

PRIME MINISTER

SOUTH AFRICA

It is now established that the South Africans have attacked targets, allegedly ANC offices, in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia.

No details yet of casualties.

South Africans are saying that it is in retaliation for discovery of a major arms cache near Johannesburg yesterday.

They are also claiming analogy with the US attack on Libya. We propose to say that it is more like the Israeli attack on Tunis.

We are sending in our Ambassadors in South Africa and elsewhere to find out exactly what has happened. I have said that until we know the facts we should not pass any judgement.

The Foreign Secretary proposes to make a statement to the House this afternoon. On first sight, this looks like another example of rushing into reflexive statements on matters for which we are not responsible. The arguments for doing it are to pre-empt PNQs (of which there are several); and to say something while we can still honestly take the line that we are still investigating precisely what has happened and cannot, therefore, pass judgement on it. It is not a very strong case but I think just passes muster.

CDD

CHARLES POWELL

19 May 1986

LOSAAM

South Africa

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on South African incursions into Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As the House knows, a number of locations in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe were attacked early this morning. The South African defence forces have acknowledged that they were responsible for these attacks, full details of which are not yet available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) has already summoned the South African chargé to ask for an urgent explanation. She expressed to him our grave concern. Our ambassador in South Africa has been instructed to seek an early call on the South African Foreign Minister.

Our high commissioners in Gabarone, Lusaka and Harare have been instructed to convey to their host Governments the British Government's concern at these attacks and to seek further details about them, including any indication of casualties.

We have always made plain our opposition to cross-border violence and have consistently condemned the resort to force by South Africa against her neighbours. Today's attacks by the South African defence forces represent a plain violation of the sovereignty of three fellow Commonwealth countries. It is particularly deplorable that they should have taken place while the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons were in South Africa, seeking to promote a process of dialogue which would lead to the ending of apartheid, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. Today's events underline the urgent need for just such a suspension of violence.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Yet again the South African Government have committed acts of aggression against front-line states. Yet again the sovereignty of independent Commonwealth Governments has been infringed by acts of state terrorism by the South African Government. Following President Botha's speech last Thursday, when he spoke against meddling foreigners, does that not show that South Africa is rejecting possibly its last chance of proceeding to a relatively bloodless evolution to majority rule via the mediation of the Eminent Persons Group, which, after all, our Prime Minister put forward at Nassau last October as a means, in her isolation, of preventing effective sanctions against South Africa?

President Botha, by this raid, has sent us a clear message. What a limp message the Foreign Secretary has sent in reply. Is the Foreign Secretary aware that Bishop Tutu has just said that the world awaits what the Prime Minister and President Reagan will do now, as always in the past the Prime Minister and President Reagan have vetoed mandatory sanctions against South Africa?

Does the Foreign Secretary not recognise that because of what happened at the Tokyo summit, and because of our isolated stance at the Luxembourg meeting last September with EEC Foreign Ministers and our isolated stance at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau last October, we are perceived in the world as South

Africa's best friend? The Foreign Secretary proposes to show our disapproval of this incursion by asking the Minister of State to wag her finger at the South African chargé d'affaires. This is an absurdly weak response, but how typical of the Government.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now take the lead in seeking the full implementation of the range of measures agreed at Luxembourg in September and at Nassau in October? In the letter and spirit of Luxembourg, how can he justify the South African military attachés accredited to Britain remaining en poste in London? In the light of the decision at Nassau last October, how can we still allow the importation of Krugerrands? Will he now send to President Botha a message that he will understand? What better reason than this aggression is there for immediately proceeding with selective sanctions against South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand the indignation that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) seeks to express in his questions. I deny absolutely the suggestion that the Government have adopted an isolated stance. We have condemned apartheid, and shall continue to condemn it, without reservation, and we wish it to be abolished as soon as possible. We wish that abolition to be achieved without the condemnation of all the peoples of South Africa to a bloodbath of violence. For that reason the Prime Minister and the Government were able to take the lead at Nassau and in the European Community in promoting an effective opportunity for a peaceful solution through the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. When it, has suited them, Opposition Members have been only too willing to endorse the legitimacy and effectiveness of that group. Let us start from the common ground.

