



PRIME MINISTER



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ELECTORATE TALK

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is a grave threat to the maintenance of world peace.

Not only has the invasion presented a sharp challenge to the United States, but it has had a profoundly destabilising effect extending far beyond Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours.

It is important that we all have a clear perception of the implications of Soviet actions in Afghanistan.

Large Soviet forces have invaded a small, non-aligned, independent country.

The action taken against Afghanistan is similar to that taken against Hungary and Czechoslovakia in earlier years. On this occasion, however, the Soviet Union has moved outside the Iron Curtain bloc - accepted since the War as the Soviet sphere of influence.

We reject totally the Soviet claim that they were invited into Afghanistan by the former government in order to protect that country from external threat.

It is a spurious claim.

The man who was a pro-Soviet leader of Afghanistan before the invasion was killed after Soviet forces had control of the capital city of Kabul.

The new 'leader' of Afghanistan was brought into the country by Soviet officials several days after Soviet control was established.

He and his so-called 'government' are clearly Soviet puppets.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan threatens world peace because of the strategic importance and volatility of the area.

The bordering nations of Iran and Pakistan - already not without their problems - have reason to fear for their security.

The next Soviet objective could well be designed to give it access to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

With that access, the Soviet Union could assert control over much of the world's oil supplies and a new dominance in the Indian Ocean.

Who can doubt that that is their next objective?

The consequences of any such Soviet action would be intolerable for the entire world.

It would threaten the security of all countries and fundamentally alter the strategic balance to the disadvantage of the United States and its friends, including Australia.

That is why we have decided that Australia must respond strongly and give a lead to others in our own area.

We need to make it clear that Soviet action in Afghanistan represents a serious threat to stability and peace and that the international community should not allow any extension or repetition of such behaviour without the Soviet Union paying a high price.

It must also be understood that the Soviet Union has lent its support to other destabilising action as well.

There can be no doubt that Vietnam would not have moved into Kampuchea without Soviet support.

The Soviet Union sees Vietnam as promoting Soviet interests in South East Asia and thus it supports the continuing presence of Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea.

In Southern Africa, the Soviet Union has long encouraged the deepening and prolongation of instability and war.

And now when peace is so near at hand in Rhodesia, as the country moves towards legal independence and genuine majority rule, it is clear that the Soviet Union does not find events there to its liking.

When the Soviet Ambassador called on me at "Nareen" last week, he could not or would not answer questions as to why the Soviet Union was not supporting the arrangements, agreed to by all parties, which hold out the best hope of movement towards peace in Southern Africa for more than a decade.

Despite the hopes of former years, Soviet behaviour internationally is clearly unacceptable and the Government has acted to demonstrate its concern and its opposition.

We have offered to consult with the United States concerning an increased Australian contribution to security in the Indian Ocean area.

We have supported United States action on wheat sales, by agreeing not to replace the 17 million tonnes of grain which the US had intended to sell to the USSR during 1979/80 although our normal sales to the Soviet Union will continue.

We have withdrawn approvals for two fishing projects off the Western Australian and Tasmanian coasts.

We are reviewing Soviet shipping operations in Australia, and no further approvals will be granted for Soviet research vessels to visit our ports.

Scientific collaboration with the Soviet Union is suspended as are all official talks and visits and no new programmes under the Cultural Programme will be entered into.

President Carter's announcement last weekend of the US reaction to the Soviet invasion sought the co-operation of other nations in imposing sanctions on the Soviet Union.

Australia's response has been prompt.

In fact we have been one of the first Western nations to take such firm action.

It was important for us to act to let the United States know that it is not alone in the major burdens and obligation it has as chief defender of the faith of the free world.

Our action has already been warmly received. President Carter has written to me thanking Australia for our steadfast support and assistance.

It was, the President said, an invaluable part of the joint effort of the Western Alliance in this most difficult situation.

We realise that the weight that Australia - a nation of 14 million - can throw into the scales is limited.

But it is of vital importance that we do all we can to support the United States, Britain and Canada - indeed all nations that respect the principles of international law - in opposition to the Soviet action in Afghanistan.

I am delighted to see that the Canadian Prime Minister announced yesterday a range of measures against the Soviet Union which are broadly parallel to those which we have taken.

It may well be that the Soviet troops will stay in Afghanistan despite what the United States and other like-minded countries do.

But collectively we need to make the price of their action so high that it will never again be repeated.