

EMBARGOED 6.00 PM

PRIME MINISTER

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ELECTORATE TALK

It is now three months since the Russian army rolled into Afghanistan.

That cold-blooded and brutal invasion drew universal condemnation.

Russia had stepped out from behind its iron curtain for the first time to use its forces against a sovereign non-aligned Third World country.

Today, the Soviet troops are still there.

The murder of Afghans continues.

Tragically, there is not a single sign that the Soviet leadership has paid any heed to the world's revulsion of its actions.

On the contrary, there are still upwards of 90,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan and some 30,000 to 40,000 more massed on the Soviet-Afghanistan border.

If anything, the Soviets are increasing their military occupation of Afghanistan.

In the past few weeks, Soviet forces have been heavily involved in suppressing resistance in the Kunar Valley near the Pakistan border.

My information is that this action has been particularly ruthless and brutal. All but a handful of the valley's population of 160,000 has been forced to flee.

This once fertile food bowl has been defoliated - its people have fled: those who remain are reported to be suffering injuries consistent with the use of napalm or phosphorous weapons.

What has the Soviet occupation meant to the people of Afghanistan?

For the Afghan people, the large scale repression, terrorism, murder and torture have now become their way of life - and the tyranny of violence has been imposed upon them.

There are already 600,000 refugees in the United Nations-controlled camps in Pakistan and elsewhere.

I am advised this figure is expected to reach one million, comparable to the exodus of Kampuchean refugees that so touched the world.

In one prison in Kabul, the commandant boasts that his aim is to reduce Afghanistan's population to around one million to achieve a "communist" society.

Purges of intellectual and religious leaders are continually taking place.

There are reports of Soviet-supervised torture - dating from 1978 - that include drownings in latrine pits, mass drowning, and the night-time burying alive of village male populations.

There are further reports in the central Afghan region of submission by starvation of village political and religious leaders.

In one incident on the outskirts of Kabul 150 people were burnt alive, and a further 150 buried alive.

These reports have been documented by an observer from the Paris-based International Human Rights Federation - a responsible organisation which operates independently of any government and is recognised by the Council of Europe.

On top of these atrocities come the reports in the world free press of:

- . the murder, on April 20, 1979, in the village of Kerala, of the entire male population of 1,200 men and boys over 7 years old;
- . the use of helicopter gun ships to put down peaceful protest rallies in Kabul with reported casualties of 800-1000 dead and 2,000 wounded.

That's the story of Afghanistan today.

Can that leave any doubt in anyone's mind as to why the world is so repulsed.

Yet there is a tendency to regard that continued occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet forces as a fact of life ... and to let it slip from the day-to-day consciousness.

Perhaps that is why there are some among us who now ask us to re-think our decision on the Olympic boycott.

As I have said all along, the issue before us is not the Olympic Games - the issue is, and always will be, the Soviet suppression of the Afghan people.

Are these horrific accounts of human tragedy and suffering not the real answer to those who doubt the wisdom of our course?

Let me remind you again of how the Russians view the Olympic Games. They claim it is as "universal recognition of the historical importance and correctness of the course of our country's foreign policy".

When you think about this whole question, ask yourself:

"Do you want the Australian flag raised in Moscow?"

"Do you want our national anthem played in Moscow?"

Should Australia pay homage to tyranny?

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