We wish to bring about an early end to apartheid in South Africa. We wish that to be brought about by peaceful means, and the Eminent Persons Group is the most effective instrument devised so far for achieving that. As I said in my statement, it is for that reason that we regret this series of attacks. I have described as particularly deplorable the fact that they are taking place at this time. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members wished to address themselves seriously to trying to bring about what is necessary, they should stop shouting about it in their present absurd fashion. We have made our condemnation clear and will consider with our partners what further action may be necessary. Our objective will be to bring about a suspension of violence and a cessation of apartheid as soon as possible.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Should not our judgment of these matters be based, not on the merits or demerits of African Governments, but on international law? What is the international law on these matters? Was the air strike against terrorists in Tunisia consistent with international law?

Mr. Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises the matter of the air strike against Tunisia. He will recollect that we condemned that air strike without hesitation as having no foundation in international law.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend said Tunisia.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I apologise, I meant Libya.

and agricultural development? Is there a policy block, or is it just that that is the way things have been done in the past and it is very difficult to change them?

Mr. Raison: I am ready to consider proposals for increased and further agricultural aid, because I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is very important. However, one has to remember that it is a question not only of this country accepting proposals but of the recipient Governments making a commitment to agricultural proposals as opposed to others.

Voluntary Agencies

56. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make increased provision to the voluntary agencies concerned with development over the next three years.

Mr. Raison: The voluntary agencies provide very cost-effective aid to some of the poorest communities in the developing world. Our support for the agencies has increased considerably in recent years, and I expect to continue to offer them substantial financial support in the future.

Mr. Holland: Will the Minister come clean about how much he will contribute, because he did not in his reply say how much that might be? Does he intend at least to keep the increase in contributions in line with inflation? If not, in effect there will be a real cut. Despite all that he has said about his support for such excellent initiatives as Sport Aid, if the Government's contributions to voluntary agencies cannot be increased in real terms, Sport Aid is the privatisation of what should be the Government's support policy.

Mr. Raison: It is not the Government's practice to publish detailed figures for three years ahead. If the hon. Gentleman looks at our record in the voluntary sector since 1979, he will find that our support for the British volunteer programme has increased by no less than 101 per cent. in real terms and that our support for the joint funding scheme has increased, again in real terms, by 41 per cent. That represents a major increase in support to the voluntary sector.

Mr. Forman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends think that to increase the provision for the voluntary agencies is a most cost effective way of using the funds that are available for the aid programme? Does he take heart from the paragraph in the Tokyo summit declaration that makes it clear that the Prime Minister and all the other Heads of Government are committed to maintaining and, where appropriate, increasing official aid from this country and from the other countries involved?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the Government's support for the voluntary

sector. I have already said that our support has been outstanding. I, too, was heartened by the Tokyo summit communiqué.

Equatorial and Tropical Forests

57. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards aid projects which affect the conservation of equatorial and tropical forests.

Mr. Raison: Our policy is to support the wise use and replenishment of the forests. In doing so we have accepted the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forest action plan as a valuable framework for our actions.

Mr. Spearing: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he assure the House that special attention will be given where there is objection to any aid project for which he is responsible which does not comply with the criteria that he has laid down? What action are Her Majesty's Government taking in respect of aid projects from other countries which do not meet the criteria which he outlined?

Mr. Raison: I accept that it is important that our aid projects should have full regard to environmental and human factors. As I have told the House, I have made representations to the president of the World Bank stressing our belief in the importance of giving proper regard to the environmental factors in respect of other aid programmes; and, of course, we are happy to discuss that with our fellow donors through the various means of donor co-ordination.

Public Expenditure (Aid)

58. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of total public expenditure was spent on overseas aid in 1985.

Mr. Raison: For the financial year 1985-86 provisional figures indicate that overseas aid accounted for 0.84 per cent. of total public expenditure.

