

PRIME MINISTER AND RICHARD ANDREWS
PUBLIC AFFAIRS RADIO AUSTRALIA

P.M.: THE INTERVENTION IS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED - IT'S QUITE PLAIN THAT THE FORMER LEADER WHO IS PRO-SOVIET WAS ACTING IN A WAY THAT WAS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL. AND THE SOVIETS, AND THEIR FRIENDS WANTED TO REPLACE HIM WITH ANOTHER PRO-SOVIET LEADER IN AFGHANISTAN. AND TO MAKE SURE THAT THAT STRATEGY WAS GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL, RUSSIAN TROOPS WERE NEEDED. IT'S NO WONDER THAT THE COUP OF A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO HAS CAUSED DISSENT, THAT THERE IS FIGHTING WITHIN THE COUNTRY, BECAUSE AS WE'RE ADVISED THE REGIME THAT WAS DEPOSED A DAY OR TWO AGO, WAS A PARTICULARLY BRUTAL ONE. AND NOT ONE THAT WAS LIKELY TO WIN ANY LASTING SYMPATHY FOR THE COMMUNIST CAUSE. IF COMMUNISM WAS TO PREVAIL, IF THE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE WAS TO PREVAIL, IT WAS NECESSARY TO CHANGE LEADERS.

ANDREWS: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY OF THE SOVIET ACTION?

P.M.: WELL IT'S OBVIOUSLY GOING TO LEAD TO A GREATER AREA OF UNCERTAINTY. IT'S BORDERING AN AREA THAT'S ALREADY A VERY SENSITIVE ONE, THERE'S NO NEED TO TALK ABOUT PAKISTAN'S CONCERNS, BUT THEY WILL ONLY BE HEIGHTENED. AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF COURSE, THERE'S THE GRIEVOUS AND VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEM OF IRAN. NOW WITH RUSSIA PLAYING AN IMPERIAL GAME, AS SHE IS IN AFGHANISTAN, IT'S JUST GOING TO MAKE THE TENSIONS WORSE AND ADD TO INSTABILITY IN THE REGION.

ANDREWS: IF YOU SAY THAT RUSSIA IS PLAYING AN IMPERIAL GAME, DO YOU SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER SOVIET EXPANSION IN THE REGION?

P.M.: I HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF THE EARLIER CZARS HAS ALTERED.... IMPERIAL RUSSIA ALWAYS WANTED TO EXPAND, AND UNDER THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP WITH A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY THAT BASIC SOVIET DESIGN SEEMS NOT TO HAVE ALTERED. I'VE GOT NO DOUBT THAT RUSSIA WOULD SEEK TO EXTEND HER INFLUENCE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, BY ONE MEANS OR ANOTHER. AND IF THAT MEANS EXPLOITING UNSETTLED CONDITIONS, THEN THEY'LL CERTAINLY DO THAT. I ASKED THE AMBASSADOR YESTERDAY WHAT HIS POSITION WAS IN RHODESIA, IN ZIMBABWE. I SAID: "HERE SURELY YOU HAVE A SITUATION WHERE ALL PARTIES ARE IN AGREEMENT - THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, FRONTLINE STATES, BRITAIN, BISHOP MUZORERA, EVERYONE - NOW ISN'T THAT SOMETHING THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT, AND SUPPORT WHOLE-HEARTEDLY?" ALL THE AMBASSADOR COULD DO WAS TO SAY THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS ON THAT ISSUE, THAT PART OF THE AGREEMENT..THE FIGHTING WAS GOING TO CONTINUE, THERE WOULD BE A GREATER SUPPLY OF RUSSIAN ARMS, GREATER INCURSION OF CUBANS AND OF EAST GERMANS WHICH, YOU KNOW WOULD HOLD OUT THE PROSPECT AND THE POSSIBILITY, I SUPPOSE, IN THE SOVIET MINDS OF THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA.

ANDREWS: WHAT WAS THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S REACTION TO YOUR CRITICISMS OF HIS COUNTRY'S ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN?

P.M.: I THINK IT WAS ACCEPTED, I THINK IT WAS YOU KNOW. THE EXPLANATION THEIR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN WAS SO WEAK, THAT HE MUST HAVE EXPECTED A REACTION. AND YOU KNOW I'VE SAID ON MANY OCCASIONS THAT I REALLY DO BELIEVE THAT MIDDLE RANKING POWERS, SUCH AS AUSTRALIA, HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SPEAK THEIR MIND ON MATTERS OF THIS KIND. BECAUSE IF THEY DON'T, MATTERS JUST GO BY DEFAULT. WE ARE AN INDEPENDENT NATION AND THAT MEANS THAT THERE'S A VIEW THAT'S HELD STRONGLY AND WE WANT TO EXPRESS IT.

ANDREWS: IS THE LATEST SOVIET ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN GOING TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, TOWARDS MOSCOW?

