

Question

Prime Minister will you stop an Olympic Games teams going from Australia?

Prime Minister

I have said that I do not think that anyone in this country or any other will be withholding passports from athletes. But certainly we are seeking to persuade, and we will seek to persuade as hard as we can in relation to that. I have had a good deal to say about the Olympic Games over the last day or two in response to questions and I do not really want to add to it. But what I would like to do is to remind everyone that the issue is not the Olympic Games, the issue is the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, a non-aligned country and one that had every right to believe that it would be allowed to work out its own future in its own way, making mistakes if it was going to. But that would have been their business. It had every right to believe that it would not be invaded by a large and overwhelmingly powerful neighbour. Now if the independence of countries is to be respected, we have to try and establish the circumstances where this kind of event cannot occur again. I have been encouraged by what I have seen in the United States where there is a sense of determination and a sense of unity of a kind which many people told me they had not seen since 1945. And I was also encouraged by what I found in Europe about the ultimate strength of the Atlantic Alliance and the determination that what has happened in Afghanistan will not be repeated. That determination was common to all the people I spoke to.

Question

Prime Minister, with respect on the Olympic Games again; you didn't answer my question.

Prime Minister

No look at the moment there are discussions and people can become too preoccupied with an issue that is important and I have spoken strongly about it and if it is necessary will repeat what I have said. But I have also said that nobody is in the business that I know of, certainly not the United Kingdom, not Australia, not New Zealand, of withholding passports. Now there are questions of negotiations and discussions that are going on in relation to that and it is not necessary to say more about that at the moment. And it is easy, and I can understand it, because everyone has got a sympathy. Everyone would have preferred to have the circumstances in which the Games could go ahead as Games and not a political event and be a significant sporting success. But the Soviets have politicised the Games - they have said so in their own terms and I have used the quotes on more than one occasion and you will be by now familiar with them. But they say the awarding of the Games to Moscow is a mark of support for their foreign policy and that kind of statement, which has been propagated very widely in the Soviet Union, I would believe makes it difficult for national olympic committees and for individual athletes. But again let us not be diverted into thinking that a discussion about what happened to the Olympic Games is the essence of the issue before the international community at the present time. It is not. The Soviet invasion of

Afghanistan is the issue. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is the issue and the increased tensions and dangers that come as a result of that.

Question

Surely we have got to do more than to show our displeasure at the Soviet action?

Prime Minister

Well we have done a great deal more.

Question

(inaud)

Prime Minister

Well let us see what happens. I believe that we are in for a long haul. My colleague, Andrew Peacock said that it's not a return to the Cold War and it is not. But it is not detente either. I do not know who will be coining the phrase or the words that will depict the new period that the world is entering. But it will be a period for some time of increased tension and increased difficulty and that will impose increased costs on nations that are determined to preserve their national independence, the integrity and safety of their own people. And that ultimately is the most important and vital obligation on any government and especially on a democratic government.

Question

Will this mean defence cuts?

Prime Minister

Well it certainly does not mean defence cuts. I would have thought and I have made it quite plain. I have recalled for reports. The Defence Department and the Minister will be putting matters to us and there are increased obligations that we have already accepted in relation to the Indian Ocean. It is my belief that we will need to be on a higher plateau in general defence capacity and preparedness. But the Government has finally to determine precisely what should be done.

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