Mr. Alton: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he confirm that as a percentage of GDP that is a lower percentage than in the late 1970s, and, despite Live Aid, Band Aid and the famine in Africa, we are spending less now in real terms than we were then? Do the Government have any plans for increasing the amount of money spent on overseas aid?

Mr. Raison: There has been a fall in percentage terms since 1979; on the other hand, the aid programme is now broadly stable as a proportion of planned public expenditure, and we have had an increase in real terms this year over last year.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Libya was quite different. There we had the plainest possible conclusion that state-directed terrorism was promoted, organised, sustained and directed by the Libyan Government, and it was universally recognised and condemned as such. That must be distinguished from what is happening in this case. One cannot conclude that any of the three Governments concerned have been promoting or inspiring, still less directing, terrorism in South Africa. In addition, we know that the Government of Botswana are at this moment considering with the South African Government means of curtailing terrorism. The circumstances could not be more different.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The whole House will join the Foreign Secretary in condemning this attack — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — this outrageous attack, particularly as it is not justifiable in international law. I am glad, at least, that the Foreign Secretary has not given us a justification in terms of article 51. Will he recognise that he will have to come before the House and the Security Council and agree now to a package of sanctions against South Africa? That is the logic of the present position. The South Africans deliberately undermined the Commonwealth peace initiative. That must now be met with sanctions, which must involve a banning of air flights to and from South Africa and a banning of new investment in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the point of view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman, but I do not depart from what I have said about the deplorable nature and timing of what has taken place, particularly because of the powerful efforts that my right hon. friend the Prime Minister and others have made in trying to promote the work of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. However, it is too early to come to a judgment on what action should be taken. Certainly the situation is very serious.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): What representations has my right hon. and learned Friend made to the Governments of the three Commonwealth countries concerned against the quite open and flagrant harbouring of Communist-assisted terrorists?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have made plain our position over a very long period of time. We are opposed to cross-frontier violence of any kind, from whatever country, in southern Africa. Equally I must make it plain to my hon. Friend that there is no evidence comparable to that cited in other cases that the front-line Commonwealth Governments concerned have been involved in the promotion, direction or inspiration of terrorism. Certainly there is nothing whatever to justify unprovoked attacks of this kind from South Africa.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): May we come back to the point about international law? Is the Foreign Secretary saying on behalf of the Government that these violations of sovereignty are wrong and that the violation of the sovereignty of Libya, using aircraft from this country, was right?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said in my statement that the attacks by the South African defence forces represent a plain violation of the sovereignty of three fellow Commonwealth countries, and they are to be deplored. I have made it plain to the House on other

occasions, and do so again, that in the case of Libya—a totally different case from this—there was the plainest possible evidence of a Government directing and promoting state-sponsored terrorism and attacks on innocent targets. In the case of Libya there is plain evidence of state-sponsored terrorism, but there is no evidence of that kind in this case.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there might be a more balanced view on this matter if the Government were in touch with the ANC and were able to talk to it and find out the reactions, not only from the terrorist parts of that organisation, but from the nationalist parts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It was for that reason that we took steps to authorise contacts with the ANC at the time of my visit to Lusaka earlier this year and subsequently.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Foreign Secretary accept that those of us, including my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who visited Gabarone last summer, after that infamous raid, and who saw rooms where young children had been shot in their own beds, regard South Africa as the focus of evil in the international society? Does not what has happened call for more than mere words and platitudes? Will the Foreign Secretary join the three Commonwealth countries concerned in demanding sanctions as the only real response to this outrage?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely sympathise with the point expressed by the hon. Gentleman and by his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) about the way in which the incident is bound to be seen in Botswana. I have discussed the earlier incident there on more than one occasion with my opposite number, the Botswanan Foreign Minister, and I know that throughout the earlier part of this year Botswana was engaged in discussions with the South African Government, through a joint commission and other means, about methods of preventing the risk of terrorist action across their frontier. In those circumstances, with a meeting of the joint commission due to take place at the end of this week, I have already deplored this action, particularly with reference to Botswana.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that our American friends and allies persuaded us that Libya had mounted terrorist attacks from its territory, which justified an attack in turn on Libya. What opportunity has he given our South African friends to tell us of their evidence of terrorist attacks mounted on them from the three countries concerned?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have, of course, been in touch with the South African Government on earlier occasions

