister. Do you expect that sanctions will be eased at the forthcoming Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting?

PM: No I think that what will happen at that May meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers on South Africa meeting is that they will undertake the most up to date review of what is happening in South Africa and they will firstly welcome the changes that have been made but they will, I believe, be wanting to see further changes. You've got to remember that the four pillars of apartheid, the four legislative pillars of apartheid could variate the Population Act, the Land Act the Separate Amenities Act, those four pillars of apartheid are still in place. Now I was one of the first to recognise and to welcome the significance of the changes that have been signalled by President de Klerk but he has got to go further and it was rather disappointing the other day where he seemed to go so far in terms of talking about one vote one value but then, at the end, had this phrase which said we will never allow majority rule. Now that was something which didn't sit with what he had said before or with what the world requires of South Africa so we must put the pressures upon de Klerk, make him recognise that he has his own difficulties in South Africa. He has his extremists on the right that he has to deal with, so we have to walk this difficult line of recognising the significance of the changes that he has made but also demanding that those changes must lead inevitably and logically to the position of one person,

one vote, one value in which it will be possible for the black majority to rule. But at the same time as we're working for that we must be impressing upon our black African friends that it is in their interests and in the interest of South Africa and in the interest of the region and in the interest of the world that, as we move to the possibility of black majority rules, that they should recognise the contribution that white South Africans can make to the future of a free South Africa and that is going to require not prejudice and rhetoric but hard work.

JOURNALIST: Are you still at odds though with Margaret Thatcher on the issue of sanctions.

PM: Oh Mrs Thatcher made it quite clear really that she would prefer to see either no sanctions or limited sanctions and she would be wanting to lift them, those that are there, faster than others. But we are at one at wanting to see a democratic, racially tolerant South Africa and we will differ on the means and the pace on getting there but the Commonwealth as a whole I think will have the view that I've just expressed.