

FOR PRESS:

PM No. 123/1970

PM'S MESSAGE TO UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton, tonight sent the following message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations :-

"The Australian Government fully understands the concern of the Government of Israel at the circumstances in which death sentences were recently passed on two Soviet citizens of the Jewish Race.

It is alleged that an attempt was to be made to hi-jack an aeroplane and no-one would wish to condone such an offence.

But it is disquieting that the trial itself was held in camera and was not open to observers so that world opinion could judge of its fairness and of the facts of the case.

It is also disquieting to note that if people of the Jewish Race were permitted freely to emigrate from the Soviet, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations, this incident would never have occurred.

I note from press reports that the International Commission of Jurists has expressed concern over the severity of the sentences and the lack of official information regarding the trial.

There is a clear need for all the facts of the case to be established for the world to see and we hope that this will be recognised by the authorities of the Soviet Union and that such severe punishment of what appears to have been an attempt at escape will not proceed."

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CANBERRA  
27 December 1970