Mr. Forth: This time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Today, my hon. Friend the Minister of State has been in touch with the South African chargé in London. I cannot emphasise too strongly the lack of similarity between the two events. There is almost universal recognition of sustained, direct, proclaimed Libyan state-sponsored terrorist attacks on innocent people outside that country. The two cases are as different as chalk from cheese.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Leaving aside the fellow travellers of the South African regime who are sitting on the Tory Benches, do not the raids once again demonstrate that the South Africans have no more intention of observing international law than of respecting human and political rights in South Africa? When will the Foreign Secretary realise that a gentle rebuke now and again of the South African authorities is not sufficient? Much stronger action is required. When will the British Government face their responsibilities and recognise that far more effective measures including economic sanctions, are required against that apartheid regime?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the matter were only one tenth as simple as the hon. Gentleman implies! The Prime Minister and I have made it plain to the South African Government on many occasions that there is an urgent need for them to take the necessary steps to bring apartheid to an end. To that end, with the support of Commonwealth and European Governments, we have promoted the energetic work of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. We have invested a lot of effort in that exercise, and that is why we join the whole House in deploring the attacks that have taken place today.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): If terrorist raids had taken place from those three Commonwealth countries against South Africa's sovereign territory, it would surely have been with the connivance, at the very least, of their Governments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said that there is no evidence that any violence by the ANC or anybody else in South Africa is sanctioned, still less directed, by the authorities in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. At the very time when the attack took place, contacts were made between the Governments of Botswana and South Africa with a view to a further meeting of the joint commission directed towards joint action against such activity.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Did the Foreign Secretary notice that when President Masire of Botswana surveyed the damage done by the brutality of South African troops he described the action as being "completely unprovoked and unwarranted"? He asked:

"What have we done to deserve this?"

Does that not sound like a cry for help to fellow Commonwealth countries? What practical contribution will the Government make to the Government of Botswana in order to repair some of the damage done by South African troops?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not yet seen the President's observation, but I can well understand why he made it. We shall have to consider that question, and several other matters arising out of it.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the fact that he has made a statement is appreciated in all parts of the House, especially as the United Kingdom Government is in a difficult position, which deserves some sympathy, but do not the raids conclusively show that the regime in Pretoria is not only extremely dislikeable, but stupid? After all, it has perpetrated an act that will make it far more difficult for the Eminent Persons Group to reach a successful conclusion. Is there any prospect of this Government, as a leading Government in the Commonwealth, and as they are taking over the EEC presidency on 1 July, making sure

that there are renewed initiatives? Is my right hon. and learned Friend still hopeful that the Eminent Persons Group will be successful? Has not the day been brought inevitably closer when full sanctions will be imposed against Pretoria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the Governments concerned, and others, are bound now to consider how far, and in what way—if at all—the group can continue to play a part. We believe that it should be possible for it to play an important role in the search for a settlement, but obviously this series of raids underlines the urgency of its work. We have made absolutely plain to the South African Government our view of the gravity of the action that they have taken.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not likely that the raids will make it impossible for the CEPG to continue its work, and that the raids might have been designed for that purpose? If that work comes to an end, will that not represent a decisive change in the circumstances under which the Prime Minister said in Bermuda that she was not prepared to contemplate sanctions? Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the British Government's attitude must be completely reassessed if those circumstances arise?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall not undertake a reassessment of the Government's attitude in the House of Commons this afternoon. It is plain from what I have said already that the attacks, when the Commonwealth group is in South Africa, are to be particularly deplored. Plainly, they make a substantial difference to the atmosphere in which the group has been trying to do its work. We still believe that it is important to try, if it is humanly possible, to promote a peaceful solution to the troubles of southern Africa.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take into account subsequent business being under the guillotine. I shall allow questions to continue until 4 o'clock, and then we must move on.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to make a statement today, and I welcome what he said. Will he please note that his description of state terrorism as perpetrated by the South Africans seems to be a more accurate use of such a phrase than on other occasions on which it has been used recently by Her Majesty's Government? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the South Africans have put themselves in exactly the same position as the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the Vietnamese in Kampuchea and the Israelis in the Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria, in that they have deliberately invaded and occupied a neighbouring country because they do not like the nature of the regime there?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have made plain our condemnation of the action. I urge my hon. Friend not to press his analogies too far, because what is plainly different is that incursions have taken place into three countries, but no attempt at occupation has been made. That is totally different from my hon. Friend's examples.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The Secretary of State has said several times that he has condemned the action. The interesting question to put to him now is

