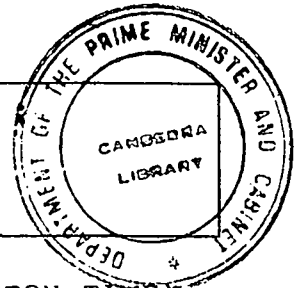




PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

1 SEPTEMBER, 1980 (WASHINGTON TIME)

2 SEPTEMBER, 1980 (AUSTRALIAN TIME)

SPEECH TO B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL

On occasions like this it is customary to begin by saying that one has been greatly moved by the award in question. In my case I can say that with absolute, literal truth, for I have been moved some 10,000 miles to be here tonight to receive this medal.

I assure you that the length of the journey is commensurate with the importance I attach to the occasion - not only because I feel deeply honoured personally that a body of the stature and prestige of B'nai B'rith has chosen to give me this award, but because I regard your decision as a recognition of and tribute to Australia's humanitarian record.

You represent an organisation which has demonstrated the seriousness of its concern for human dignity and justice over the years. I represent a country which has done the same thing. I would like to begin by mentioning briefly two manifestations of that concern in areas which I know have been at the heart of B'nai B'rith's activities since its inception one hundred and thirty seven years ago: refugees and opposition to racialism.

Australia began to take refugees in significant numbers in the 1930s, with the exodus of Jewish people from central Europe. After the Second World War, Australia continued to do so in response to the vast displacement of population in Eastern Europe and the creation of regimes there which many found intolerable. Thousands came from the Soviet Union and the Baltic States. Overall, in the 35 years since that war we have taken an average of around 10,000 refugees a year. Now I appreciate that for Americans, accustomed to think in large numbers, that figure may not seem unduly impressive. However, if I point out that as a percentage of population it is equivalent to an annual intake of some 150-160,000 by the United States, I am sure you will appreciate its significance in Australian terms.

In recent years Australia has been taking many more than that average figure. We have responded to the deliberate creation of a terrible refugee problem in our own region, one made even more harrowing by long sea journeys in small and unseaworthy boats which have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths by drowning. In fact, in per capita terms we have accepted more refugees from Indo-China for permanent settlement than has any other country in the world. We have done this because it is right. But over the years Australia has also benefitted greatly from it, as the energy and talents of those who have come to Australia have contributed to the rich diversity and prosperity of life there. We are a better country for it.

As for racialism, let me begin by acknowledging that in earlier times Australian life was seriously marred in this respect. Australians did pursue a discriminatory policy as far as immigration was concerned, the so-called "White Australia" policy. Australians did discriminate shamefully against the Aboriginal people in Australia itself. We do neither any longer.

At the beginning of the 1980s Australia's immigration policy is colour blind and over a third of our settler arrivals come from Third World countries. We have moved a long way from being an essentially Anglo-Saxon-Celtic community to being a truly multi-cultural and multi-racial one. Within that community, the Aboriginals are today an important and respected component. It would be idle and wrong to deny that earlier neglect has left a residue of serious problems. There is no complacency about these problems. They are fully recognised and determined efforts are being made to cope with them. A comprehensive set of policies - covering, among other things, land questions, royalty payment for mining; low interest loans, and special legal, health and education services - is being implemented. These policies are based on a full recognition of the fundamental right of Aboriginal Australians to participate fully in the determination of their own future. They have been devised in consultation with Aboriginal people and, where possible, are carried out by Aboriginal people.

In international affairs Australia is fully committed to opposing racialism. We have opposed it vehemently and to some effect in Southern Africa, where my Government recently played a significant part within the framework of the Commonwealth of Nations in resolving the Zimbabwe crisis. Unlike some others, however, we do not restrict our opposition to racialism to where it is fashionable or safe. We do not believe in being selective on this issue. We oppose it in all its forms and even when it is practised by the very powerful - by the Soviet Union, for example.

You may be interested to know that the Australian Parliament recently conducted an enquiry into human rights in the Soviet Union and produced a comprehensive report on the subject. To the best of my knowledge, the Australian Parliament is the only legislature to have produced such a report. It has subsequently been incorporated into the U.S. Congressional Record.

