



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP CIVIC RECEPTION, NOYERS-BOCAGE, NORMANDY, FRANCE MONDAY 6 JUNE, 1994

Distinguished guests, citizens of Noyers-Bocage and veterans of the second world war, from Australia.

I think we Australians feel proud to be among you and I'm delighted that so many of us could be with you today. As I was moving around the crowd - of course, the faces all looked the same - I didn't know who was Australian and who was French. And, I think it is nice for the veterans to come back to meet the community that they defended when they could never have met them, like this, at the time. Because, it has to be real... one doesn't fight for something and die for something which is ephemeral or imaginary and that which is real is, of course, the kinship between Australia and France. So, for the families who lost their sons - and daughters, in some cases - in this part of the world, to hear the expression of heartfelt thanks from President Mitterrand today is, I think, a very heartfelt, confident and reassuring thing.

When you see the village pictures at the front door you see how much destruction there was here and how vicious and evil the Nazis were... and entrenched and how hard they were to remove. But, the French understand liberty and they understand democracy, as we Australians do; true democracy, deep democracy. And, that is why we could never live, any of us, under the tyranny of fascists like Hitler. So, these are lessons that we all have learned expensively, some more expensively than others. This all happened the year I was born. Fifty years later I want to remember and I want all Australians to remember. And, Mr Mayor, we are in your debt when your citizens remember, too.

So, let's agree that there is a great friendship between Australians and the people of France. Indeed, between the people of France and all the people who fought here. Let us agree that there is a kinship which extends across countries, across borders and across cultures. So, today, we again celebrate our freedom and our friendship and faith in one another. And thank you for being such gracious hosts to us, thank you for coming in such numbers to see

my countrymen. We're delighted to be among you, we thank you, Mr Mayor, for the privilege extended to us and hope that D-Day will never be forgotten.

Mr Mayor, I have a picture for you of an Australian flier shot down here. Pilot Officer Mason who was reburied, as I said, in 1992. And, so in 20 or 30 or 40 years from now someone will look at the picture and understand what it was all about.

Thank you very much, indeed.

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