simply this: if that is all that he is to do, what impact will that condemnation have on President Botha, and what impression will that condemnation, without any other action, have upon the Commonwealth countries affected?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If that were all that happened, the hon. Gentleman's question might have some sense in it. We are speaking less than 12 hours after the incident took place. I have already made it plain that we shall have to assess the situation carefully—not only on our own—with a view to deciding whether any further action is appropriate.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Government Members understand the difficulties, particularly in view of our membership of the Commonwealth, but how long are this Government and country planning to behave towards South Africa as if we were a sort of nanny? Surely that independent nation should pursue its own salvation in its own way? Pious protests from us might be counter-productive.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no question of our proceeding as a "sort of nanny". We have important political and economic relations with South Africa, and a large number of British citizens are resident there. We have had historic connections over many years and a profound interest in the prospects of peace in southern Africa. For those reasons, we rightly interest ourselves in the future of that country.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Foreign Secretary not aware that this violent and brutal attack when the Commonwealth group of personages are in South Africa is no accident, but is a deliberate policy of destabilisation? Those of us who saw the brutal attacks on people who had nothing to do with politics and the murder of a six-year-old in the street know exactly the degree of savagery of which the South Africans are capable. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must do more than talk.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Lady's concern. We are all totally affronted and shocked by violence and savagery, in whatever form. For that reason, we have consistently called for a way forward in South Africa in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. For that reason also, I have already made plain the extent to which we deplore the fact that the action took place while the Commonwealth group was in South Africa.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the ANC is heavily infiltrated by Soviet Marxist forces, which are anti-democratic, and are fulfilling a role of world terror? The raids emphasise only too clearly that the chances of a peaceful solution in South Africa are fast running out. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the chances of a peaceful solution are based on power sharing that will protect minorities, and that such a solution has been adopted in the past by Switzerland, where the power is based on cantons? Does he believe that such a solution is applicable to South Africa? If so, will he agree to push for one?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Despite our close interest in the future of South Africa, we have, I think rightly, refrained from seeking to offer detailed prescriptions for the constitutional future of that country.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has obviously heard of Libya, because he agreed to this country's bases being used in an attack on that country. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that had the British Government attempted to say no, Reagan would have gone ahead in any case?

When will he stop trying to differentiate between state terrorism, whether lodged by South Africa, Israel or South America, in countries such as Libya and against a possible foe such as Nicaragua?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand how anyone might be tempted to draw parallels and comparisons within the wide number of examples cited by my hon. Friend. It is not possible to lump them together in one general categorisation.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend draw the attention of advocates of sanctions to the experience of the Wilson Government in the late 1960s, when they tried to impose sanctions against Rhodesia and failed completely, especially in respect of oil?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is one of the reasons why our view of sanctions has always been as we have expressed it many times.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the Secretary of State take on board the fact that, in the eyes of the world, we are on trial? The Commonwealth is looking at us to see to what degree we put words in place of action. The terrorists in South Africa, who are nothing but a lot of terrorist wolves, recognise a dead sheep when they see one.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot accept the absurd proposition with which the hon. Gentleman started his question.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the South Africans would be better advised to try to learn something from the remarkable reconciliation and co-existence between blacks and whites in Zimbabwe than to try to disrupt the whole region through such an attack?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has made an entirely valid point.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As the Government in Harare have made it clear that Zimbabwe is not being used for attacks on South Africa, is the Secretary of State prepared to accept any requests from the Government of Zimbabwe, or of any Commonwealth country to erect British anti-aircraft missile systems around the capital cities? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to send British military advisers to those countries to safeguard territorial integrity?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The points raised by the hon. Gentleman went a good deal further than the conclusions that we have drawn from our discussions.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend expand on his answer to our