Before leaving this question, let me add that we are also concerned to oppose the debasement of anti-racialism, which some seek to exploit in a self-serving way by attaching the label of racialism to anything they oppose. To be more specific, my Government has opposed and will continue to oppose attempts to characterise Zionism as racist, even when this involves us being in a very small minority as far as UN voting is concerned. There are times when what you do is more important than the numbers. Racialism is too vile and serious a matter to be misused and subordinated to other issues in this way.

Ladies and gentlemen, I know that B'nai B'rith's concern is with humanitarian issues. I know also that many people believe that a concern with humanitarian issues should be kept separate from political and strategic matters, that they are somehow incompatible. I sympathise with the impulses behind that view - the religious and humanistic impulses to look for what unites people rather than what divides them.

It represents a necessary ideal. Yet at the level of practical policy, I believe that it is profoundly mistaken. All our experience denies it. In particular, the experience of the Jewish people in this century emphatically denies it. Humanitarian problems arise in, and are profoundly affected by, a political context. A realistic humanitarianism, and one meant to solve problems and not merely to assuage consciences, must therefore extend to embrace the great political and strategic issues of our time.

Before I turn to say something about these issues there is something which, from past experience, I feel I should explain. I am sometimes asked, with some surprise implicit in the question, why a geographically remote, middle-sized country like Australia which faces no imminent threat is so concerned with such matters. The best way I could answer this question, would be to take the person asking it to an Australian country town - almost any country town - and ask him to look at the memorial he would find there to the Australians who had died in the wars of this century. The lists are long. Too many Australians have died in places remote from their home - in Europe, in the Middle East, in Korea, in South East Asia - for us to be unconcerned about the preservation of world peace. Their sacrifice not only confers a right but imposes a duty on an Australian Prime Minister to speak on these issues.

If I may make a more general point, one cannot on the one hand use the rhetoric of "one world", the "global village", "interdependence", and on the other proceed to argue that the questions of peace and war should be left to those immediately involved or to the great powers alone. The middle-ranking countries of the world should recognise that they have a role to play. It would be an excess of modesty on their part, indeed it would be a political and moral failing, to assume that they should be seen but not heard on the great issues.

In the present circumstances, it is not a matter of some exaggerated and unrealistic notion about the extent of the influence an Australian voice can have which moves me to speak. It is rather a belief that in a Western world characterised by a great deal of self doubt, division and illusion, every incremental contribution to the clarifying of issues and the strengthening of resolve is valuable. It is in that spirit that I make my remarks.

We have travelled far this century. Much of the journey has been grim and harrowing. The First World War, whose brutality and suffering almost numb the imagination, left ordinary people shocked, dazed, and longing for an era of peace. They did not get it. 21 years later - in precisely the time required for a new generation of young men to reach their majority - the world was again at war.

Tragically, that second conflict came about because, in the name of peace, the very moderate steps necessary to resist aggression in good time were opposed. Those who sought to maintain the true conditions for peace were denounced as militarists. As a result, millions were to perish needlessly - in the gas chambers of concentration camps as well as on the battle fields.

By 1945 the essential lesson had been learnt, at least by one generation: it was realised that the end of the war did not signify the end of the struggle to maintain peace - that there was no end to that struggle. So the democracies of the world, led by this great and generous country, girded themselves to face a new threat from a new tyranny.

New alignments were forged, new strategies shaped. Leaders of stature and vision emerged. That effort provided the foundation for a generation not only of peace but of unprecedented material advancement for the world.

But 35 years have passed. The generation which emerged from the last war and which understood its lessons is no longer active. Memories have faded, awareness of danger has receded, determination to uphold, and explain and expound the values of free societies has diminished.

What then is the situation facing us at the beginning of the 1980's?

The essence of what I have to say can be summed up in two propositions. First: the single most important fact which faces the world in the 1980s is the reality of Soviet military power and the implications which flow from it. Second: the next most important fact is the reluctance of many in the West to recognise that reality and to respond to it.

