



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

3 September 1983

The Australian Ambassador in Moscow, Mr David Evans, called on Soviet Foreign Ministry officials yesterday (Moscow time) and handed to them statements made by the Foreign Minister, Mr Hayden, and me.

He asked for a full and early explanation of the circumstances surrounding the shooting down of Korean Airline Flight No.7.

No information was provided by the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The Australian Government regards the latest TASS statement as totally inadequate and deliberately misleading and calls on the Soviet Union to provide us with a full and proper account.

During the current Security Council debate, Australia's acting Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr Lance Joseph, has added our voice to the world-wide condemnation of the Soviet action.

In his statement, Mr Joseph said:

"Australia joins with other members of the international community in demanding an immediate and full accounting from the Soviet authorities. We have put this request bilaterally and I repeat it here today in a multilateral context. The explanations so far emanating from Moscow about the episode are, in our view, entirely inadequate. There has been a refusal thus far either to acknowledge responsibility or even to extend a convincing expression of regret for the action. This is deplorable. We appeal to the Soviet Union. If the Soviet authorities give in to the instinct to cover up, it will only confirm the worst fears of those who suspect them most, with repercussions across the spectrum of international relations.

"In this regard, Mr President, I must say that one cannot but feel profoundly disturbed by the latest TASS statement which was read out to the council earlier this afternoon by the Delegation of the USSR. We see no element of contrition in the statement. It amounts, at least on first reading, to blaming the victims themselves. I would remind the Soviet Delegation that some of those victims were Australian citizens and I would say firmly on the behalf of these victims, now deceased, that they were entirely blameless in this appalling episode. We reject this latest attempted evasion of responsibility".