

Question

Sir on what basis was yesterday's Cabinet decision taken?

Prime Minister

Well which one do you mean? There were many decisions yesterday, which part of it?

Question

Not to impose trade sanctions against the USSR.

Prime Minister

Well we do have trade sanctions and there was a particular aspect of yesterday's decision referred to. I think you need to remember that scientific and cultural exchanges have ceased, that there are sanctions in relation to the grains, that fisheries arrangements have been cancelled. Some of those obviously involve considerable costs in different ways. Now one of the things that I sought to do overseas and there were senior officials from the Trade Department with me, which enabled them to have consultations in the United States and in the United Kingdom about the kind of sanctions and embargoes that other countries, specifically the United States and the United Kingdom, believe necessary in the present circumstances. There is a list of high technology items called a 'Cocom' list in the jargon which broadly the European countries adhered to and also Britain and the United States. Now in our discussions we found quite plainly that broadly in relation to commodities, there are not on the list. They are not embargoed by others. There is no point in Australia maintaining an embargo or a sanction which is not supported by other significant trading nations. Because that would then be placing the cost on our people and no cost at all on the Soviet Union.

Question

Well our major dollar earning commodities aren't under a sanction. Doesn't that contradict the situation...Olympic boycott.

Prime Minister

No not at all. No because if you want to talk about the Olympic boycott the important point is, is that this is very evident to the Soviet people. Trade sanctions can be hidden, especially if they can buy their commodities somewhere else. But it is the Soviet Union that has said that the awarding of the Olympic Games to Moscow in 1980 is a mark of support, a mark indicating the correctness of the Soviet Union's foreign policy. Now in those terms the Soviet Union is saying that it is a great social and political event, not a sporting event. The Soviet Union therefore is claiming a credit because the Games are in Moscow, which they certainly do not deserve in the face of their invasion of Afghanistan. If all our athletes and athletes in the United States and Britain and Europe go to Moscow, it is not what those athletes say which is going to be important, it is what the Soviet Union will say to their own people, because of their presence. And they will say that

that because of their presence those athletes are repudiating the leadership of the West and supporting the activities, which includes the foreign policy activities of the Soviet Union. Now in the face of Afghanistan, and assuming that their forces are still in Afghanistan, I really do not see how people can allow themselves to be put in that position.

Question

Well do you think Australia's athletes individually will be prepared to bear the brunt of Australia's protest by not going...

Prime Minister

It is not the brunt of. Scientific and cultural exchanges have ceased. That is very important to scientists. It is very important for artists. It is just as important as the Olympic Games are for athletes. But it is the Olympic Games which happens once in four years, the greatest sporting event in the world - meant to be non-political. But let me put it again in another way. How many Olympic Committees, how many athletes would have gone to Berlin in 1936 if they had known the use to which their presence was going to be put by Nazi Germany in 1936. These are the sorts of questions that need to be asked. How importantly does the average person regard the invasion of Afghanistan? If it was an invasion closer to us, of Indonesia, of Papua New Guinea, would there then be any doubt? Does that say that an Afghan life is less important than another life? How many people have to be killed? How many tens of thousands of Soviet military people have to be invading in a country before it is of sufficient importance for people to say universally, the Olympic Charter has been defied. The objective of the Olympic ideal has been despoiled by the host nation.

Question

The International Olympic Committee has rejected that idea.

Prime Minister

I know they have. And I believe they are placing sport before the freedom and independence of peoples. And that is not the kind of priority that governments - we have not got the licence to have that kind of priority.

Question

You've said you won't take the passports of Australian athletes. Will you be embarrassed if they decide to go individually?

Prime Minister

Well our own Olympic Committee has to make a decision finally. As to other Olympic Committees, I will be in discussions with them. Ellicott will be. And we will have to see what comes out of that. But we have said basically that we will be putting our views and persuading as strongly as we possibly can. But we do not want to use the tactics of the Soviet Union and deny our citizens passports. That would be using Soviet tactics to achieve our objectives. Obviously under present circumstances if those troops are in Afghanistan, the Australian Government will be vastly disappointed if our Olympic Committee or athletes go to Moscow. We certainly would not do

Prime Minister (continued)

anything to assist them to go to Moscow. But the arbitrary Soviet type measures would not be taken. It is designed to keep them away.

Question

Do you believe there is any possibility of a Soviet withdrawal by February 20?

Prime Minister

Not really no. They are starting to speak of withdrawal. And the very fact that they are starting to speak of withdrawal indicates that the worldwide condemnation of what they have done is starting to bite. And that is all the more reason to maintain the strength of that combination and not say because it happened so many weeks ago, because we are getting used to it, because there is not quite so much on the television screen, it is therefore less important. A life lost seven weeks ago remains just as important as it was seven weeks ago. And we ought not to allow ourselves to diminish its importance because we get used to the idea and because more lives have been lost and because the invasion continues.

Question

Do you believe continued opposition will be able to retrieve detente?