As far as the Soviet Union is concerned it is necessary always to bear in mind some basic facts. During the last 50 years, while other empires have been dismembered at an unprecedented rate, the Soviet Union has been the only major power which has acquired substantial territory and surrendered its claim to nothing.

Soviet leaders today, as in the past, describe international politics as basically a struggle between what they call "progressive" forces and the forces of "reaction". They profess support for the "progressive" forces in their struggle to gain power throughout the world and they refuse to accept any definition of detente which in any way circumscribes Soviet participation in that struggle. "Progressive" forces are, of course, defined in terms of their compatibility with the national interest of the Soviet Union.

Internally, there have been some important changes in the Soviet Union over recent decades. In particular the disappearance of mass slave labour and mass terror stand out and are to be profoundly welcomed. But there is still no rule of law, no freedom of opinion or information, no right to strike, no right to emigrate. And many of us must marvel at the courage of many thousands of people in Poland in recent days. There is still an oppressive and ubiquitous security service which harrasses cruelly the kind of dissent which is considered normal in open societies. Political and economic power is still monopolised by a self-appointed and self-perpetuating elite. There is still a command economy, of the kind which other countries only resort to in war-time. In other words, the basic institutional structure of the country remains unchanged since Stalin's time.

I spell out these features for one reason only: because they are the features of the country which many judge is now the strongest military power in the world and will, given military lead-times, remain so for most of the 1980s. It has achieved this status by a massive and relentless arms build-up over the last two decades, a build-up which started from what was already a very high base. It was achieved by giving arms an absolute priority, even at the enormous expense of the serious sacrificing of other goals, the achieving of which would have bettered the lot of its long suffering people.

This is the country we are going to live with in the coming years. I believe that doing so is going to be a dangerous business. The main danger as I see it stems not from the likelihood that the Soviet Union will deliberately precipitate a nuclear war or that it will launch a general attack on Western Europe.

The Soviet leaders do not want a war with the West. They recognise that if it occurs its effects will be devastating for everyone. I believe, however, that they do want those things the pursuit of which will greatly increase the risk of war.

The danger is greatest in the chronically unstable regions of the Third World. It is particularly great in the Middle East - racked as it is by internal conflict, vital as its oil is for the countries of the world, and adjacent as it is to Soviet military power. The Soviet Union's combination of nuclear parity with the West and conventional superiority make it tempting for it to use the latter in the Middle East. If it does so the possibility of a spill-back of conflict into Europe will be very great. In other words, the traditional pattern whereby wars have begun in Europe and have then engulfed the rest of the world may well be reversed. For historical reasons it may be difficult for those viewing the world from a European perspective to come to terms with this possibility.

I believe that the danger has been increased by the invasion of Afghanistan which has driven a Soviet salient into the region. I believe it will be further increased to the extent that it is possible for the Soviet Union to misread the situation due to ambiguous or inadequate signals from the West. I emphasise that point: danger will arise not only from Soviet power and intentions but from confusion and division concerning Western policy which could lead to miscalculation on the Soviet side. For the sake of peace it is essential that this be attended to.

It should be emphasised and clearly understood that what I am talking about is not merely hypothetical. To a very significant extent it is already happening: in Angola and Ethiopia on the African continent, in the Yemen and Afghanistan in the Middle East, and, nearer to Australia, in Indo-China where the Soviet Union is subsidising Vietnamese aggression to the tune of \$3 million a day, and acquiring military facilities in Vietnam for its trouble.

In the case of Afghanistan and Cambodia, Soviet policy has demonstrated yet again that it has a capacity rivalled only by Nazi Germany in this century for adding to the sum of human misery by creating great and tragic flows of refugees.

What of the Western response to this challenge? In terms of population, in terms of wealth, in terms of knowledge, in terms of technology, the combined resources of the West far exceed those of the Soviet Union and its associates. If, therefore, the West finds itself vulnerable to Soviet power - as in some respects it does - it is because of a failure of perception and resolve.

