



24

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY, 19 DECEMBER 1981

MESSAGE BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE RALLY OF
THE FEDERATION OF POLISH ORGANISATIONS IN VICTORIA

You are meeting here today to express your justifiable indignation over the recent developments in Poland. May I express at the outset my deep sympathy and understanding for all of you who have relatives or friends in Poland. All Australians must share your grief at the suffering which the Polish nation is enduring now. Australia has been fortunate to have had the contribution made to our society by Polish immigrants - you have made us a richer culture and a more diverse nation. Your distress and anxiety about what is happening can only be sharpened by the lack of communication between Poland and the outside world and the absence of any complete picture of events.

The Australian Government condemns not only the original imposition of martial law in Poland, but also the violence with which it is increasingly being imposed. President Mitterand expressed the reactions of all free nations when he said: "Whether it be the result of the external pressure or internal oppression, the loss of public, collective and individual liberties is always to be condemned and must for that reason be clearly, vigorously and constantly denounced." I join in that denunciation.

We condemn the curtailment of new-found freedoms enjoyed for such a short time. We are shocked to learn that this crack-down on freedoms is being accompanied by use of such force as is now leading to deaths, injury on a wide scale and jailings and internments of tens of thousands of people.

We hear reports of brutal confrontation against innocent and unarmed people. We hear of factory workers being beaten and shot. We are not sure of the whereabouts of Lech Walesa and the Polish authorities keep silence on this question of vital importance to Poland's well-being.

The present violation of human rights in Poland is taking place on a major scale. It is not surprising that people in freedom-loving countries, including Australia, are raising their voices in protest.

We believe that this sort of violence can only breed an intensification of confrontation and further violence.

The events of the past week have proved that Archbishop Glomp, the primate of Poland, spoke truly when he said that the authorities in Poland are not authorities of dialogue.

There must be no outside interference or coercion whatsoever.

This means not only the threat of direct intervention, but also the application of other kinds of pressure. The Government would condemn the creation of any impression of outside interference.

Only if they are left alone will the Poles enjoy a free and peaceful society. But the Polish authorities must not now take a direction which puts that objective beyond reach.

The Government is watching developments carefully and is paying close attention to what it can do to help the Polish people. We are acutely conscious of Poland's economic difficulties and the hardships and shortages being faced by the Polish people.

Similarly, how we can help refugees from Poland is a matter of the utmost concern. We are discussing what may be possible with other Western Governments, especially Canada and the United States.

May I repeat the Government's deepest concern about the situation in Poland, and condemnation of the activities of the authorities.

Responsible governments everywhere are looking to the Polish authorities to exercise restraint and responsibility so that the future of a free and stable Poland is assured.

I understand your concerns and I share them. I will be watching the situation closely. We should all pray for peace in Poland and for the well-being of YOUR relatives and friends.

---oOo---