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) concerning the fact that the operation today is a lesser evil than the Israeli incursion into Lebanon? When my right hon. and learned Friend considers what action to take—if he considers taking action—will he bear in mind the action that was taken in respect of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand why my hon. Friend attempted to draw every kind of parallel. It is not easy to deal with the matter in any sensible fashion at this length. The fact is that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon involved both an invasion and an occupation of Lebanon. That is to be distinguished from the incidents taking place today, however deplorable they may be.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, to defend an indefensible regime, the South African Government are now thrashing round wildly in a way which is utterly unacceptable to the civilised world and which, I hope, is unacceptable to us, although it has massive backing on the Conservative Benches, as has been shown clearly today? Will he realise that platitudes give aid and comfort to the Pretoria Government, and that only when some action such as sanctions is taken, and only when the right hon. and learned Gentleman gets President Reagan to do something rather than helping UNITA, will South Africa be stopped from bombing places around them, bombing Angola and occupying Namibia, contrary to the wishes of the United Nations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already made clear our view that these actions are a plain violation of the sovereignty of neighbouring countries and that they are especially deplorable in these circumstances. We shall have to consider what further action may be necessary. I am not prepared, however, to endorse the proposition offered by the hon. Gentleman and to align any of my hon. Friends with support for the apartheid regime, which is condemned and deplored on both sides of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Assuming that the attacks had not been against these military camps, but from them and against South Africa, would my right hon. and learned Friend have made a statement, and, if so, what would it have been?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not able to follow my hon. and learned Friend's reference to attacks from and against South Africa. It seems to me to be a confusion of thought.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Foreign Secretary reconsider his answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)? He said that Libya was as different from South Africa as chalk is from cheese. Is it not a fact that the Federal police in Germany—the Bundeskriminalamt—has said that it has found no connection whatever between the pretext for the bomb in Berlin and the Libyan connection and that Herr Lochte in Hamburg, the head of the Verfassungsschutz who is in a position to know, has said that he—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question must be related to South Africa.

Mr. Dalyell: It is related to a statement by the Foreign Secretary which is just not true. He said—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman a good chance. He must get his question in order.

Mr. Dalyell: The Foreign Secretary should not be allowed to get away with things that are factually inaccurate when answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South. The fact is that a man who is in a position to know in the Verfassungsschutz has said that he excludes any connection. It is intolerable that the Foreign Secretary should come to the House and by sleight of hand make statements for which there is no factual backing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we have heard enough for the Foreign Secretary to make a brief reply if he wishes.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not.

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

As the House knows, the South African Defence Forces attacked a number of locations in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe early this morning. The South African Defence Forces have acknowledged that they were responsible for these attacks, full details of which are not yet available.

My Hon Friend the Member for Wallasey this morning summoned the South African Charge to ask for an urgent explanation. She expressed to him our grave concern. Our Ambassador in South Africa has been instructed to seek an early call on the South African Foreign Minister.

Our High Commissioners in Gabarone, Lusaka and Harare have been instructed to convey to their host governments the British Government's concern at these attacks, and to seek further details about them, including any indication of casualties.

We have always made plain our opposition to cross-border violence and have consistently condemned the resort to force by South Africa against her neighbours. It follows that we strongly condemn today's attacks by the South African Defence Forces, which represent a plain violation of the sovereignty of three fellow Commonwealth countries. It is particularly deplorable that they should have taken

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place while the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons were in South Africa on a mission aimed at achieving a suspension of violence on all sides and start on a dialogue. It underlines the urgent need for such a suspension of violence by all the parties concerned.