Prime Minister

I believe it is the only way ultimately of securing integrity and the peace of the world. Detente, whatever it meant, applied much more to Europe than in other parts of the world. Over the last decade the Soviet Union has pressed, either directly or indirectly through Cuban mercenaries in Africa. In South West Asia, as we have seen, it has always been their support for Vietnam that has given Vietnam the military strength to do what it did - to do what it has done. So all of history tells us that if only the democracies, if only independent minded nations will affirm their position and support their position early enough, then peace can and will be secured. But if they say this is not important, we don't have to worry about this, it doesn't require a reaction, they will get moved closer and closer to the ultimate danger. And as I understand it what President Carter is seeking to do, what major European leaders in France and Germany and the United Kingdom are seeking to do is to establish the circumstances in which the world is not moved to that ultimate danger - to prevent it, so that we can secure respect for the integrity and independence of people.

Question

Has your trip convinced you that Australia should adopt a stronger attitude to Soviet aggression than it has already?

Prime Minister

I think the attitudes that we have taken and the attitudes that we have expressed have been responsible. I think they are in accord with the kinds of measures that the United States and many countries of Europe have taken. We have made some adjustments in the

Prime Minister (continued)

commodities areas as a result of what we learned that other countries are doing or not doing. That was necessary. But by and large, what we have done to this point I think is responsible and I believe it is about right. Over the longer term when I make a statement to Parliament we will be announcing other measures of a long term kind in relation to aid to the South Pacific and increasing defence preparedness. Now these are long term matters. That will be with us, as I believe, not for a matter of weeks or months but for years.

Question

So were you disappointed that in certain areas France and West Germany adopted slightly less hawkish stands than you and President Carter?

Prime Minister

I do not think that they have. If you read that communique that was issued - and in reading communiques and looking at words, you have got to understand the historical perspective with which nations says things, the way in which they say them - and geography imposes its own differences, history imposes its own differences - but that joint communique between France and Germany was a very strongly worded communique indeed. It made it perfectly plain, as did President Carter's State of the Union Message, that if there was any further move by the Soviets, then obviously France and Germany stand as one with the United States. It also made it perfectly plain that all their commitments under the Western alliance would be met in the discharge of their own responsibilities. That document was a very severe warning to Moscow. (end of interview)

CHANNEL 7 MELBOURNE

Question

The IOC seems certain to go ahead with the Moscow Olympics. Can and will Australia modify her stand?

Prime Minister

The Australian Government has stated the view very strongly and we adhere to that view. Because we believe that the Soviet Union is not only defying principles on international behaviour. We also believe that the Soviet Union is defying the basic principles of the Olympic movement. It is the Soviet Union which has said that the holding of the Games in Moscow is a great social and political event. It is the Soviet Union that has said (and I am not taking your words) the awarding of the Games to Moscow is a mark of the correctness of their foreign policy. Against that background I think it places olympic committees and athletes in enormous difficulty, but it is not a question of what they say. When you look at what the Soviet media will be saying to their own people - they will be saying, because these people are here in Moscow, they are affirming support for our foreign policy and repudiating those terrible people in the West whether it is Europe, America or Australia. So in that sense the Soviet Union have politicised the Games very greatly.

Question

But if we go ahead and sell rutile on the basis that if we don't sell it to them somebody else will - doesn't the same argument apply to the Olympics?

Prime Minister

I think it needs to be understood that decisions we have made in cultural areas, scientific exchanges, in grains embargoes, in the ending of fisheries arrangements - these represent a very considerable degree of support for international sanctions where those sanctions are also getting support of other nations. There is, what's called in the jargon, a Cocon list, which is a European list of things that will not be traded with the Soviet Union. Now one of the things that I was doing is to establish close consultations especially with Britain and the United States in these particular matters. We would want to be basically supporting that general position. But there is no point, no point at all in Australia's taking a position in relation to other matters which are not going to be supported by the wider trading community. That would be an exercise in futility. But the Olympic Games against the background of the politicisation of the Games by the Soviet Union is a very obvious thing, it can not be hidden from the Soviet people. One of the newspaper columnists this morning referred to the fact that an earlier Olympic Committee had taken the Games away from Tokyo because of invasions in another place. How many troops have to be involved? How many people of a foreign country have to be killed by the host nation before it is inappropriate for that host nation still to be host.

If I could be hypothetical for a minute - if it was Indonesia that had been invaded or Papua New Guinea - I don't think there would be any doubt. But is there a qualitative difference between an invasion of Afghanistan and the invasion of a country closer to home? One has happened and the other has not and it is a hypothetical circumstance I know. But I do not think there is any qualitative difference. A life is a life whose ever it was. And one life is not really more important than another. But if it was an event closer to home, I do not think any one in this nation would want to go to Moscow.

Question

Fourteen nations boycotted the Melbourne Olympics over Hungary. Can you expect that many nations to boycott Moscow?

Prime Minister

Well let me only say that while I am not at all surprised at the decision of the International Olympic Committee, I found, not only in the United States but in the United Kingdom, but also in Europe, a much greater strength for the opposition to the Olympics than I think one might gain from reading the newspapers. There are certain things that have been said about France and Germany. But the German Foreign Minister has said in very plain terms - if we want American support over Berlin we are not going to be divided from the United States ultimately over matters such as the Olympic Games. Now that seems to me a pointer for an ultimate German position.

Question

Bluntly, do you expect as many as 14 nations to boycott.

Prime Minister

So far as nations are concerned there are upwards of about forty who have spoken in favour of boycott or movement of some of the sports. I would hope ultimately that many more than the 14 would boycott. Because these are matters of great significance. The invasion of a small non-aligned country which was offering no threat to anyone, is a really significant event and I really do not believe we should give the Soviets the triumph of having our people ignore that.

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