P.M.: I DON'T THINK IT ALTERS THAT AT ALL. IN PART OF THE CONVERSATION, I SAID THAT MY WISH WAS TO PROMOTE BETTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND AUSTRALIA. OVER THE LAST YEAR OR TWO, VARIOUS EVENTS HAD OCCURRED WHICH INTERRUPTED THAT RELATIONSHIP - (YOU'LL REMEMBER THE BUGGING DEVICES, DISCOVERED IN OUR EMBASSY IN MOSCOW) ... AND THAT VARIOUS MATTERS IN NEGOTIATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION WERE THEN, YOU KNOW, PUT ON ICE. BUT I'VE POINTED OUT ON MANY OCCASIONS THAT THE WAY TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP IS TO DO IT BY MEANS OF TRADE OR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND NOT TO CONCENTRATE ON THE STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL MATTERS WHERE I'M QUITE CERTAIN THAT WE'VE GOT DIFFERENCES WHICH ARE VERY DEEP. BUT THERE ARE OTHER ASPECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND THERE IS MUCH IN THE TRADE RELATIONSHIP THAT COULD BE IMPROVED AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP THAT COULD BE IMPROVED. WE HAD MADE OUR OFFICIALS AVAILABLE TO TRY AND WORK OUT HARD-HEADED ARRANGEMENTS THAT WOULD ENABLE THAT TO TAKE PLACE. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY HAVEN'T MADE A GREAT DEAL OF PROGRESS.

R.A.: DOES THE FACT THAT AUSTRALIA'S JOINED CHINA IN CONDEMNING THE SOVIET ACTION SIGNIFY SOME KIND OF ANTI-MOSCOW ALIGNMENT?

P.M.: NO, I DON'T THINK SO, WE JUDGE EVENTS AS WE SEE THEM AND THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I POINTED OUT TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR. IN MANY TERMS WE'RE AN ALIGNED POWER, BUT THAT DOESN'T STOP US TAKING A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT VIEW, A VIEW THAT MIGHT BE IN ADVANCE OR DIFFERENT TO THE UNITED STATES OR BRITAIN. THERE WAS A TIME DURING OUR WINTER MONTHS, WHEN AUSTRALIA COULD HAVE BEEN TAKING QUITE A DIFFERENT VIEW FROM BRITAIN IN RELATION TO RHODESIA. IN THE END WE WERE ALL TAKING THE SAME VIEW BUT I THINK THAT WAS IN LARGE MEASURE DUE TO AUSTRALIA'S ADVOCACY BEING PREPARED TO STATE A POSITION WHICH AUSTRALIA BELIEVED TO BE RIGHT, WHICH I BELIEVED TO BE RIGHT. AND THEN OTHERS WERE PERSUADED TO THAT COURSE. BUT YOU KNOW IF THEY HADN'T BEEN PERSUADED TO THAT COURSE, IT OBVIOUSLY RAN THE RISK OF AUSTRALIA BEING AT ODDS WITH, IN A SENSE OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS.

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R.A.: LOOKING GENERALLY AT THE REGION, HOW DO YOU SEE THE SOVIET ACTION IN TERMS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE?

P.M.: I SEE EVENTS THERE AND EVENTS IN IRAN AS... MAKING A ZONE OF PEACE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. I ALSO SEE THEIR ACTIVITIES IN VIETNAM AS MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THAT TO BE ACHIEVED. WHILE THE SOVIET UNION HAS NOT YET ESTABLISHED MAJOR USE OF BASES, MILITARY BASES IN VIETNAM, THERE IS AN OCCASIONAL USE WHICH IS INCREASING. AND I WOULD EXPECT THEM TO TAKE MATTERS, STEP BY STEP, THAT OBVIOUSLY ENHANCES THEIR STRATEGIC POSITION. AND QUITE PLAINLY VIETNAM WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO UNDERTAKE THE INVASION OF KAMPUCHEA WITHOUT RUSSIAN MORAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT - MATERIAL SUPPORT. AND THERE IS A SOVIET VIETNAMESE TREATY WITH DEFENCE CLAUSES, AS WE KNOW, SO ALL OF THESE THINGS HAVE, OVER THE LAST YEAR OR TWO, TENDED TO BE DISTURBING IN A PART OF THE WORLD THAT AFFECTS US, THAT WE'RE VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN. BUT ON THE BRIGHTER SIDE, THE SOLIDARITY AND STRENGTH OF ASEAN IS VERY MUCH TO BE COMMENDED AND THAT'S AN ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN NATIONS WHICH IS REALLY CONTRIBUTING VERY GREATLY TO STABILITY AND PEACE IN THE AREA. AND A CARDINAL PLANK OF THEIR POLICY OF COURSE IS THAT THERE SHOULDN'T BE INTERFERENCE BY ANY OF THE GREAT POWERS, AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT AUSTRALIA WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTS.

R.A.: O.K. WELL THANKS VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. I PROMISED OWEN LLOYD THAT I WOULDN'T KEEP YOU FOR MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES SEEING THAT IT WAS A PUBLIC HOLIDAY.