



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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AFGHANISTAN

The Soviet Ambassador today called on the Prime Minister at Nareen. He did so on instructions from his Government.

The main purpose of the Ambassador's call was to give an official explanation of the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan. The Ambassador said there had been an appeal to his Government for help, and that help had been granted.

The Prime Minister told the Ambassador that his explanation was noted, but that it was not acceptable; that there were no valid grounds for Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan; and that while the previous Afghanistan Government had been a brutal one, whatever might have occurred in Afghanistan during the last two years did not justify or provide any reason to condone the Soviet invasion.

The Prime Minister drew attention to the fact that the Soviet military action in Afghanistan was similar to that taken by the Soviet Union in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. What they have done in Afghanistan should be condemned by freedom-loving people around the world.

The Australian Government and people could not accept that there should be military interference by one power in the affairs of a neighbouring state. It was morally wrong and totally contrary to the accepted norms of international society. In this particular case it could only have a destabilising effect on an area which already had more than its fair share of problems.

The Prime Minister said that Soviet actions in Afghanistan stood in marked contrast to the restraint shown by the United States in Iran. He called on the Soviet Union, as a responsible member of the international community, to condemn the taking of hostages. The Soviet Union should exert its undoubted influence in achieving a return to normal relationships.

The Prime Minister said that Australia had only yesterday made its position on the Iranian situation very plain in the Security Council Debate. The opportunity would be there for the Soviet Union to do likewise.

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