These two - perception and resolve - are intimately related. On the one hand, there can be no adequate response to a problem until its existence is properly recognised and its nature understood. On the other hand, a failure of resolve and will is likely to lead to interpretations - either optimistic or fatalistic - which will either explain away the problem or deny the possibility of effective action.

Two years ago at Harvard, Solzhenitsyn spoke of the prevalence in the West of a self-deluding interpretation of the contemporary world situation. "It works", he said "as a sort of petrified armour around people's minds...it will be broken only by the pitiless crowbar of events".

We must hope that Solzhenitsyn is wrong in his conclusion that only after bitter experience will people see things as they are; but he is surely right in identifying the capacity for self-delusion as a critical factor in the West today.

Consider, for example, the typical sequence of arguments advanced against any attempt to focus attention on Soviet imperialism.

First, a strenuous denial that the Soviet Union is in the process of attempting to achieve military preponderance accompanied by a claim that it is merely reacting to the military programmes of the West.

Second, the assertion that even if the Soviet Union is in the process of achieving military superiority, this is not politically significant. Beyond the level of "sufficiency", it is claimed, military power is meaningless - and in any case, is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the achieving of foreign policy goals.

Third, the claim that even if military superiority does confer an advantage there is no need to worry since the Soviet Union is a cautious, conservative, satisfied state, more fearful than ambitious.

Fourth, the reassurance that even if all preceding arguments turn out to be false there is still no cause for alarm, for it is well known that the Soviet Union is so maladroit in its dealings with the Third World that anything it tries there is sure to fail. And so, it is argued the sensible course is to relax and wait for it to fail.

This sequence of arguments - with its series of fall-back positions - constitutes a determined defence in depth against taking anything but an utterly complacent view of Soviet power and intentions. Each step in the sequence is either false, or a dangerous half truth, or involves taking an irresponsible gamble with the peace and security of the world and of the lives of men and women.

The Soviet Union is engaged in a quest for superiority in every important category of weaponry and has already achieved it in many of them. It is not simply reacting to Western efforts, but on the contrary follows an undeviating course regardless of fluctuations in Western performance. The present U.S. Secretary of Defence made the point succinctly when he observed that, "as our defence budgets have risen, the Soviets have increased their defence budget. As our defence budgets have gone down, their defence budgets have increased again".

Military superiority is translatable into political advantage, especially when nuclear parity, and consequent nuclear stalemate, is combined with conventional superiority.

Soviet caution is not based on conservatism but on a rational calculation of risk and opportunity. When it is at a disadvantage it is cautious, but when it enjoys an advantage it acts boldly to capitalise on it - as it did in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, and as it is increasingly doing now in the Third World. To the extent that the Soviet Union is motivated by fear, it is, as indeed many of those who interpret its foreign policy as defensive concede, a paranoid fear. But the practical manifestations of such a fear are virtually indistinguishable from aggression, in that they cannot be appeased or assuaged short of conceding global dominance.

As to its alleged inability to deal with the Third World, the Soviet Union has had its failures there, but it has also had its successes, and recently the latter have predominated. In any case, what kind of societies would we be if we were prepared to risk our future on the expected mistakes of an adversary? Surely we value our way of life, our liberty, too much to accept such a risk.

It cannot be denied that some of the effects of the self-delusion and confusion I have sought to identify are apparent in the state of the Western alliance today. NATO, the centrepiece of that alliance, has been enormously successful, perhaps uniquely successful as a peace-time alliance. But it is operating today in essentially the same form and according to the same strategic doctrine as it did when it was founded 30 years ago, even though there have been profound changes since then.

There have been many such changes: in the economic balance between the United States and Europe; in the extent of trade between the West and the East; in European perspectives following the dismemberment of their empires. All these have important implications and consequences. But in terms of security, one change stands out: in 1949 when NATO was founded, the United States had clear nuclear superiority and virtual immunity from nuclear attack. Now it has neither.

If the Western alliance is to survive, these changes must be reflected in its form and substance. It must be made consonant with the kinds of threats which its members face today and with the current distribution of power and wealth among its members.

