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# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

MONDAY 2 JUNE 1980

## SPEECH AT THE RECEPTION AT THE CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE

Occasions such as this are always enjoyable because they bring together friends and families with common interests and a deep sense of community involvement.

Functions such as this say much about your community and its values and provide a significant lead for what we try to achieve from community organisation.

Only recently, I had the privilege of opening the Yeshiva College at Bondi.

An occasion which brought to my mind the contribution made by the Jewish community to Australia.

At a time when there is a serious reappraisal of community, national and international values, the example of the Jewish community reminds us - and we sometimes need reminding - that the family is an irreplaceable source of affection, guidance, security and direction for young people.

At a time when we could be excused for thinking that, in many parts of the world, humanity is being stood on its head, I commend what is being done through this Synagogue as an instance of the values of humanity and learning that each of us must pursue in building a better community.

This Synagogue, established 65 years ago, is the soul and symbol of your community, reinforcing the values we must seek to enshrine in the national way of life in the decade ahead - persistence in the face of difficulty; dedication to self-improvement, and to personal and professional success; and, the achievement of all this, with a respectful sense of history and heritage.

This has been the text for the Jewish community down through the years.

Well may it be the text for our nation in the 80s.

The traditions which inform the Jewish community have been forged through thousands of years and countless struggles for independence in the pursuit of values and beliefs.

These struggles regrettably continue today.

Jewish people are still discriminated against in the Soviet Union, and their rights as a people are suppressed.

This only serves to highlight the increasing importance of Israel as a homeland; a dream achieved; a hope fulfilled.

It also emphasises the importance of countries like Australia where there is an acceptance and a welcome for all people especially those of Jewish faith who have done so much for Australia.

The contribution by the Jewish community, across a broad spectrum of life - music, the arts, literature, industry and public life - is widely acknowledged.

Many have left their marks in Australia's history of community service.

The contribution made by your efforts is important; as is your company amongst us as proud Australians.

Your role emphasises the acceptance and encouragement of diversity in the Australian way of life.

This is not a country where we expect everyone to be the same.

We believe we are a better, more tolerant and more mature nation because our people have come from many lands and from many different backgrounds.

And the Jewish community plays a proud part in the successes that come from our diversity.

For us all, the decade has opened in an atmosphere of international concern, of which the Middle East and South West Asia are the focal points.

The difficulties involving and surrounding the strength and survival of the State of Israel; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the illegal detention of American hostages in Iran; the threat that all this poses to oil supplies for industrialised countries; all these cast shadows of turmoil and unpredictability.

The minds of world leaders are centred upon these problems.

Our hope is that they will secure practical and peaceful solutions to these grave and threatening crises.

Against this background, the links between our nations have stood the test of time.

In 1948, Australia was one of the strong supporters of the creation of the State of Israel.

And we remain absolutely committed to its continuation within secure and recognised borders.

You are all aware that the Government has taken a most serious view of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

I have indicated in Parliament, and on other occasions, our difficulty in understanding how a country engaged in the invasion of another country and the suppression of its people can be regarded as a fit host to the Olympic Games.

Still, Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan in great numbers; brutalities continue.

Middle-ranking country that we are, it would be a betrayal of our international responsibilities and an abdication of our commitment to the international family, if we were to stand idly by and not make our position clear.

Many people, in calling for a boycott of the Games, have mentioned as a prime reason, quite apart from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the treatment of dissidents in the USSR.

What is just as intolerable as the invasion, is the fact that dissidents and others in the USSR who might seek to use the Games and the presence of tourists, athletes and the world's press as an opportunity to voice their protests, have already been dispersed to other parts of the Soviet Union.

They will not be heard.

They will not be allowed to embarrass the Soviet authorities.

I am particularly pleased to learn of your support for the Government's stand on this question.

It is important that we do not allow our relative remoteness over 35 years from major international disturbances to breed complacency in our attitudes.

There are those, no doubt who would argue that Afghanistan is a long way away; that grave and all as the problem is, it has limited relevance for us.

Such a view suggests that while the freedom of others can be challenged, we can enjoy, for all time, an immunity from challenge.

This is to suggest that a free society can survive without effort, without will, without commitment.

This view must be given no currency.

It is a view taken by those with so little understanding of the incomparable benefits and virtues of democracy that they are able to allow them to be chipped away.

People with so little understanding of the future that the present does not matter that much.

People who are luke-warm and uncommitted to idealism and Liberalism; uncritical of socialism or communism.

People who ask apologetically - what's in a name.

People with so little to believe in that they have nothing to defend.

When an appreciation of the virtues of a way of life is lost, there is no will for its defence.

Is it not time to understand that what we devalue today, we may lose tomorrow.

Is it not time to ask whether or not we have underrated the precious gift of continuing peace; whether or not we have been spoilt by economic growth; whether or not we have been in receipt of so much of the world's goodness that we have become blind to the world's threats.

Discrimination, repression and exile are not only an affront to those who suffer at their hands; but also, they affront the values and principles which we seek to enshrine.

On the other hand, world tensions serve to remind us of the importance of countries such as Australia where people from other lands are welcome; where members of your community have found a home and made a lasting and productive contribution.

I welcome your continuing role in providing for the welfare needs of your community; and through the preservation of the traditional, social, religious and cultural values of Judaism, enriching the wider community to which we all belong.

I commend you for the work done in the "outreach" programmes to assist Jewish people in distress.

Your work in the Jewish welfare society; for the care of the aged at the Montefiore Homes; provision for those who are ill or in need of medical care through the Wolper Jewish Hospital, are all evidence of how the Jewish community cares for those in need.

I know that Rabbi Alony is a pivotal inspiration behind all these programmes; always on hand to counsel; offering dynamism, enthusiasm and support to a dedicated band of part-time staff.

Especially do I commend the aims, objectives and the achievements of the Hineni Youth Movement.

The complex and changed world in which we live does not always make easy the transition of young people through the difficult period of adolescence.

Hineni acts as a social group for Jewish youth and a focus for the assimilation by young people of the Jewish culture.

It is something of a truism to suggest that our youth is the foundation of our future.

But by your community providing for the needs and security of the young, it is ensuring that that foundation is well laid.

In moving amongst you all, one has a feeling of being part of a dynamic community with a genuine commitment to, and concern for the Jewish traditions and Australia's future.

Long may that State of being continue.

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