



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

23 AUGUST 1991

The dramatic collapse of the conservative coup in the Soviet Union has brought into sharp focus the tragic situation in Yugoslavia. I am appalled by the violence, destruction and loss of life which is occurring there. The events in the Soviet Union must surely be a salutary lesson for those who are seeking to impose their will on others and to those who seek to use violence to resolve political problems. The times have changed. People's aspirations to freedom and democracy cannot be thwarted by force, and those aspirations will be strongly supported by the international community.

The peoples of Croatia and Slovenia have freely and democratically expressed their desire for independence. Their aspirations must be satisfied in a just, peaceful and democratic manner. For our part, Australia will be among the first countries to recognise Croatia and Slovenia when they satisfy the attributes of statehood.

The latest peace plan, which was agreed earlier this week by the Yugoslav Federal Presidency and the leaders of the six republics, appears to be yet another expression of good intent which is not being backed up by the necessary action. I urge all the parties involved to summon the necessary political will to implement a cease-fire and bring an immediate halt to the bloodshed.

We fully support the Europeans in their efforts to mediate in this crisis, and hope that they will not be discouraged by recent set-backs. We believe the European Community has the best chance of negotiating a settlement.

On my own behalf and that of the Government, I extend my deepest sympathy to those who are suffering as a result of the violence in Yugoslavia. I appreciate and respect the restraint and understanding being demonstrated by the communities in Australia which are affected by this tragic situation.