



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, TEMPLE OF LITERATURE, HANOI, SUNDAY, 10 APRIL 1984**

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J: Prime Minister, how does it feel to be the first Australian Prime Minister to come to Hanoi?

PM: One feels the obvious sense of occasion and history of it and it is at an important time in the history of Australia and Vietnam, particularly in Vietnam's development. I feel the poignancy of coming here, the first Australian Prime Minister in God knows how long and to see what's happening here and to be relevant to Vietnam's development.

J: What do you think you will achieve out of this visit to Hanoi Mr Keating?

PM: I think we will get a chance to understand what aspirations the Government of Vietnam has for the country; how it is proceeding with its development; its view of Australia's role here, the possibilities of Australia playing an even larger role in the development of Vietnam and also the view of the Government of Vietnam's role in the region and the chance for us, me in this case, to talk to the Government about how we see the region developing and what role we think we should be playing in it.

J: Is it your anticipation that there will be a meeting with the General Secretary Do Muoi?

PM: I think we have one scheduled.

J: Prime Minister, people like Tim Fischer are saying that you should alter your schedule to have some sort of commemorative service for the Vietnam veterans.

PM: I don't discriminate in Australia's commemoration of our war dead, that is why in Kanchanaburi at the appropriate time I mentioned those Australians who died in Vietnam, but when we enquired of our Embassy what particular focus or point that one might attend or visit, they said that there wasn't any obvious place because Australia took its war dead home, there is no cemetery here. So, I can only repeat what I said when our Vietnam veterans were appropriately honoured in Canberra a year or so ago - that they died with the same faith in Australia and the same belief in our values as every other service person did in other theatres of war. But

again, this in Hanoi and really in the places I am visiting there is no natural opportunity as there was in Thailand.

J: Do you accept that the Vietnamese might feel that the kinds of acts that were perpetrated against them were in some way equivalent to the kinds of things that were done by the Japanese to Australian soldiers in World War II?

PM: That is for them to know really, but for us to discern. I don't know whether they feel that or whether they want to put the war behind them. We are here to help them to develop their country as best we can and to put that history behind us.

J: Do you have anything to say to the Vietnamese leadership about Australia's role in the war here?

PM: Not particularly. I don't think they are looking for any acknowledgment by me of our role here. I saw Prime Minister Kiet in Australia, he made no such references there and I don't see there is any particular point to make them now.

J: I have only one question, Australia is now paying much attention to Asia. Do you bring any message from Australian businessmen to Vietnam this time?

PM: We see Vietnam having a great opportunity in the countries of Asia to grow and develop itself and Australia believes it can make a contribution, it can make a difference in all sorts of ways - in our aid program, in education, in social policies and in commerce and we will be represented in this country on a very broad basis.

J: Would you like some reciprocal gains like increased aviation rights?

PM: Not at this stage. I am not here in a sense in a bartering role, it is a general discussion about where our economies are going.

J: Prime Minister, there seems to be large numbers of foreign delegations passing through Vietnam at the moment, can Australia realistically lay claim to a special relationship here?

PM: There are very few special relationships in the world anywhere. You have got to earn your freight, each country has to do that with the other. We were amongst the first to give aid to Vietnam after the Cambodian Accords were signed. When it most needed support, I think, we were the first to give it and we are still giving it and we can give a lot more and make a greater contribution than we have already been permitted to make. Thank you.

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