The United States, which has shouldered such a heavy burden for so long, should receive greater support from its now prosperous allies. In Australia, we recognise this. In Europe, as America's allies have recovered and become more powerful they have, rightly, reasserted themselves politically. But until this reassertion is accompanied by the willingness to assume a commensurate responsibility for their own security which logically follows from it, it will be a source of strain between the United States and its major allies. Some progress has been made in this respect in recent years and this is to be welcomed. But the disparity in burden-sharing is still very pronounced.

The United States, in its turn, should recognise that a changing balance within the alliance requires different modes of action on its part, including greater attention to continuous policy co-ordination and consultation. There is an urgent need to develop mechanisms which will enable the Western alliance to respond quickly to events in a dangerous and volatile world.

Again, if we are to avoid nuclear war there is an imperative need for the creation of conventional forces capable in themselves of placing in serious doubt the success of any Soviet conventional attack. It is not enough to depend on a nuclear deterrent in a world in which all are vulnerable to nuclear devastation.

There is an equally urgent need for the allies to agree on the ground rules to be applied for detente: to the relationship between trade policy and the political and military activity of the Soviet Union; and also to the relationship of detente in Europe to events elsewhere in the world. Indeed, high priority should be given to the whole question of the protection of shared Western interests beyond the geographical territory of the NATO members, for as I have said it is there that the danger is greatest.

Beyond all this and perhaps most important of all, there is an over-riding need to articulate the purposes and meaning of the alliance in language which will revitalise the commitment of ordinary men and women in Western countries to its cause. That cause is not, in the last resort, about military arrangements but about the preservation of a way of life - an open, liberal, democratic way of life governed by respect for law. Whatever the shortcomings of that way of life - and we hear a good deal about them nowadays - it is necessary only to compare it with any of the others which are on offer to realise that it should be supported and defended with zeal and resolution and even by passion by all who love liberty. It is palpably absurd that its upholders should ever feel morally or ideologically on the defensive in dealing with totalitarians or authoritarians.

Currently, there are disturbing signs of a strengthening of neutralist sentiments in some European countries. This reflects in part the failure of imagination - as someone has said, those who lack the imagination of disaster are doomed to be surprised by the world. In part it represents a fatalistic assumption that nothing can be done, a feeling of helplessness in the face of events. It is made worse by the current economic problems confronting the developed industrialised countries.

Whatever its causes, it would be a tragic irony if an alliance which has held firm for three decades should falter now, when the need for it is greatest. It is imperative that the leaders of the Western world - and I do not simply mean its political leaders - find the words and the concepts which will fortify their peoples; and that they themselves act in a way which shows that they mean those words.

We need to understand that a people without an objective are a people lost. A people without faith are a people destroyed. A people without conviction will not survive. It is liberty which provides the objective, liberty which allows faith, liberty which sustains conviction.

But liberty is not an inevitable state and there is no law which guarantees that, once achieved, liberty will survive. Its preservation requires skill, determination and strength. But first and most important of all, it requires a knowledge and understanding by ordinary people of what is at stake for them: not an abstract concept but a whole way of life whose survival depends on their commitment to it.

Once - less than a lifetime ago - it was possible for the voice of Churchill to bring these truths home to the Western democracies. Now, in an age that is suspicious of heroes and sceptical in temper, the task is harder. Leaders of Governments cannot master it without the support of ordinary men and women, their readiness to argue the case for liberty with intelligence and passion.

What is needed in this respect is not novelty and gimmickry but the reaffirmation of some old truths in language appropriate to our times. For unfortunately, the realities of international affairs do not change simply because people find the burden of living with them heavy.

In one of his novels, Saul Bellow has one of his characters comment on the contemporary craving for novelty. I will end by repeating his words:

"It is sometimes necessary to repeat what all know. All map makers should place the Mississippi in the same location and avoid originality. It may be boring but one has to know where it is. We cannot have the Mississippi flowing towards the Rockies just for a change."

What is true for map makers is also true for politicians and peoples. And what is true for the Mississippi is true for the Elbe and the Mekong and the Jordan.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you again for the honour you have done me, and for the greater honour you have done my country.